

Boater survey

By boaters for boaters

2013

Boater survey: Aims and content

- The survey was designed and circulated in the late summer of 2013. It was administered using Survey Monkey online survey software.
- The survey consisted of an online questionnaire.
- All boaters were invited to take part.
- Responses were collected between 20th August and 17th September. This is a time of peak demand for mooring sites, a popular time for hire boaters, and a time when planned stoppages are at a minimum.
- Respondents were recruited via Canal World Discussion Forum (CWDF), Facebook Groups, Twitter and personal emails. Details were then recirculated via the Canal and River Trust Boater Update and at least one dedicated canal magazine.
- Responses have been analysed using Excel. An SPSS licence was not available during the analysis period, so significance has not been tested. The team hope to be able to do this in future.
- The findings are arranged thematically and are not exhaustive. The dataset will remain confidential, but bespoke analyses may be requested. It may be possible to share limited, anonymised data on request to John Sloan.

Questionnaire topics

Question topics included:

- Boat ownership status and boat characteristics
- Boating patterns and waterways visited
- Mooring priorities
- Use of mooring sites and official Visitor Moorings (VMs)
- Experience of accessing VMs
- Opinions of possible new approaches to improving access to appropriate moorings

Most questions were closed (single or multiple option) questions, and most had a comment box available for further detail. A large amount of textual data was collected which has not all been included in this analysis (owing to time constraints) but may be subjected to further analysis in due course.

Limitations

- This research was conducted by volunteers, meaning that the data were not analysed as quickly as would have been possible using full time researchers.
- The survey was solely conducted online, thus excluding any boaters who do not use online resources.
- By recruiting participants through boating interest groups, the survey mostly reached regular boaters rather than one time boaters (such as summer hirers).
- The survey was designed by a small group of people with a limited set of aims. The survey did not set out to be a comprehensive data collection exercise, but instead an exploratory glimpse into some current issues on UK waterways.
- There was a certain amount of missing data. No missing data were imputed. Responses with less than 25% of questions completed were excluded.
- An SPSS licence was not available during the analysis period, meaning that the significance of relationships between variables has not yet been tested.

Findings

1,285 completed questionnaires were included in analysis

- 90.4% of respondents had cruised a narrowboat
 - 4.3% had cruised a widebeam or Dutch Barge
 - 3.7% had cruised a GRP cruiser
 - The remaining 1.6% had cruised multiple boat types or combinations, or different types of boat
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- 82.0% of respondents were full owners of their boat, 6.7% of respondents were shared owners and the remaining 11.3% were non-owners who had been cruising, either as hirers, invited crew, delivering boats or other trip passengers.
 - 68.2% of respondents had cruised in boats of 41' to 60' in length. 12.8% had cruised boats of less than 40', and 18.8% had cruised in boats of 61' and longer.
 - 82.7% had cruised on one of the more popular waterways (popular waterways are those which at least 50 respondents had cruised on their most recent trip)

Findings: Continuous Cruisers (CCers)

- CCers made up a substantial proportion of the respondents: n=329; 25.6%
- When asked how many times they had moved in the last fortnight...
 - 3.3% said they had not moved in the last fortnight
 - 31.9% had moved on 1 or 2 days
 - 44.4% had moved on between 3 and 9 days
 - 17% had moved on 10 or more days
 - The remainder left the question blank
- The top 5 waterways visited by CCers, *in the fortnight before responding*, were: Grand Union Canal (n=103); Oxford Canal (n=54); Kennet and Avon Canal (n=35); Coventry Canal (n=28); and Regent's Canal (n=25)

Findings: Boaters with moorings

- 63% of respondents have a home mooring for their boat (n=812).
- The largest group of boaters with moorings (n=508) moored offline (e.g. In a marina). The next largest group moored online but offside. A smaller group moor online on the towpath (n=62) and a small number (13) moor in other locations.
- Most mooring boaters moor on 'leisure' moorings (n=681) and the minority hold a residential mooring (n=131).
- Boaters on residential moorings were the least likely to report that they had stayed on a Visitor Mooring in the summer of 2013 (51.9%, compared to 66.9% of CCers and 62.4% of leisure moorers).

