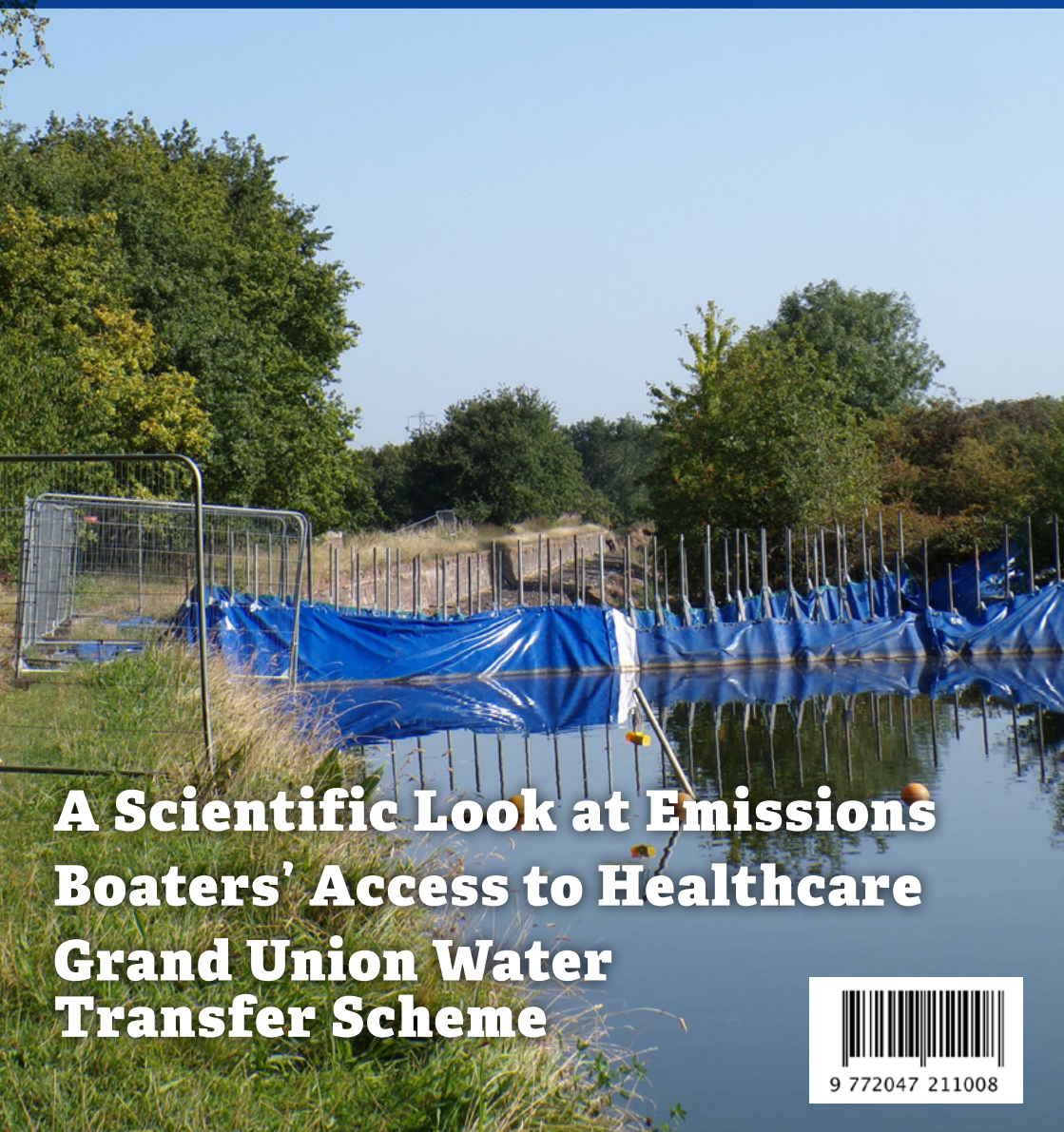




NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 4 September 2025



**A Scientific Look at Emissions
Boaters' Access to Healthcare
Grand Union Water
Transfer Scheme**



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NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

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Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, photos and cartoons are most welcome. Please email your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk or post to the Editor by 6th September 2025.

NABO Calendar 2025

13th September Zoom, 15th November face to face after AGM (provisional date) at Tamworth Cruising Club.

Cover photo

The end of navigation 2025 on the Bridgewater Canal.

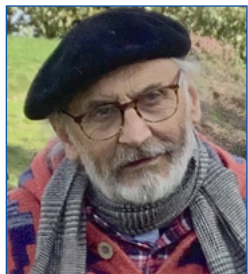
Please email your photos for the front cover of NABO News to the Editor, as JPG, ideally portrait with a file size of 5MB or larger.



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At last the subject of water, or rather the lack of it has become big news. A situation in which government can hardly claim to be uninvolved.

The quality of rivers has declined since privatisation, no great recommendation for the principle that private enterprise will always excel over publicly owned utilities. Much depends on how the organisations are run and the ethos determined by the most senior management. Is the value of a water company defined by its bottom line? Surely there should be room for the value to be expressed in terms of clean water delivered to customers and the sustainability of river quality. Whilst searching for indicators of achievement by water companies perhaps we should also be taking a look at the performance of the Trust.

Water is the driving force of all nature

Leonardo da Vinci

Editor **John Sadler**

It has certainly been cheaper for the public purse but has it produced any other benefits? Much work has been done in opening up the canal towing paths to walkers and cyclists which has helped to spread the awareness of canals, while simultaneously there has been a reduction in the amount of historic structures, largely justified by rationalising maintenance costs.

When I became a boater it opened up a new vista of industrial archeology; an array of premises that were once connected to the canal network for deliveries and transport of finished goods. Some of these businesses remain but many have

now either ceased trading or moved to new premises, which leaves a lot of canal side space. It appears that people like to live near canals even if they are not boat owners although the reality of engine noise and smoke only becomes apparent after occupation. The nature of town canals is changing, they are no longer the centre of industry. Travelling through them by boat is no longer a trip through our manufacturing history. The scent of Birmingham was probably provided by various steel works and pickling plants. I'm sure the residents of those areas are happy but the loss of steel processing plants has given the city a new identity. They used to say if an item's not made in Birmingham it's not made. The bricks of those factories now form the foundations of new housing estates as the city continues to expand. The relevance of the canal is only to provide a bit of greenery, wildlife habitat and a recreational space to be enjoyed. I'm sure that the changes in city living are welcomed by many, I still pass the empty canal entrances to long forgotten businesses with a nostalgic eye.

Meteorologists predict increasing instability of the UK climate; longer hotter periods and extreme spells of wind and rain with maybe less snow and ice in the winter. The necessity for water supply and the ability to store the winter rains will become ever more important, not only for boaters. Is there a programme of activity to ensure the resistance of the canal network to climate damage or is it doomed to follow in the footsteps of redundant industry?

In drought conditions

Chair **Anne Husar**

First to say a warm welcome to Jacqui Lund who has joined Council, bringing us up to our full quota of twelve members. We look forward to your input and hope you find your involvement interesting and absorbing.

How are your cruising plans panning out so far? Have they been scuppered by low water, exacerbated by unplanned stoppages? Certainly the closure/restriction notices are coming in thick and fast. By the way, when is a 'navigation restriction' a 'navigation closure'? Best to tick both filter boxes at the moment. With drought affected waterways you could find yourself unaware.

In a recent meeting with CRT, the rumour that they are considering closing the complete system was firmly squashed. Certainly canal feeding reservoirs are rapidly depleting, look up the August reservoir watch tables and compare with July's. Even river fed canals are suffering too, for example the Llangollen's top is even nearer the bottom because of the low level of the Dee.

Here on the Shroppie, boat movements are continuing, it's one of the few waterways that are so far unaffected although it is of course closed near Chester with the culvert collapse at Mollington.

