

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 1993

NEWS FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING...

... held on 14th August, 1993 at Hockley Port on the Birmingham Canal Navigations.

Internal Matters

Council members reported that the NABO membership numbers remain about the same, and that the bank balance continues to look healthy. The Council approved expenditure on public liability insurance, necessary for our attendance at events such as the Waterways Festival at Peterborough, and a bubble jet printer which should improve the print quality of the Newsletter and Boater.

NABO has been approached by Market Harborough Council who are looking for somebody to organise a boat rally there in 1994. A big event, requiring a great deal of work... we are thinking about it.

The Council also discussed the AGM in more detail. More of this on page 3.

The response to the questionnaire has been fantastic, with about 40% of members having responded so far. Very many thanks to everyone who sent back a questionnaire. We are still analysing the results, which will be published in the next Boater.

Parliamentary All Party Waterways Group

The Parliamentary Waterways Group, an all-party group of MPs

which meets every month during Parliamentary sessions, was reconvened during the BW Bill negotiations. A formalised membership of the group is now available. NABO is to apply for associate membership, which entitles us to attend meetings and receive minutes of proceedings. This forum could be useful, for example in putting pressure on the Port of London Authority over mooring charges on the tidal Thames.

Winter Stoppages

The winter stoppage programme has been settled by BW. There are several long stoppages planned, many for the installation of chains or handrails in tunnels.

Hockley Port

Penny Barber, who moors her boat at Hockley Port, reported on the proposed developments due to take place there shortly. It has been proposed that all the boats currently moored in the arm should be evicted for three months while work takes place, although the moorings themselves are not being altered. The land does not belong to BW, but they will soon be involved in a lease agreement. On their return, boats will be required to have insurance and a houseboat certificate, and the new classification of the moorings will be far above their real value. Can BW justify Class 5 (top notch) moorings in one of the roughest parts of Birmingham?

Miscellaneous

Peter Lea visited BW at Hemel Hempstead during their open weekend in July. He was impressed by the survey of canal profiles being undertaken in the southern region, which is to be used to organise a dredging programme. They are recording the depth profile and spoil analysis at 1 km intervals, and giving each stretch a priority weighting according to the number of boat movements.

Pump out facilities, or lack of them on BW canals, have again been brought to our attention. We are going to raise the issue with BW at the next available opportunity.

Finally, a victory of a boat owner over BW! The owner of a boat which sustained serious damage from an underwater obstruction on the Stainforth & Keadby canal (supposed to be 8'2" deep) has successfully sued BW for the cost of repairs, after BW had offered him insufficient compensation.

The next Council meeting will be on Saturday 2nd October, starting at 10a.m. at Hockley Port. You are welcome to attend, but we would be grateful if you could let a Council member know if you intend to come.

AGM

The NABO AGM will be at 2pm on 27th November at Doctor Johnson House, Bull Street, Birmingham - the same venue as last year.

If you would like to nominate someone to serve on the NABO Council please complete the nomination form on page 7, or if you would like to serve on the Council and do not know another member to second you, just fill in your own details on the nomination form, and a current member of the Council will second you. Candidates must endorse their willingness to stand and it would be helpful if they include a brief resume about themselves and their boating interests which can be circulated to members before the AGM. Nomination forms must be returned to the Secretary by 16th October.

Anyone wishing to propose any resolution to be considered at the AGM must send the proposed and seconded resolution to the Secretary by the 16th October. A copy of the constitution is available on request.

OMBUDSMAN APPOINTED

On 23rd August British Waterways appointed The Lady Ponsonby of Shulbrede, a practising Barrister and Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, to the Role of Waterways Ombudsman.

Because the services of the Ombudsman are to be unbiased, and independent, (and free of charge) there may be some surprise that the appointment is being made by BW. It appears there is some technical difficulty which does not allow the Government to make the appointment. In practice it will probably not make much difference if it is BW or the DoE - and at least BW did consult with IWAAC on the appointment.

The Ombudsman can investigate complaints from people who think that BW is guilty of "maladministration" in any decision it has made about any activity it has undertaken since 1st January 1992.

The Ombudsman's findings, together with responses from BW, will be published in an Ombudsman's Annual Report, a copy of which will be sent to IWAAC and to the Secty of State for the Environment. A summary of the report will be included in the British Waterways Annual Report which is laid in Parliament.

A leaflet "The Waterways Ombudsman" giving more details about the type of complaints that can be investigated is available free of charge from BW's local waterway offices or their Customer Services Dept at Watford.

Lady Ponsonby can be contacted at :

The Lady Ponsonby of Shulbrede

Maureen Ponsonby, a Barrister by profession, was called to the Bar in 1971 and practised in Family, Personal Injury, Criminal and Employment Law. She has been involved with the training and pupillage of young barristers and has contributed to reference works on the law.

She has specialised in arbitration over a good many years and was admitted to Fellowship of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators in 1990. In 1992 she was appointed Tutor by the College of Estate Management on their Diploma in Arbitration course.

She was elected a Corporation of London Common Councilman in 1981 and is actively involved in various Corporation Committees including currently the joint consultative Committee, London Court of International Arbitration, of which she was Chairman in 1991/2.