Findings: Using official Visitor Moorings (VMs)

- More than half of respondents had last used an official VM during summer 2013 (n=742; 57.7%).
- When asked where they 'mostly moored' on their more recent trip, 36.9% said the towpath, 33.7% said Visitor Moorings and 2.2% said private moorings.
- 67.3% of respondents who last used a VM in summer 2012 were able to find a place at the bank, compared to 70.5% in summer 2013.

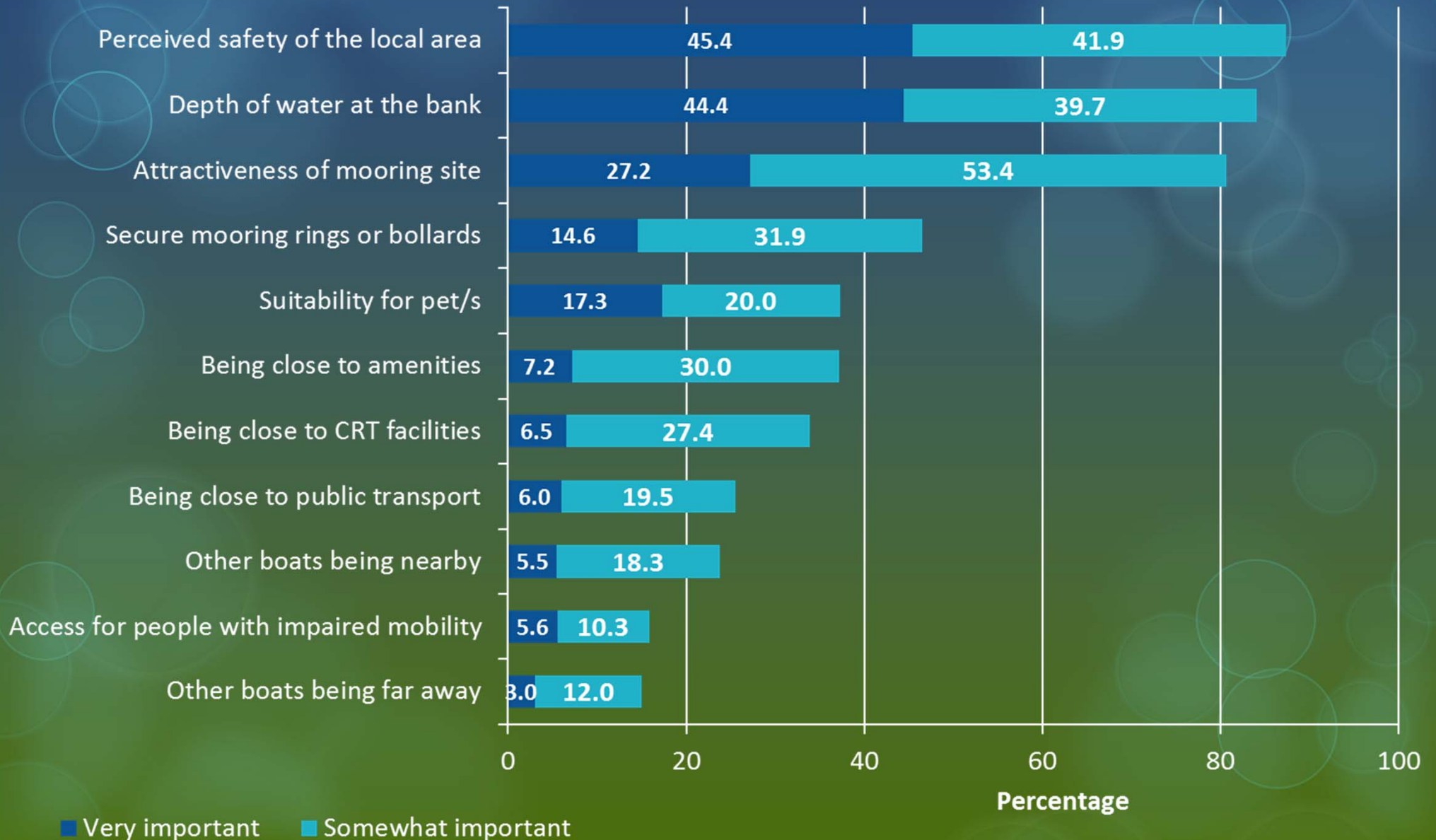
Season last tried to moor on a Visitor Mooring	% able to find space at the bank	% able to find space moored alongside	% no space at first choice mooring	% blank
Summer 2013	70.5	3.5	18.7	7.3
Spring 2013	73.7	5.3	12.7	8.3
Autumn 2012	63.6	6.1	24.2	6.1
Summer 2012	67.3	4.1	20.4	8.2
Spring 2012 and before	54.9	6.6	15.4	23.1