Still, you can't have everything although maybe at some future date, boaters on the Grand Union might have. The long in the planning and now beginning to get underway Water Transfer scheme will in fact put more water in to this canal. Don't hold your breath though, works probably won't even start until 2031. Nabo's vice chair is a member of the Canal User Group for this scheme and is keeping a close eye on this project with its impact on boating. Concerns include the speed of the flow which will be introduced and possible canal closures when structures are being built. As he says, "I'm not entirely convinced that boaters will be well served by CRT with it's push to monetise water movement along the GU."

Here's hoping that wherever you are, your boat is still afloat by the end of the summer, happy cruising!





And a hello from Jacquie

I am a retired nurse spending my time in Yorkshire and on my boat which is based on the Shropshire Union. I have been interested in our navigations and the industrial revolution for a long time, particularly the advent of engine power and vintage engines, and actively boating for over 30 years.

During that time I have seen many changes, the advent of CRT, the rise in the popularity of boating and how the canals are being utilised in different ways. While there have been some improvements such as the Ribble Link overall, the infrastructure is very fragile and in need of much repair, improvement and

investment. I have seen many boater facilities fail and never be repaired.

I am also an avid walker, watcher of wildlife and interested in environmental issues.

There have been changes in social demographics, especially around our cities with more people of all ages choosing boat life.

There are many challenges ahead, funding, maintenance, licensing, and environmental. Boaters are a minority group and we need to make our views known and actioned. I am hoping to contribute in helping to preserve, develop and maintain our precious navigations.

A NABO appeal for help!

nabo.org.uk/registration



NABO is fighting battles on numerous fronts trying to keep the canal network open for as many people as possible. We are involved in discussions with CRT and EA as well as other bodies affecting the operation and continuation of navigable waterways. Sometimes we have to travel to meetings in person (expenses provided) but mostly meetings are on-line. More members would be greatly appreciated.

Full Member

This is the primary membership that covers one Full Voting Member for which the only qualification is that you are the owner of any sort of boat capable of use on the inland canals, rivers or Broads of the UK. Any or all part owners in a boat-share or syndicate scheme may also join as Single Members with individual voting rights. Cost £25 per annum.

Full Member and 1 Family member

This is the primary membership that covers one Full Voting Member and one family member for which the only qualification is that you are the owner(s) of any sort of boat capable of use on the

inland canals, rivers or Broads of the UK. Any or all part owners in a boat-share or syndicate scheme may also join as Single Members with individual voting rights.

The family member(s) are of any age who normally boats with and is associated with a nominated boat-owner who has joined as a Full Member. They are considered to be of the same household/address. Family Members are counted as Full Members as far as voting rights and membership of NABO Council are concerned. Cost £30 per annum.

Other memberships are available even to non boat owners that appreciate the work we do in preserving access to the canal network for all.

Let's get together

By Andy Williams



I'm not clairvoyant but I can safely say "I saw this coming". What coming? The disruption to boating that we're pretty much all experiencing recently.

Over a period of maybe three Springs I have thought, 'that was another unusually dry winter. If that carries on I wonder if there will be enough water to go around? I wonder if in 10, even 5, year's time will I be able to boat as I do now?'

Firstly there's the weather and on a larger scale the climate. The weather is what caught my eye those few Springs back, while for longer I've been fully aware of the realities of climate change. CRT has also been tracking the long term risks and actual impacts of climate change, their conclusion 'Our Climate Adaptation Report' was published in May 2025 (lucky timing or...). Canals are dependent on the Water Cycle. Drought equals no water to harvest so no water to share out so no water in waterways. Easy. Canals also depend on Water Cycling, ie, the notional need to put water in at one end so it can flow down hill and float boats along the way. That implies supplies 'at the top' in the forms of a continuous flow of water in at the top (like the Llangollen with water off the River Dee), a continuous return of water (by uphill pumping), or a reliable store of water that lets out the necessary water as needed and is regularly topped up. There is also water pumped out of aquifers to supply a waterway directly. And/

or various mixes of these. Every single one of these potential sources is stressed and stretched right now. With no significant rain last winter, spring reservoirs have not refilled, groundwater and aquifers are emptying and rivers are running exceptionally low. The result is inevitable and now obvious.

And I've not even mentioned 'water management', which is about getting the best out of sources as well as not wasting what there is (leaky reservoirs or canals, failing infrastructure, good boating habits, etc). So now, given the situation, it's time to get controversial...

How can CRT continue to be supportive of the renovation and reopening of old and abandoned canals (or even the establishment of new canals like the possible Milton Keynes/Bedford link) if its clear that there is already not enough water for the existing network (right now 13 miles of the Trent & Mersey are closed indefinitely)?

Is it time to have a major rethink of the feasibility of adding to the network and therefore to the volumes of water required for continuous operation. I think it is. It's fun to open up new 'ditches' but surely not at the cost of losing others? Shouldn't CRT be envisaging a halt or at least a moratorium on all canal restorations that are parasitic upon the existing and dwindling supplies? I'll leave that one with you for now, but I sincerely believe that it's something that has to be addressed.

Fly on the wall

From the minutes by **Peter Braybrook**

An almost full house settled in to talk to each other on Zoom. Malcolm Blundell was in Scotland but he sent in a report about the Thames and joined the meeting later.

Anne Husar kicked things off by introducing Jaqui Lund; a very experienced boater who joined NABO partly for support in her dealings with the navigation authorities. NABO members gave her encouragement and invited her onto the NABO Council. She was proposed as a Council member from the chair, seconded and voted to join Council by all present.

The agenda continued with a review of the Minutes from our May meeting. Arising from these we noted that Stuart Mills is going to act as Interim CEO in the gap between Richard Parry leaving and Campbell Robb's arrival. Also noted that Duncan Wright will now take responsibility for the Monthly Bulletin. The next item was the conclusion that we can do little about marina terms and conditions and had detailed this in an article in NABO News. Moorers need to beware when they negotiate their contracts.

The meeting moved onto pressing issues. The Council found that we're in limbo with CRT's Licence Commission. The survey results are in but we will never see the raw data and we have to wait for the commission's recommendations before we can really make any comment on them. A look at CRT's Better Boating Initiative highlighted the enormous task that CRT have set for themselves. In the NW alone they have about 2500 customer service issues that are being dealt with by just 21 staff. The third matter arising was Fund Britain's Waterways. Following their successful nationwide cruise there will be a review of the organisation at the next steering group meeting in September.

There was a look ahead at the forthcoming meetings with CRT. The Chair, Vice chair and General Secretary will be meeting Matthew Symonds, CRT Customer Services Manager and Alex Hennessey, Head of Boating on Monday. It will be a lively meeting. It is hoped that there will

be at least one representative of NABO at every national and regional forum that CRT publicise as the year proceeds.

CJ Green described the huge amount of activity on social media through our X(Twitter), Facebook and Bluesky accounts. There was sympathy for CRT and the drought conditions and comment on the plethora of restrictions and closures that are being announced daily. There is also continuing concern about the activities of unpowered craft in tunnels and on aqueducts, particularly the Pontcysyllte. A group of canoeists was reported to have recently stopped without warning in front of a narrowboat to take some photos. Narrowboats cannot stop suddenly, there is potential for a serious accident.

Our Welfare Officer, Ken reported that there are increasing numbers of cases where boaters with disability are being asked to move without consideration for their particular conditions. He asked anyone with concerns to contact him.

An important Vacancy within the Boat Safety Scheme was discussed. This is for a Convenor for the Technical Committee. Details of the role are available and the Council asked whether there might be someone among the membership with the necessary skills to ensure that matters were discussed fairly and squarely without preference to any particular interest group.

Council also received a proposal from the Editor of NABO News to reduce the number of issues from the current six per year to four "seasonal" issues. The quarterly magazine would be slightly larger: 32 pages rather than 28 and could include more in depth articles. Council was happy with the idea.

Any Other Business brought up the topic of Membership. Council agreed to look at this topic in depth at the Annual General Meeting in November. Another topic discussed were the reeds on the Leicester Line. Reeds are now impeding navigation in many places but CJ had noticed that the Leicester Line was particularly bad. This will be taken up with the Regional Management.

From our members

By **Duncan Wright**

Our summer has been affected numerous times this year for a number of different reasons. Sometimes the outcome has been good, sometimes not so good.

