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Environment
Agency

Dr Mike Rodd
Chairman, National Association of Boat
Owners

Our ref: SPD/jb/6415

By email: nabochair@nabo.org.uk

Date: 03 November 2015

Dear Dr Rodd

Fire Extinguishers and Lock Ladders

Thank you for your email of 16 October 2015.

I appreciate that a lot of concern has been generated by these issues which is why we sent a briefing paper to Thames Navigation Users Forum members to explain the background.

We want to manage the navigation of our rivers, and especially our lock sites, to keep people safe. Like you, we hope that solutions can be found which do not put anyone, including our staff, at unnecessary risk.

We have removed fire extinguishers from lockkeepers' premises because they are not trained to use them. In these circumstances, our emphasis is on calling the emergency services and getting people away from the source of the fire, rather than to put our staff at risk by asking them to fight it. This has been the case for many years and is set in our standing instructions on how to deal with a boat fire, displayed in every lock office.

We have been considering the issue of lock ladders for many years without resolution, hence the agreement with our staff safety representatives to take external advice. The organisation with whom we consulted, Spartan Rescue, are experts in water safety and rescue and are well qualified to give an opinion on the matter.

Their advice is that it is better and safer to have equipment to assist a casualty while access is made to the lock steps and for this reason we have removed lock ladders.

I know that your representatives attend the Thames Navigation User Forum and we will be taking the proposals back to this group in due course. I feel this is the appropriate place to discuss with all user representatives for the Thames.

I do understand the concern of your members. If you would like to discuss their particular concerns further please contact Andrew Graham, Waterway Manager, who is leading on our review of this issue. You can contact Andrew on 01491828308, at andrew.graham@environment-agency.gov.uk or at Environment Agency, Shepperton Navigation Office, Lock Island, Shepperton, Middlesex TW17 9LW.

Yours sincerely

Sir Philip Dilley
Chairman

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