She has many other interests and undertakes committee work on behalf of several bodies in the fields of Charities, Tourism and the Arts.

1994 PLEASURE BOAT FEES AND CHARGES

BW announced on the 19th August that licence fees and charges for hire and privately owned pleasure boats in 1994 will be increased by 1.4% which is the published RPI rate of inflation for the year to July 1993. This is in line with the undertaking given to IWAAC some years ago that the RPI to July will "have a bearing" on the proposed rates for the following year.

The prompt payment discount of 10% and the £20 discount for a C of C will continue in 1994.

The increase in BW mooring fees will generally be pegged to 1.4%, but a larger rise may be notified where the range of services and/or facilities available at a mooring site have been increased since the last review. Please let us know if prices rise but there is no increase in facilities, or if facilities are put in which are not required or not consulted on.

NABO welcomes the decision to keep prices in line with the RPI and believes the increase is reasonable.

CUSTOMER CHARTER

The BW Customer Charter which was expected in late July, was finally published on the 23rd August. It is a very nicely produced booklet, not too glossy, artistically pleasing, and well written. But it is clearly not a Charter of commitments or standards, but rather an introduction to the activities of BW. It appears that the consultation draft looked too much like a boaters' charter whereas it should reflect the needs of all the many users. Rather than clutter the Charter with detail, the reader is referred to other documents which do set specific standards. Consequently most of the commitments relating to boaters which were in the first draft have gone but are now supposed to be in individual "waterway standards". These are described in the Charter as documents "which set out how our canals, rivers and sites are maintained and operated. These cover the standard of facilities as well as day to day maintenance and standard of service. Large working documents available for inspection at waterway offices".

We do not believe that these individual waterway standards are a satisfactory alternative to commitments and standards in a Charter for the following reasons:

1. The waterway standards are specific to particular waterways, and will vary according to individual managers' budgets and decisions.
2. The individual waterway standards should be set within a clearly defined national framework of minimum standards and aims. Users can then judge whether these standards are being adhered to.
3. The whole purpose of a Customer Charter is to set clear standards by which the customer can judge the service he or she is getting. It is central to this aim that each customer can obtain a copy of those standards.

4. There are general issues relating to boaters which should be in the Charter and aren't, but are nothing to do with waterway standards.

We are not criticising "Caring for Britain's Waterways" as a Charter for the general public and the wide range of users of the canals, but it is quite clear that Boaters are a user group with particular requirements which are not being met by the new Charter. We have proposed that BW supplement the existing Charter with a Boaters' Charter to cater for these needs. We have also drafted a suggested Boaters' Charter which essentially contains the standards and commitments which were included in the consultation draft, but were left out of the final version. We are hoping to meet BW later in the month when we shall discuss our proposal.

BW ANNUAL REPORT

The recently published 1992/93 Annual Report and Accounts provides exciting bed-time reading for people who can't think of anything better to do when they go to bed, but it does have one or two interesting additions to the normal fare.

Firstly Mr. Ingman in his Chairman's report, states that this will be his last. It is expected that he will probably leave towards the end of the year. His replacement has not yet been announced.

Perhaps the most interesting addition is a note, included for the first time, on executive salaries:

"The number of senior employees whose emoluments (excluding pension contributions) were within the following ranges was:

£	1992/3	1991/2
50,000-60,000	3	2
60,001-70,000	-	1
70,001-80,000	2	2
80,001-90,000	3	1

The remuneration of British Waterways' senior employees is determined by a committee of non executive directors. The remuneration includes a performance related bonus scheme, payments under which are determined by the achievement of agreed objectives. Emoluments included in the above table include bonuses payable in respect of the year together with the taxable value of benefits in kind which include cars, health

insurance and, in certain cases, payments towards housing costs following relocation at British Waterways' request."

Two observations:

1. Amounts paid to employees earning in excess of £50,000 have risen by approx 39% from between £380,000 and £440,000 to between £530,000 and £610,000.
2. Amounts paid to the first 6 highest paid employees have risen by approx 12% from between £380,000 and £440,000 to between £430,000 and £490,000.

NABO COUNCIL 1993/94

NOMINATION FORM

Proposed Candidate's name.....

Address.....

.....

I am willing to stand for election to the NABO Council.

Candidate's signature.....

Seconder's name.....

Address.....

.....

Seconder's signature.....

Whilst every care is taken to ensure that the contents are factually correct, we accept no liability for any direct or consequential loss arising from any action taken by anyone as a result of reading anything contained in this publication. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association.

WHO REPRESENTS NABO?

NAME/POSITION

ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE

Penny Barber,
(Treasurer/Mids Rep)

Phil Bland.

Jon Darlington,(Vice
Chairman/Boater Editor)

Melanie Darlington.
(Production/Distribution)

Dave Green
(Chairman)

Roger Hancock

Thomas Hartney.
(NW Rep)

Neil Hutchinson,
(Newsletter/Boater Editorial Team)

Peter Lea.

Stephen Peters.
(River Users Coordinator)

Christine Potter.
(Membership Secty/PR)

Pete Sterry,
(NE Rep/Publicity)

Nikki Timbrell,
(Secty/Editorial Team)

Harry Winter.
(Engineering Officer/
S/E Rep)