Firstly, before our departure, the planned Fund Britain's Waterways crossing of the Wash, was put back by over two weeks by the EA closing Boston Barrier.

Secondly we arrived at the Vazon bridge a day later than originally planned, due to the above giving us much more time, only to discover it had failed the previous evening. This had a happy ending because it gave us the opportunity to make our Trent passage out of Goole Docks via Trent Falls to Torksey. An adventure to tell the grandkids! (Not that we have any).

Next, our time on the Anglian Waterways had to be cut short when we learned that CRT were planning to close the Leicester Line because of the drought and low water levels.

Any thoughts of heading further south had, by this time, already been shelved because of low water levels across the network.

At the time of writing our plans have yet again taken a hit since a paddle failure on the Foxton locks has forced its closure. We had intended to go down the flight in two days.

As it stands at the moment, we don't know if we'll be able to get the boat home before the autumn, or whether we'll just have to leave it in a marina somewhere.



News from the Thames

By **Malcolm Blundell**

Lock keepers are still scarce on the river, maintenance is no better, in fact vegetation cutting back does not seem to have taken place, the EA have prioritised lock islands instead. Sight lines are poor in many places and wide beams will struggle.

Pump outs have failed and need lock keepers present (not so often).

The water level is lower than we have seen it in eight years. However from Northmoor upriver to St John's (Lechlade) it's normal as extraction takes place at Farmoor reservoir so downriver

from Northmoor is low by about 3 inches on the time of year on average. In our mooring in Oxford we are sat on the bottom but can get off with a push. Passage is still very possible but some moorings are too shallow for deeper drafted boats.

We have stayed away the July/August madness around Windsor. A new trend appears to be some boaters just abandoning their boats in choice mooring spots and leaving them locked up whilst they are elsewhere, rather than using a marina.

Is there a future for charity-run public trip boats?

By **Mike Rodd**

Canal charities up and down the country are having to decide how to cope with ever-rising operating costs for their trip boats, which in some cases are now threatening their actual viability.

As a previous chair of the K&A Canal Trust and an MCA registered Boatmaster on the Trust's hugely successful *Rose of Hungerford*, I am only too well aware of the problems facing us. Tom Rolt wrote his famous book "Narrowboat" – which made the case for canal restoration – whilst sitting on his small boat in Hungerford during the Second World War.

Suitably inspired, the K&A Canal Trust was largely responsible for restoring the canal, and still contributes to it by supporting various important visitor attractions along its length, complementing CRT's work of managing and maintaining the canal itself. The premier visitor site is the historically unique, but costly, Crofton pumping station.

Image Crofton, This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

This is the only remaining steam-driven beam engine in the world still doing what it was designed to do 200 years ago: when it runs (typically over long weekends), it still takes over the provision of the bulk of the canal's water supply. The Trust also runs a canal museum in Devizes in the only remaining canal-side warehouse, as well as the unique water-driven

pumping station at Claverton (near Bath), and many other historically important buildings and structures – including the 300-year-old loo at Aldermaston. The income is also used to support the four amazing Bruce boats for disabled passengers, based in Great Bedwyn.

Operational costs are, like many canal charities, reliant very heavily on the income generated by public trip boats. Four of the five K&A Canal Trust boats are MCA licensed, each carrying around 40 passengers on regular public trips, as well as being available for very popular charters, manned by our crews. The boats are totally volunteer run for crewing the trips, and also for most of the maintenance and overall boat upkeep.

Over the past year, however, we have seen incredible cost increases in all aspects of the trip boats, over and above normal running costs for diesel and oil, cleaning materials and of course, gas – largely used for on-board passenger drink and food provision.

Firstly, CRT's licence fees have been increased this year as well as our mooring cost in Hungerford – together giving us underlying costs of over £6000 per annum, before expenses. It is clear that these fees will continue to increase.

The four larger trip boats are regulated (and inspected) by the MCA. This cost has also increased, largely because the *Rose* now requires an additional ~£3,000 annual out-of-water inspection because of its age.



So, rather than recognising the amazing work done by the K&A Canal Trust, both now and in the past, CRT have decided uncharitably, to grab a large chunk of the money raised by us, the volunteers! That's sheer madness, especially if it pushes us over the edge of economic viability and finally slays the golden goose!

Comment from the Canal & River Trust

Mike Rodd lists the increasing costs of operating the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust's public trip boats. We recognise the increasing costs for all charities, the Canal & River Trust included. At a time when govern-

ment funding is reducing, the cost of maintaining the canal network is increasing.

Unlike the other costs listed by Mike, licence or mooring fees paid to the Trust are costs that contribute towards keeping the K&A in working order – helping to fund the cost of keeping open over 100 locks, plus the spectacular aqueducts, as well as the many sluices and swing bridges and the actual line of the canal itself. So, whilst we offer an extensive discount for qualifying charity operators – 60% off the standard business boat licence fee – we must also raise the funds needed to ensure there is a navigable K&A for trip boats to operate on.

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A social media bonanza?

Sue Tonious

The Canal and River Trust have certainly embraced the possibilities of social media to an extent that I've not noticed any other UK navigation authority doing. Faceache, the ubiquitous 'X' of twitter righter than right wing fame, Instagram and even that well regarded and serious platform TikTok have all been regularly utilised by a team specifically set up for the purpose. There are regular posts displaying all the propaganda 'p' words of praise, promotion, pleading, publicity, but never the 't' words, truthfulness, transparency and reality (yes, I know that starts with an 'r').

And what a successful method it is with their many thousands of followers to naysay what a few thousand boaters, who actually have first hand experience of the state of the waterways, are saying. So easy to cast concerned boaters in the role of CRT bashers, moaners, non-contributors when all their photos show idyllic scenes with self-congratulatory descriptions.

And now, an increasing use of the social media begging bowl, otherwise known as crowdfunding, for donations which 'can' or 'could' help

with maintaining failing structures, or put another way, structures that have been failed by CRT. Is this a way of simply topping up the general maintenance pot, the wording certainly never states unambiguously that it isn't, or just a lazy way of fund raising?

Example

'Built in 1815, we're inviting the public to help repair and restore the Grade II Listed Tardebigge Top Lock, part of the longest flight of locks in the UK, after one of its historic 210-year-old brick-built walls bowed and was at risk of collapse.

The restoration of the lock is needed to ensure this important piece of canal heritage is protected and for the continued safe passage of boats as well as for the thousands of walkers and cyclists who use the towpath and marvel at the locks each year.'

The Canal & River Trust (CRT) has already spent around half a million pounds of charitable funds on the Tardebigge lock rebuild, the trust expects to invest between up to £2 million in the overall restoration work. A Crowdfunder campaign has raised over £10,000 to support the restoration efforts.

The continuing saga of Nantwich Bank on the Shropshire Union.

A Statement From CRT

"Nantwich embankment slippage - 11 boreholes have been drilled at a 10m depth plus 6 hand cut pits. Soil samples from these are now being examined and a plan to prevent more slippage will be formed from the results."

It does appear to be totally CRT's responsibility.

BSS requires convenor

The structure of the BSS organisation has been changed extensively over the past year, and instead of effectively being run as part of CRT, it is now an independent company. This Forum reports to the Advisory Forum and through that to the BSS Ltd Directors, who in the end have to approve all actions.

One of the roles of the Technical Forum Convenor is to keep the “groups” who make up the Forum working together, who often will have very different agendas. These groups represent the navigation authorities, the BSS inspectors, the marine trade, and the users (of which we are one of four organisations involved).

Whilst the Forum spends some time on handling matters raised by boaters or boating organisations regarding aspects which have been failed or raised during inspections, the key work involves examining all aspects of the BSS

requirements which inspectors have to examine against.

There are presently serious issues being raised for example by forthcoming requirements (arising from the related international standards body) regarding the inspection of systems where boats have voltages higher than 12 or 24 volts, and how these systems should be inspected, by whom and what are the consequences are as to whom can do an appropriate inspection. They are also having to deal with all issues raised by the increased use on boats of lithium batteries.