Findings: Using official Visitor Moorings (VMs)

- Findings suggest that those respondents who had visited the most popular waterways were *more* likely to have been able to find space at the bank the last time they used a VM than those who had not visited popular waterways (64.3% compared to 54.1%).
- Respondents' experience of finding VMs seems to be related to their likelihood of approving of potential measures to create more moorings or to impose tighter restrictions on existing moorings. However, this is difficult to analyse because of the small numbers of people who had difficulty finding moorings.

Findings: Mooring priorities

All respondents were asked to rate the importance of the following factors when choosing a mooring site:



Findings: Mooring priorities

- Respondents pointed out that some mooring priorities (such as proximity to amenities) vary according to the type of trip – whether it's a holiday trip, a working trip or something else. ***“It varies according to what's in the fridge!”***
- Metal barriers ('Armco') were not offered as an option in the list of things that boaters look for when mooring, but was mentioned many times in further comments, as was the construction of the bank and vegetation growth. Overall nearly half (47%) of respondents said that mooring rings, bollards or metal barriers were important.
- Clearly, providing water depth and somewhere to moor without concern about coming adrift are more important to a great deal of boaters than proximity to amenities or attractions. ***“Dredging is the biggest issue, if a boat could get close to the bank then visitor moorings wouldn't be so fought over”***
- No further information was collected about what contributes to the perception of safety of canal-side areas. This is a potential area for more investigation.

Findings: Mooring priorities

There appear to be some key areas of divergence amongst different groups of boaters.

Priority for mooring (ticked as 'somewhat' or 'very' important)	% of non-owners	% of owner CCers	% of owner moorers	% of all respondents
Being close to shops/supermarkets	47.0	43.8	32.6	37.1
Being close to CRT facilities	47.0	41.0	28.7	33.9
Being close to pubs, restaurants, children's playgrounds or other leisure amenities	61.2	24.0	38.5	37.2
Depth of water at the bank	78.4	86.3	84.0	84.0
Attractiveness of mooring site	83.6	69.6	84.6	80.6
Being close to public transport	22.4	40.7	19.8	25.4
Mooring rings, bollards or metal barriers	58.2	31.9	51.1	47.0

Findings: Mooring priorities

- It seems that, when choosing a mooring site, non-owners (including hire boaters) place more importance on proximity to shops/supermarkets, CRT facilities and amenities than do CCers and boat owners with home moorings. CCers are much less likely to choose moorings sites based on access to leisure amenities than either other group.
- It seems that CCers place less importance on the attractiveness of a mooring site than do non-owners and owners with home moorings.
- It appears that CCers place much greater importance on being close to public transport.
- CCers are slightly more likely to choose sites where other boats are nearby, and are slightly more likely to need appropriate sites for their pet/s.

Findings: Hypothetical options

Respondents were asked to respond to a number of hypothetical options for the waterways. These hypothetical options were:

1. “The Canal and River Trust could create new, basic, Visitor Moorings by providing mooring rings, ensuring depth at the bank, mowing the vegetation and erecting signage.”
2. “During July and August, all official CRT Visitor Moorings could be temporarily designated 24 hour moorings. For the rest of the year, they would revert to the regular local designation.”
3. “At popular CRT Visitor Moorings, the maximum duration of free mooring could be 2 days (48 hours). After the 2 days, a extended stay charge of £25 (including VAT) per day will apply.”
4. “Mooring enforcement wardens could be given the discretionary power to allow boats to remain on official CRT Visitor Moorings, free of charge, when the mooring site is quiet.”