It is important to note that the convenor does not have to be an expert in any specific area but does have to be able to appreciate and handle conflicting views. For example, there also is a present issue regarding how often a BSS inspection should take place.



CRT's promise to keep canals open for boating

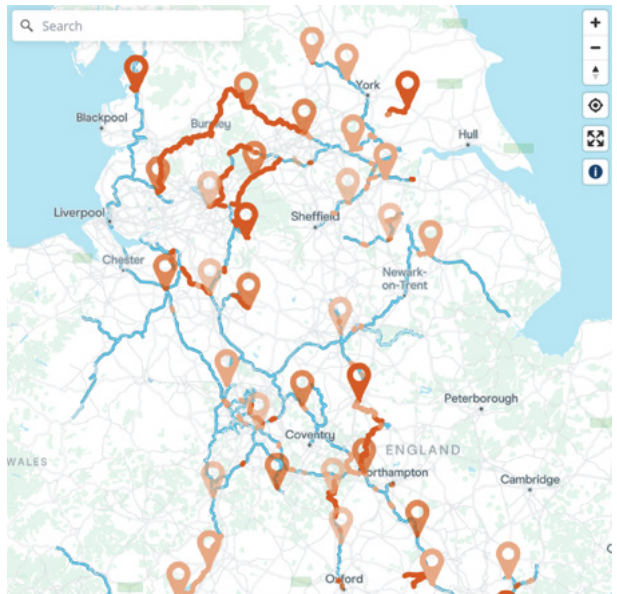
“We will demonstrate to boaters that keeping our canals open for navigation is at the heart of what we do.”

Sadly it continues to look like hot weather paralysis to most boaters.

Closed to navigation at the time of writing:

Difficult to keep up - just use canalrivertrust.org.uk/notices. Navigators are further hindered by the breach of the Bridgewater Canal, not under CRT. Not scheduled to re-open until the end of 2026.

Sadly a campaign to highlight the need for it to re-open has had to be cancelled because of the difficulty of navigating to the site.



CRT's Better Boating plan

This has been a real success, or at least I've not had a single response to the contrary.

NABO spends a lot of time and money publishing the NABO News, but it's failing to get responses from members. If you spot failures or improvements, have any comments drop a line to feedback@nabo.org.uk or nabonews@nabo.org.uk we would love to hear from you.

Getting the basics right

Boating should feel easier, with locks and swing bridges better maintained and easier to use. There should also be fewer unplanned stoppages that disrupt cruising. *Difficult to judge with lack of water causing so many stoppages.*

CRT will fix all outstanding broken paddles by spring 2026 and set a target from April 2025 to repair any paddle faults arising as soon as possible (but no longer than four weeks). *While Wolverhampton 21 is closed for lack of water, there's three paddles towards the top that are out of action. Good opportunity to fix them.*

CRT will target more resources on planned preventative maintenance (PPM), prioritising re-greasing and clearing vegetation at locks and swing/lift bridges in the spring and early summer ahead of the busier period of boating. *I have noticed an improvement in greasing around the West Midlands.*

CRT will spend more delivering improved grass-cutting in 2025/26. They will also review where and when they cut grass – ensuring grass is cut at locks and mooring sites and cutting more towpaths to the water's edge, making it easier for boaters. *Has happened selectively but there's still places where you can't see the mooring bollards approaching a lock and bridges where the passage through is obscured on both sides.*

Boater facilities

Combatting overflowing bins and fly tipping will improve the experience of using these facilities.

CRT will review refuse collections at their busiest sites to reduce overflowing bins and take measures to help tackle fly-tipping.

If water, Elsan or pump-out boater facilities break, CRT will fix them promptly.



Better communication & customer service

The Trust want to make it easier for boaters to tell them if there is a problem so that they can fix it. Being able to find up-to-date information is important, so they'll improve the communication and customer service providing more opportunities to meet and talk with them.

CRT will develop a Boater App to make it easier for boaters to access the online services provided, when and where they want. Our target: We'll launch the first version of our app by April 2026.

Here's CRT's summary of what's been happening:

- Lucy Blyth (IT project manager) has been appointed project manager.
- The app project was presented to and approved by the Technology Appraisal Group.
- A series of workshops with teams across the Trust (operations, contract managers, customer services, IT) will map out the current fault reporting and feedback processes, to scope what could be automated through the app.

Then, with regard to delivery:

- An Invitation to Tender (ITT) has been sent to 7 external providers, including existing Trust systems developers Enigma, CGI & Concurrent.
- Fix My Street have been included in the ITT to explore an 'off the shelf' approach.
- CRT's Web & Geographic Information System (GIS) teams are also scoping internal development and maintenance options based on existing resource.

The internal and external development options will be reviewed following the August submission deadline. The timeline discussed at our last meeting remains within our grasp.

National boat count 2025

The Canal & River Trust's National Boat Count, conducted across the charity's waterways each year, has seen a 1.5% increase in boat numbers together with an increase in unlicensed boats, with evasion standing at 9.9%.

Ed: does that include all the boats that display no name number or licence?

Nationally, 33,080 boats were recorded on the Trust's enforceable waters. The most populous regions, London & South East and the West Midlands, saw increases of 3.5% and 3.6% respectively. Numbers of boats without home moorings increased by 11.9% (to 8,519 boats), while boats with home moorings declined by 1.8% (to 23,889 boats)**. Approximately 92% of boats with home moorings are licensed compared to 84% of boats without home moorings. As a charity, the Trust uses the income from licensing to help fund lock repairs, provide boater facilities, and maintain canals for navigation and, following the creation of a new national licence, compliance and enforcement team last September, the Trust has pledged to address unlicensed boats faster. The team has been restructured to streamline case management and is improving customer communication, for example reminding boaters about shortly lapsing Boat Safety Certificates, with lapses commonly causing boats to become unlicensed and fall into the enforcement process.

With the difficult economic climate felt to be an increasing contributor to boats becoming unlicensed, the Trust's welfare support

has been strengthened, with boaters in need signposted to financial assistance for support with licence payments, such as Universal Credit.

The effectiveness of this new approach has been born out in London, which saw a reduction in licence evasion, from 17.9% to 15.5%, for the first time since 2018.

Alex Hennessey, national boating manager at Canal & River Trust, said: "We're seeing the harsh realities of the cost-of-living crisis play out on the waterways. More people have turned to life afloat or taking to continuously cruising but, for some, the financial and practical challenges of boating are proving difficult to manage.

"We're doing everything we can to support boaters who are struggling, and we urge people to talk to us early. Our welfare and customer support teams are helping people navigate complex situations, whether that's applying for benefits, getting boats safety certified, or simply staying compliant.

"As a charity we rely on income from boat licences to help fund the essential work needed to keep the canal network open and safe. While we help those who need assistance, where someone simply chooses not to license their boat, we'll be doubling down and taking enforcement action."

Despite the licence, compliance and enforcement team's best efforts to resolve matters, on occasion, when all other avenues have been exhausted, the Trust takes action to remove boats. In the last financial year, 101 boats were removed from the network that were abandoned and/or unlicensed.

July 2025 Explorer cruise

Birmingham Canal Navigation Society (BCNS)

By The Editor

Not normally given to travelling with other boats this cruise was an experiment for us.

The stated aims of the cruise were to give the group confidence to return to Birmingham and boating independently in this area, a sense of the history and development of the BCN and its supporting infrastructure. Not least to increase the number of boats visiting the less used parts of the BCN and promote links between the BCNS and other canal related groups e.g. CRT, LBC, Dudley Canal Trust.

The cruise was organised by Brenda Ward and led by Stephen and Barbara Busby on board *The Shrew*. Eight other narrow boats: *Sonflower*, *Stamford*, *Churwell Force*, *Swinging the Lead*, *Ginally*, *Thryce*, *Matariki* took part. Sadly four of the expected participants could not avoid the various problems of navigating their way to Birmingham.

The group moored near the



Bradley Workshops



Roundhouse in central Birmingham and met for introductions, briefing and a buffet at The Distillery. It was a hot and noisy evening somewhat restricting conversation. The next day we cruised the route of the Old Main Line, taking in Oozells Street, Icknield Port and Soho Loops. We then turned right at Smethwick Junction and ascended three Smethwick locks, assisted by BCNS volunteer lock wheelers and were shown around Galton (Smethwick New) pumping station by Wayne Sivers, who had a mine of information dispensed with his beautiful Black Country accent.

Continuing along the Old Main Line and crossing the New Main Line on Steward Aqueduct, we moored at John the Lock and Coronation Garden moorings in Tipton. The evening meal was at Mad O'Rourke's Pie Factory.

The next day there was a Boat trip into Dudley Tunnels, followed by a cruise turning right at Deepfields Junction onto Wednesbury Oak Loop and mooring in the basin outside the Canal and River Trust Bradley workshops, where apparently boaters are welcome to moor.

On the next morning we had a guided walk along the line of Bradley Locks, led by Gavin Hawkins of Bradley Canal Restoration Society. It's a short length of canal and nine locks to restore to reopen the link to Moorcroft Junction. Despite the top end being built over, most of the land still belongs to CRT.

This was followed by an eagerly awaited tour of the CRT lock making workshop. The expertise and machinery required to fashion large pieces of English oak into lock gates was eye-opening. Some of the equipment was aging but the CNC plasma machine could only have been dreamt about by earlier workers. We were pleased to hear that



output is planned to increase and that apprentices were being taken on.

The Nickeodeon

We then negotiated the Wyrley and Essington Canal to moor in the Bentley Arm with dinner at the Nickelodeon.

The 'Curly Wyrley' provided plenty of entertainment, mostly down the weed hatch. While travelling we received the notification that Rushall Locks were closed, so took a break at Sneyd Junction CSF and discussed options before turning left at Birchills Junction for dinner and overnight mooring at Fingerpost.

Some of the group left early the next day to explore the Cannock Extension Arm. With Rushall Locks closed, the flotilla retraced its steps to Birchills then descended Walsall Locks. Despite the change of schedule, BCNS volunteers turned up to assist with locks. Eventually, following some help removing debris from preventing one of the gates closing, we moored in Walsall basin. A much under used and underrated facility. Several people used bus or taxi to get to Longwood Boat Club, which had been on the original schedule, where BCNS historian Phil Clayton



Mooring in Walsall basin

gave a talk. Dog owners stayed in Walsall with their pets as the weather was too hot.

On another hot morning the first flotilla of boats cruised along the Walsall Canal to traverse the section that had been closed for ten months following a serious chemical spill. An opportunity to do a photo-shoot with Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) banners. Later we all moored at Ocker Hill, once the power station capital of the Black Country.

Sonflower, which had been stranded in Birmingham with a seized gearbox, then joined the group. Several boaters went to help them down Ryders Green Locks. A sociable evening cheered us up for the next challenge; ascending the

eight Ryders Green Locks, again assisted by volunteers from BCNS. After some careful water management we reached the top, turned right at Pudding Green Junction onto the New Main Line, left at Dudley Port Junction and moored for lunch. We then passed through Netherton Tunnel (3,027 yards) and moored at Bumble Hole near Windmill End. We had a guided walk, led by Bumble Hole Nature Reserve trustee Brenda who also collected the pre-ordered fish and chips, eagerly consumed by us and the Bumble Hole volunteers.

On the last full day we cruised back through Netherton Tunnel and onto the New Main Line, this time turning right onto the Gower Branch and ascending Brades Locks, left on the Old Main Line, then at Oldbury Junction (under the motorway), sharp right onto the Titford Canal, up the six Oldbury Locks, aka 'The Crow', mooring near Titford Pumpouse. Some boats then continued on to explore Titford Pools, another opportunity for photos with FBW banners.

Image Titford, The pools had been recently dredged, but not the canal approach, so deeper drafted boats chose not to risk it, some of the boaters walking to the pools to take photos. The evening concluded with an excellent Chinese takeaway and entertainment with songs and spoken word by Black Country dialect performer Billy Spakemon.

Friends were made on this trip. Although we had explored some of the canals before it was great to get the history that is not always apparent. We certainly did increase the boat traffic, and found a welcome everywhere but particularly in Walsall basin where people were really pleased to see boats again. We'll be back when there's water in the canals.

Titford Pools

Photo Stephen Busby



Obituary

Gordon Thompson

By friends and relations

Brenda Ward of the BCNS

Many of you will not have heard of Gordon Thompson, time is unkind in that way, but for many years especially in the 1970s & 80s he was a good friend and member of the Society. Gordon was for a time editor of Boundary Post and vice chairman as well as organising rallies at Wednesfield junction and central Birmingham.

Gordon Thompson was a great contributor to Boundary Post during the years I was editor, with cartoons, photographs, several items of interest, photos for the picture quiz and solving them and a painting or two.

Gordon's son Quentin

who informed me of his death:

I am so sorry to report that Gordon died on 22nd June at home with his family. He was 93 and had been fighting various forms of cancer for many years.

His interest in canals began in the 1960s whilst living in Pelsall. He told me once he watched a train of coal boats being towed towards Walsall whilst on his way to work.

Gordon was very keen to introduce children and later students to the local canals. Working at the West Midlands College of Higher Education he became involved with canals at Ken Keay's yard in Walsall taking art students to the yard and on canal trips to sketch and paint.

He had a wooden canal boat called Linguist converted at the yard and spent the 1970s onwards cruising the BCN and further afield.

Keith Eley

Keith was a contemporary of Gordon, who served on the BCNS



Committee at the same time as Gordon. One of Gordon's Classes

"Many thanks for the sad news regarding Gordon Thomson. I knew Gordon from the early 70's onwards as a fellow BCNS member, but also as a Skipper with the Walsall Youth Leaders Council boats "H F Truman" and "Usk". He was very active in that role and as leader of groups he took afloat on the "H F Truman."

I remember "Linguist" being converted, I think from a butty back-end. Ken Keay gave her one of his square counters he had fitted on a number of new and converted boats (including the Truman) and fitted a twin cylinder Lister under the back deck.

I will always remember Gordon as a gentle but very effective exponent of the BCN to so many people of different ages; undoubtedly many later enthusiasts could trace their interest back to the time Gordon talked with them or took them afloat.

A painting of the Top Lock Bentley Canal, by Gordon Thompson



Safety concerns grow at Pontcysyllte

Concerns at Pontcysyllte
Photos: David Bramley

Experiences are being marketed by several companies, promoting crossing the aqueduct as a safe trip for novice canoeists. In these sales it mentions quiet water but nothing about having to share the space with big and potentially dangerous moving metal objects.

Bit like selling the M5 as a great smooth place for rollerskating. From a narrow boater's view, "We crossed last year and the canoes were like trying not to shoot fish in a barrel. We waited for a good dozen canoes to dawdle across the aqueduct, a trip boat waiting to cross behind us, two hire boats not too far behind, another six canoes, one with youngish children trying to push in front. We eventually crossed, the canoes that had dawdled now wanted to turn, right beside three boats wanting to cross who'd been waiting for them to pass, another trip boat coming towards us all having turned to return. Chaos... an accident waiting to happen. As a boat owner and an experienced navigator of 20 years, I have crossed the aqueduct many times, but would rethink going over in that mix."

From Andy NABO Vice-Chair

In peak times the poor Pontcysyllte Aqueduct now more resembles a theme park like Alton Towers Water Park than a venerable and historic World Heritage Site.

Yes, it's an attraction, yes it needs some tourists but there are disasters waiting to happen (and near-misses already happening). NABO is preparing a detailed report on incidents and experiences on the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct this season and will be presenting CRT with their findings and with concrete proposals for improvements to the safety and management of passages across the aqueduct. We want to see a situation where all craft and pedestrians have a safe and enjoyable experience.



Mentions in the Houses

House of Commons

Andrew Rosindell Shadow Parliamentary Under Secretary (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs) asked the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to improve navigation assets along the non-tidal Thames.

Emma Hardy Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs responded: The Environment Agency (EA) maintains its non-tidal Thames Navigation assets through the combination of a capital investment programme to deliver major refurbishment projects, and a revenue maintenance programme which sustains the safe day-day operations of these assets.