1. “The Canal and River Trust could create new, basic, Visitor Moorings by providing mooring rings, ensuring depth at the bank, mowing the vegetation and erecting signage.”

- 70.3% of respondents were supportive of this idea.
- 14.6% of respondents did not have strong feelings about the idea, and a further 12.4% left the questions blank (total 27%)
- 2.8% were opposed to this idea.

“I'd rather they didn't if they are then going to put a restriction which is less than 14 days.”

“Keep it simple, keep costs down but we need more space with adequate depth, rings are a bonus”

“Adequate dredging would be sufficient”

“I am supportive of the idea as long as this at the very least maintains the 14 day rule.”

“Mooring rings aren't required if the Armco is there for mooring clips to fit into. Also rings aren't moveable so you end up using mooring pins (which damage the bank) if your boat doesn't line up.”

2. “During July and August, all official CRT Visitor Moorings could be temporarily designated 24 hour moorings. For the rest of the year, they would revert to the regular local designation.”

- 28.2% of respondents supported this idea
- 17.9 did not have strong feelings about the idea, and a further 13.4% left the questions blank (total 31.3%)
- 40.5% were opposed to this idea

Many of the comments suggested that 24 hours would be too short, but 48 hours would be acceptable. This would be suitable for further exploration.

“I disagree with 24 hours - but possibly 48 hours in very popular places.”

“I don't believe that ALL visitor moorings should be treated like this because boats wishing to stay in an area longer also need to moor but I would be in favour of at least some of the visitor moorings being treated in this way.”

“I think 48 hours is more realistic to give time to explore the area”

“It suits me as a hire boater but not sure it is fair for others who like to take their time.”

“Additional moorings will directly benefit the local economy of any town or village so local councils should be advised of the advantages if they are not already aware so they may be more likely to be willing to fund additional moorings in their community.”

3. “At popular CRT Visitor Moorings, the maximum duration of free mooring could be 2 days (48 hours). After the 2 days, a extended stay charge of £25 (including VAT) per day will apply.”

Response option	Number of respondents who ticked this response	Percentage of respondents who ticked this response
I am supportive of this idea and think £25 is a fair charge	287	22.3%
I am supportive of this idea but think that £25 is too high	283	22.0%
I am supportive of this idea but think that £25 is too low	33	2.6%
I am supportive of this idea year round	63	4.9%
I am supportive of this idea for peak cruising months (April to October)	245	19.1%
I am opposed to this idea	354	27.5%
I have no strong feelings about this idea	44	3.4%

NB Respondents were able to select more than one response to this question.

3. “At popular CRT Visitor Moorings, the maximum duration of free mooring could be 2 days (48 hours). After the 2 days, a extended stay charge of £25 (including VAT) per day will apply.” (cntd)

“Would support only in areas where need is proven, peak months only, much less than £25”

“This will only work if: There are regular daily patrols of the mooring including weekends There are clearly defined processes to enable visitors to remain longer in emergency situations There is a clearly defined dispute resolution process”

“The problem with "charges" is that it enables the affluent to buy privilege, but something needs to be done to deter overstaying. Until someone comes up with a more effective solution, charging seems to be the only realistic proposal.”

“Mooring for the most well off is not a good or fair system. Carefully thought out restrictions (not just blanket restrictions), and enforcement in honeypot areas would be a better option.”

“I support the general concept of a £25 charge for overstaying in any location, including non-designated locations after 14 days.”

“I have never had a problem finding a mooring so see no need to change”

4. “Mooring enforcement wardens could be given the discretionary power to allow boats to remain on official CRT Visitor Moorings, free of charge, when the mooring site is quiet.”