During 2025/26 the EA are investing £16.3 million on the highest priority lock refurbishment projects to benefit their navigation customers and will support the vital retention of the River Thames water resource through the refurbishment of specific weirs.

The EA's future investment programme has identified approximately £18 million of investment need over the next 5 years to progress more lock and weir refurbishments. This programme also focuses on the operational reliability

of the navigation assets and is planning to upgrade 22 lock operation systems, which are the main source of temporary lock breakdowns. The EA will bid for the identified funding as part of the government's spending review process.

In a separate debate Emma Hardy confirmed:

The water industry is failing. Our rivers, lakes and seas are polluted with record levels of sewage. Water pipes have been left to crumble into disrepair. We share customers' fury at rising bills. The lack of water infrastructure is blocking economic growth and a broken regulatory system has failed customers and failed the environment.

This Government is committed to delivering the bold and necessary reforms needed to fix our water sector. Our priority is to restore our rivers, lakes and seas to good ecological health, and to put in place a planning framework that works for the environment, the public, and future generations. This Government was elected to clean up water pollution and ensure unacceptable water bill hikes can never happen again. The report of the Independent Water Commission published yesterday proposes how to do this, and the Government will set out our response in the next Parliamentary session.



Andrew Rosindell



Emma Hardy

Grand Union water transfer scheme

By **Andy Williams** NABO Vice Chair

Affinity Water has issued a preliminary market engagement notice, signalling the start of an early market consultation for this nationally significant infrastructure initiative, anticipated to be worth in the order of £500M.

The Grand Union Canal Transfer is a collaborative effort involving Affinity Water, Severn Trent Water and the Canal & River Trust, the charity responsible for the upkeep of the canal network across England and Wales. The project seeks to leverage the existing canal infrastructure alongside new water treatment works, pumping stations, transfer pipelines and environmental mitigation measures to provide a more sustainable and reliable water supply. It also aims to reduce reliance on current sources, including vulnerable chalk stream habitats, while ensuring continued water availability for canal navigation.

The solution's deployable output will be 50Ml/d by 2031/32, with the potential for a further 50 Ml/d by 2040-2050 if required. Flow will be transferred from Severn Trent's new Advanced Water Treatment Plant at Minworth via a new pipeline over approximately 20km to a discharge point into the Coventry Canal. For much of its length, the transfer will flow along the existing canal network using gravity, making use of pumping stations and by-passes as necessary. The water will then be abstracted at Leighton Buzzard for treatment.

The Grand Union Canal Transfer, designated a project of national significance, will be delivered through Ofwat's Direct Procurement for Customers (DPC) programme, which aims to introduce competitive delivery models for water infrastructure.

The issuance of the market engagement notice is a request for information, seeking to draw on expertise from infrastructure investors, construction and engineering firms, operations and maintenance specialists, as well as joint ventures or consortia. Affinity Water's goal is to gauge market capability, understand potential delivery models and associated risks, and identify innovations that could enhance project outcomes. The feedback will be used to inform the procurement strategy and refine the commercial, technical, and delivery framework.

Key considerations outlined in the consultation include technical feasibility, financial structuring, operational requirements, risk allocation, environmental and regulatory factors, and any potential barriers to market entry. Affinity Water emphasises an open, fair and transparent competitive process, aiming to secure a value-oriented solution consistent with the long-term national objectives for water resilience.

The Grand Union Canal Transfer project represents a critical infrastructure advancement, responding to growing water demand pressures in the Southeast while emphasising

environmental stewardship. It highlights an innovative approach that integrates traditional waterway assets with modern engineering and financing practices to foster sustainability and resilience in the UK's water sector.

As this early stage of the scheme's development, stakeholders and market participants will have the opportunity to contribute insights that shape a transformative water transfer scheme intended to serve millions and protect vital natural habitats for decades to come.

Severn Trent's Minworth Strategic Resource Option (SRO)

Severn Trent has also engaged the market on development of its Minworth SRO which could tie into the Grand Union Canal Transfer.

The Minworth SRO will encompass the construction of an Advanced Water Treatment Plant on Severn Trent's existing Minworth site and transfer via an underground pipeline to an outfall into the Coventry Canal at Atherstone.

NABO's concerns

A current core topic is the likely flows in the 'enhanced' canal, including how they and the increased volumes may affect things like water profile.

That's important as it links to possible needs to raise banks. Or maybe other approaches. Another approach has been proposed, the use of so-called 'Transfer Locks'. They look rather like the locks seen on the River Nene. There could be three of these, in the three longest pounds. Talk of such an approach

starts to ring alarm bells in my head. The first is disruption during their construction. Second is disruption when in use (although it's claimed they'd only be used very infrequently). Third are the flows they refer to when operation of such locks may be appropriate. 80 million litres per day "in times of severe drought". That's a lot. For comparison the flow on the Llangollen Canal is 55 million litres per day. That equals roughly 630 litres per second. It's a flow that is more than just 'perceptible', it's significant. The maximum rate envisaged for certain locations along the GU has the potential to significantly change the boating experience. The tunnels on the GU are all two-way and I for one would not like to be fighting crab wise across a current with another boat bearing down on me on the higher downstream flow.

These are the sort of details that we need to carefully monitor and respond to. I'm not entirely convinced that boaters will be well served by CRT with it's push to monetise water movement along the GU.

The meeting also spoke a lot about the efforts being taken to build a social case for this project. It feels like lessons have been learnt from the disaster that is HS2. And it is to be appreciated that this is also a major civil engineering programme that once started (which seems pretty likely) will gain momentum and governmental support. It is, after all, about making sure the Capital City has enough water in 2050.

The next meeting will be in November.

Grounding advice from RCR

Follow River Canal Rescue on Facebook or visit rivercanalrescue.co.uk

River Canal Rescue (RCR) is warning boaters about the risks of grounding after receiving 40+ calls in a six-week period, prompting a higher than usual number of call-outs.

From 1 June to 11 July, rescue co-ordinators have been giving on the phone assistance to one or two people a day, and while many callers are then able to move their boats, around 40% require intervention from CRT or support from a rescue team.

Low water levels, sand banks and underwater obstacles are causing problems in a number of areas including: the Hatton locks, Caldon Canal, Oxford Canal, Grand Union, Trent & Mersey and River Nene. By 10 July, the CRT had posted 15 alerts on its online stoppage map, detailing navigation and lock closures, restrictions and areas where water levels were at their lowest and more closures since then.

If a boat runs aground, RCR will liaise with the CRT, to check low water levels are causing the stoppage, and CRT will endeavour to move the boat (if it can't be moved by the caller). If CRT is unavailable or other issues are identified, RCR will despatch a team. This type of event is usually covered by a fully comprehensive insurance policy.

Low water levels are also putting drive systems under pressure. Without the depth to ensure smooth travel through water, the load transfers to the drive system, resulting in gearboxes overheating, and a higher risk of hitting/catching something underwater, causing damage to drive plates and couplings.

RCR reports gearbox, coupling

and drive plate issues have risen by 50% in some cases, when compared to the same period last year. From 1 June to 11 July, 11 gearboxes, 16 drive plates and 7 couplings were replaced; in 2024, it was 5 gearboxes, 11 drive plates and 6 couplings.

RCR managing director, Stephanie Horton, advises keep the revs down: "If you're on a canal and you find the boat is not moving as fast as usual, and water levels look low, DON'T simply increase your speed, be patient and wait until the water levels increase or you can get through a lock to a better location. Speed on low water puts pressure on drive systems."

Weed is another problem across the network, impacting propellers and blocking intakes of raw water-fed boats and outboards.

RCR grounding advice:

- Put on a life jacket and put your boat in reverse to see if you can move away from the obstruction. If this doesn't work, walk around the vessel testing the surrounding water depth with a boat pole. This will pinpoint where the water's shallower and where the problem is. On rivers you can usually see it - rocks or gravel for example - as the water's clearer.
- If the front of the boat's grounded, move some of the ballast that may be holding it down. The water tank is always at the front of a narrowboat so turn on the taps to empty it and move heavy items such as gas bottles, the anchor and any chains to the rear - this will give the boat more buoyancy at the front and potentially lift it a vital few inches which may be

all it needs to clear itself. Half a ton of water can create a six-inch difference. If it does clear, put the boat in reverse.

- If the boat's grounded on one side, it's a similar scenario; move anything that's weighing it down in this area to the opposite side. Do this in cautious stages - if you over-balance, the vessel will list and it could end up taking on water.
- If there are people onboard, position yourself at the helm and ask the remainder to rock the boat gently; the momentum may move it. If the rear of the boat's aground and the propeller's lifted (which is a rare scenario), you'll probably need a tow.
- While it's tempting to ask a pass-

ing boater for a tow, this should only be undertaken by an experienced boater. We've had cases where the person towing the vessel has got into trouble and we've ended up rescuing two boats. Also, if you're on a hire boat, you'll invalidate their insurance if they try to tow you, so it's better not to put them in that position in the first place.

- If you are able to free your vessel, check it thoroughly at the first possible opportunity – particularly the hull – as this could have been damaged.

Stephanie concludes: "With more closures expected across the system, check your route before starting a journey, and go slow when water levels are low."

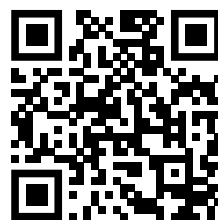
BOATERS' ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

Researchers from Keele University want to talk to liveaboard boaters about their experiences of NHS services, including going to the GP. It is vital that we listen to liveaboard boaters in order to plan the very best research possible to improve services and access to healthcare.

If you are a liveaboard boater, we invite you to share your experiences with us by completing an anonymous online survey. You do not need to answer all the questions.

Use the QR code to access the survey
or this URL forms.office.com/e/fAJKTAfDj2

If you would prefer to email your experiences or would like further information, please contact us at
FMHS.Boaters@keele.ac.uk



A scientific approach to emissions

How are we going to get to net zero?

David Fletcher examines possibilities for liveaboard boaters.

Net zero is the plan to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to a point where what small emissions we do make are offset by 'other means', so the balance is zero.

The requirements for electric vehicles are all part of this. We know that the Department for Transport (DfT) is looking at inland waterways, with the obvious political push to make all boats fully electric. But is that possible with the current technology, and what should we do to manage this? We suspect that the boating life style is low carbon, but is that really true? And if we have to make changes, are these behavioural, higher cost of fuel, or based on perhaps expensive modifications to our craft.

NABO has recently supported the consultants Ricardo who are working for DfT to understand the energy usage on inland waterway craft. Hourly fuel consumptions are well known for all sorts of equipment but what is less well known is how much the boat-engines, heaters and cookers etc are used and what fuels are used. We have helped Ricardo with a simple survey running during August in the hope we can get some statistically meaningful numbers. The objective is to understand the carbon footprint print of boating. This is the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions direct and indirect from fossil fuels. We know that other pollutants are involved, but for sim-

plicity here we only consider CO₂.

We all have a personal annual budget of CO₂ and this estimate gives a representation of a basic narrow boat, without exotic hardware. Obviously if you run a car, or fly to Spain for Christmas, this is also part of your budget, but I cannot help there. In this model, the diesel engine provides propulsion, electric power at 12V and heating for hot water. LPG is used for cooking, and a solid fuel stove burning smokeless fuel. There is no hook up and no powerful 240V for white goods. It is single occupied full time as a live aboard and the engine runs 1000 hours per year. Propulsion fuel is red diesel for which tax is paid on the HMRC assumption of 60 percent for propulsion and 40 percent untaxed.

From this model the annual CO₂ budget is about 8 tons, with the largest part taken up as expected by fuel for heating and propulsion. The average budget for UK residents is 10 tons, so the first thing to do is to get a lodger, because that halves the footprint from the boat. But setting that aside...

Let us look at three ways to change the footprint as an example of what can be done. We are going to measure changed behaviours, fuels and hardware in the imaginary model to find what might work for you. One solution will not suit everyone, because we have different needs and lifestyles. We will look at annual cost, costs for new hard-

ware, reduction of the CO₂ budget, and the cost per tonne of CO₂ over the hardware lifetime. These give a measure of the value of the change, and whether it is good investment in your circumstances.

So let us assume we change from red diesel to HVO. This fuel change comes at an extra cost, but we can assume that there is a much lower CO₂ emission (up to 90%), the annual cost in pounds per tonne of CO₂ is attractive and supports the path to net zero. The extra cost over a year is £900 (this is a lot) but the CO₂ saving is 3.73 t/year, which is cost per tonne saved: £241/tonne. This brings us to the concept of how much should I spend to reduce emissions? A commonly used number is £250 per tonne, and this can apply to annual costs or to cost for new energy saving hardware like solar panels or more efficient hardware.

Now looking at cabin heating. The base case is a solid fuel stove running for six winter months. Suppose we are able to get a mains hook up in winter, and this enables us to halve the consumption of solid fuel. I can have some heating on for 6 hours a day for those 90 days. It saves about 1 tonne of CO₂ and costs around £250 extra because electricity is a more expensive fuel. The cost of saving CO₂ works for a single day, and it is still at our benchmark £250/tonne CO₂.

Use of diesel or LPG for heating does give other opportunities. For this model let us assume that we fit a Webasto and run this 6 hours a day in winter only, for heating and perhaps hot water. This would not need to run 24 hours per day as it can operate in start stop mode to suit the need. If again we assume it is 6 hours this is a major saving on CO₂ because fuel consumption is much less. If requires a behavioural change, and is not for all, and there

is a significant cost of hardware. The CO₂ saving is 1.9 tonne per year which about halves the CO₂ budget for heating. But there is extra cost of hardware and more expensive fuel (£100 per year) and this gives a cost of CO₂ saved of £107/ tonne over 15 years. Like Webasto, bubble stoves or Aga cookers that are oil fired might be better suited to a particular lifestyle. And after all this, we haven't got the heating solution fully cracked yet. Burning wood might be considered green washing and electric hookup (if you can get it) is expensive. But with this behavioural change, and new hardware, we can make a significant reduction in CO₂ but at a cost. There is no payback like solar panels which is next.

Part of our engine running of 1000hrs is for power and hot water. If we install solar panels sized to provide enough power to run domestic load for 80% of days, we can avoid running the engine for some days, saving say 200 hours, the fuel cost and the CO₂. We don't size for all days because the panels would be too big and too costly. For grey days when you are not moving, run the engine or a small generator, or get a hook up. This project saves money over a few years, so you are getting credits per tonne of CO₂ over the life of the panels. You don't need high efficiency solar controllers because most of the time your panels are oversized and your existing lead acid batteries are fine. In the summer extra power can be used to heat water in the calorifier. This is a brilliant project unless you are moving the boat every day as a share boat or hire boat. In these cases there is enough power and heat without the need for solar energy. But there is a break point somewhere. This cuts 0.8 tons of CO₂ from the engine fuel budget. There is a cost but you get your money back quickly.

Cooking on LPG is a very low contribution and there are no easy options unless you have invested in fancy electrical systems. Even then the CO₂ emissions from cooking on engine generated electricity are higher, so no win there.

It's a bit of pick and mix, the choices are not interdependent and can be changed if lifestyle changes, or transferred to another boat. All involve extra cost either to install new hardware, or to use expensive fuels.

In summary:

Solar is the best: cuts 0.8 tonnes CO₂/year and saves money

Webasto is modest cost but strong CO₂ impact

HVO offers the biggest CO₂ cut

but is expensive

The issues are, for you, do they do the job, do they save emissions, are they affordable, do they offer value for money in cash and CO₂ savings. Only you can decide. But you can't do nothing. Choose your expense.

If you haven't lost the will, next time I will look at hybrid and electrical propulsion, and 240V household systems and find more invasive ways to spend your money. And after that we can think about the ethics of doing nothing, using HVO or dry wood, or just buying carbon offsets.

Ed: liveaboard boaters account for around 23% of craft, so any changes in legislation will need to include cost and effectiveness for the 77% of warm weather cruisers.