- 19.2% of respondents were opposed to this idea
- 10.4% did not have strong feelings and 12.8% left the question blank (total 23.2%)
- 57.7% were supportive of this idea

“How do you know if someone else wants to moor? They'd sail past presuming no availability”

“Only in cases of special need - which is already the case”

“Too messy - keep it simple - everyone or no one”

“I believe this could lend itself to unfairness but if handled well and governed properly could be beneficial.”

“I think that it is very important that local wardens have a degree of flexibility - to deal with local need.”

“This is common sense and keeps the peace.”

Findings: Hypothetical options

For boaters who most recently used a VM in summer 2013, the result of their attempt to find space at a VM seems to be related to their opinion on hypothetical changes to VMs.

Outcome at last attempt to moor at a VM	Percentage <u>in support of</u> CRT creating new, basic Visitor Moorings	Percentage <u>in support of</u> VMs being made 24hr during July and August	Percentage <u>opposed to</u> maximum 48hour moorings with a £25 extended stay charge	Percentage <u>opposed to</u> mooring warden discretion to allow boats to overstay at quiet VMs, free of charge
Able to find space at bankside	79.7	23.5	34.8	20.5
Able to find space moored alongside	76.9	30.8	38.5	26.9
Unable to find space at 1 st choice Visitor Mooring	86.3	48.9	20.9	33.1

Findings: Qualitative data – key themes

A great deal of qualitative (text-based) data has been generated. This may be fully analysed in time. In the meantime, some key themes are emerging:

- The importance of bank construction, metal piling/shuttering, management of bank erosion and vegetation overgrowth, hard surfacing preventing mooring, and safety of access from boat to bank.
- Depth of bankside
- Different mooring needs for different circumstances.
- Shortage of mooring sites on rivers.
- Perceived regional differences and the importance of being locally responsive. (Several good practice examples were given, e.g. of canal societies undertaking bank management).
- Official VMs are often not the preferred choice, provided that other local banks are available for mooring (depth and bank construction)
- Concern that new/complex rules require enforcement, whereas the rules would not be required if all towpath banks were sufficiently deep and suitably constructed for mooring.

Areas for further exploration

Some themes have emerged that would benefit from additional in-depth exploration.

1. Where VMs have qualities that are valued by both CCers (public transport) and non-owners and owner moorers (attractive sites, amenities, disabled access and rings/bollards/metal barriers), in addition to a low provision of suitable sites (lack of dredging, poor quality bankside, unsafe area) there is likely to be high demand on VMs.

Reduction in demand might be achieved by improving the accessibility of non-VM bankside and taking into account the desires of different groups.

In conjunction with the need to be locally responsive, this suggests that consultation with boaters and local canal societies is likely to produce appropriate solutions to perceived overcrowding.

Areas for further exploration

2. It would be beneficial to have greater understanding about the patterns associated with different types of mooring (overnight/tourist/shopping/short and long term) in order to ensure adequate provision of suitable sites.

In particular, attention could be paid to the obstacles to mooring off VMs, and the attractions of particular VMs. If 'honeypot' VMs are being used by people who would prefer to moor elsewhere but are unable, better knowledge might lead to cost effective solutions.

3. Further examination could be made of how boaters perceive safety of local areas when choosing a mooring site. It would also be helpful to be cognisant of actual safety issues, perhaps through liaison with local Community Policing teams, or non-statutory crime/anti social behaviour reporting channels.

As perceived mooring site behaviour is a key driver of mooring site selection, further exploration could be made of what influences the perception of safety, actual safety, and how to make improvements in mooring site safety.

Appendix

Lead researcher: Lucy Holmes

Lucy is a liveaboard boater who has moored for many years on the Grand Union Canal and now lives on the River Thames. Lucy has an MA from the University of Edinburgh and an MSc from the University of Surrey and currently works as a researcher in a national charity.

Commissioner: John Sloan

John is a liveaboard Continuous Cruiser, who has CCed for 8 years covering the complete system and has spent the last 12 months trying to ensure the voice of boaters is heard by the Canal and River Trust.