Environment change

by John Sadler

I am not an arboreal expert but the number of fallen trees recently does seem to point to a recurring problem.

Before it attracts criticism for the CRT, it is acknowledged that prolonged periods of drought adversely affect trees making them more susceptible to pests, diseases and wind damage. The trees natural defence is to close pores to reduce water loss, sadly, this also restricts the amount of carbon dioxide they can absorb. As soil dries out it becomes less stable, shrinkage and cracking are signs of excess drought, which has become a common sight this year. This could well be followed by a period of intense rain to restore the balance. With the loss of some tree roots and cracked ground does this open the door for more damage to

canal banks? I suppose we will find out. There doesn't seem to be a cost effective way of reducing the impact of climate instability.

CRT claims to survey the highest risk trees every 2 to 4 years based on where they are located, pollarding, coppicing, felling and planting as necessary. They do not survey third party trees adjacent to their land although they are legally entitled to cut any overhanging branches. Their annual spend is over £1 million for tree management.

Birmingham City Council is consulting on a new Smoke Control Order. A key change to the new order will be to extend the provisions of the Clean Air Act 1983 to moored vessels within the city boundary. birminghambeheard.org.uk/bcc/smoke-control-order-2025/

Timed travel

by Ian Hutson

We all wobble on about how the canal system was built for different times, a different pace. I'd estimate that not one in a hundred of you ever actually really slows down enough. Holidaymakers fill every day with a race from pub to abstract mark on the map and back again.

The Canal Company Ltd clocks in, clocks out, logs the minutes, pays by the hour, heaps praise on those who tell us to 'crank it', thinks only in terms of miles possible and relies on volunteers at locks to keep the queues short short short. All must be movement and rush, hither, thither, and quite senseless.

What do you miss when you rush? Well, you miss what I've enjoyed for two hours at dawn several days each these past summery weeks. Moored between field and hedgerow. No generators, no tortured, whining bow-thrusters. Solar panels quietly sucking up the energy from the nearest star. Coffee in hand. Not a radio, not a "hands-free" shouted mobile telephone conversation anywhere. No clock, no wristwatch, not even a calendar in sight. No over-tired screaming kids, no over-tired shrieking parents. Just cool, early mist among the trees and steam-wraiths rising slowly wherever the sunlight lands.

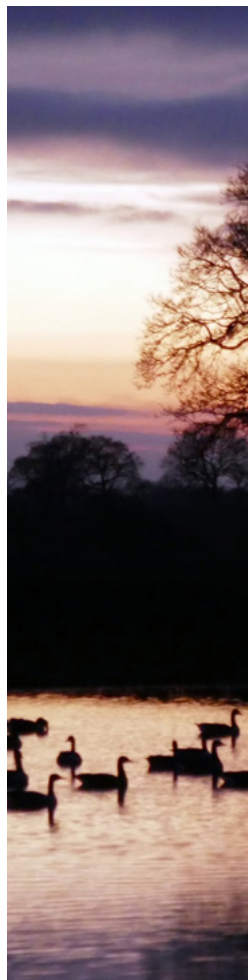
I sat with a heron one morning. He flapped in, gave me the once-over, and commenced fishing for his breakfast about six feet, no more, from my boat's stern. I refilled my coffee mug time and again and Mr Heron, a huge bruiser, briefly locked eyes but didn't panic and just carried on. Ducks gathered. Hedgerow

birds deafened me with their whispering wings. Swans squeaked as though needing oiling. Gulls flew on missions from lake to reservoir. Moorhens bobbed about and sounded like squeaky chew-toys. Small fish left trails atop the water, mostly v-shaped, sometimes expanding circles. Large carp splashed about in the shallows. Mice and voles, maybe even rats and mink, rustled the foliage.

The magic evaporated of course. Humans began to wake up. Noise. Radios. Arguments. Boats not just moving, but rushing headlong. Joggers sounding like stray elephants pounding the towpath. Electrified cyclists whooshing past at forty miles per hour and woe betide anyone in their way. Day Boats and hire boats full of embarrassing captain's hats and tinned beer, always yelling as though still trying to make themselves heard above the din of a city street.

We have the technology. Has the time come to stop boats starting unless they've been within calm earshot of the gentle rustle of a warm corn crop for fourteen hours minimum? To make them automatically pull over shy of the pub but in the middle of nowhere, among real life?

Canals are supposed (now) to be relaxing places, when all is said and done. Forget about 'Not to be taken under Potter Heigham Bridge'. How about 'This boat won't move unless the heart-rate of all aboard is seventy-two bpm or less, neck and shoulders relaxed, blood-alcohol level roughly that of a novice nun from Nuneaton.' I do wonder.





Rewind

From the NABO archives and beyond

Whatever happened...

...to the Manchester and Pennine Waterways Partnership?

On April 4th 2012 it all looked so promising at the first meeting objectives were set for the group, getting to know each other and forming a successful team. Making a start on progressing their plan. Bringing the team up to speed on national developments and agreeing how they organise ourselves.

The following were proposed:

- Cultural collaboration
- Using the canal system to better link Manchester and the Pennines.
- Working across all sectors and engaging people and businesses.
- Creating a solid and sustainable future for our waterways.
- Becoming an exemplar in volunteering.
- Helping the 93% of people who use the canals who are not boaters.
- Personal support will help the partnership to promote and tell the story of the waterways.
- Making a plan that works to draw in new funding and resources and prioritise investment.
- In 3 years, for our network to be significantly better than it is today.
- Working together to deliver our plans.
- Turn the waterways around to become outwardly communicative and attractive to people.
- Developing our management so as to improve our waterways to maximise their economic, heritage, social and environmental

benefits.

- To come back after 1 year looking forward to our meetings because we will have made an impact and a difference.
- In 3 years we are on the credit side of the balance sheet and that the Partnership is recognised as a valuable asset.
- Engage a very wide selection of people to stimulate action and effect real and positive change.

A handout issued and talked through with the Partnership. Suggestions were made regarding:

- Layers of ongoing training for the group and staff.
- Trust handbook (which is currently being worked on).
- Get the business plan signed off.
- Think about national functional organisation meetings.
- National briefing seminars (the group will be informed of where and when)

Tony Hales described the excellent financial settlement with government, progress being made in governance arrangements including The Council and the process leading up to the transition from BW to CRT.

Julie Sharman reported on the meeting she had just attended with Manchester City Council, Cityco and others and it was agreed that important opportunities were emerging around the regeneration of the Central Manchester Canals - an obvious early priority for attention and action.

Gnosall C'Fest

After a long dry spell, the weather treated the festival rather unkindly although it didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the participants. Activity was brisk amongst the traders and the trip boat filled its schedule. The Boat Inn and The Navigation provided additional places to eat and drink. Above all the festival had an enjoyable feel and was able to raise funds for the maintenance of the section of canal that runs through Gnosall to the benefit of both visiting boaters and residents.

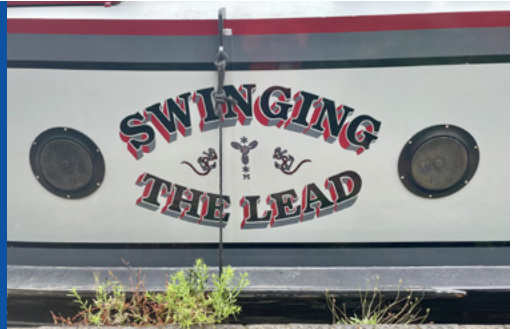


Jo Bell enjoying a Curry Boat curry with her highly acclaimed new book

I name this boat ...

Long before sonar depth detection was achieved by dropping a lead weight on the end of a rope.

Although important for the safety of the ship, it was considered to be an easier task than many on a sailing ship. Some sailors were less than honest while getting assigned, hence its modern day meaning.



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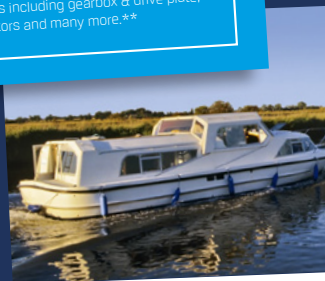
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