
The **BOATER**

ISSUE No. 9
January 1994



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF BOAT OWNERS**

The BOATER

Issue No. 9
January 1994

Comment.....	2
Letter from the Editor.....	2
Chairman's comment	2
News	3 - 5
Council meeting.....	3
NABO Business.....	6
Reports.....	7 - 15
Pricing of BW moorings....	7
Changes in IWAAC	9
Midlands area.....	11
River users	12
Links with the RBOA	13
Letters.....	15
NABO representatives.....	16

Whilst every care is taken to ensure that the contents of the Boater 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.

Published by

**National Association of
Boat Owners
111 Maas Road
Northfield
Birmingham B31 2PP**

COMMENT

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Issue 9 of the Boater. I have to admit that preparing this issue in its new format has been quite a task, as I had to get to grips with new hardware and software as well as the content! So I hope you like it.

When I am choosing newspapers and magazines in which to advertise my business, I always look at the 'Letters' page. My theory is that lively

correspondence equates with a publication which is well-read and cared about. Apply this theory to the Boater, and it does not score very highly - we have only one letter this quarter.

There is plenty in this issue to comment on - go on, prove to me that you have read this Boater by writing to me - my address is on the back page.

Nikki Timbrell

Chairman's Comment

This is the first Boater to go out in which I have not had an editorial input. I am sure you will notice a marked improvement, particularly as the new Editor was, before doing more exciting things, a technical author. I am sure Nikki will do a very good job, and I'm sure we all wish her well with a sometimes difficult, and always time consuming job.

I am particularly concerned that in the next few months we agree the basis on which BW consult with their users. At the moment I believe that the principle of effective consultation is possibly the most important

issue we are facing. We have put forward a simple but effective consultation procedure to the Board and still await a response. Will the commitment to consult given in the Customers Charter be just empty words? I hope not.

While on the subject of consultation, I am always aware that NABO exists to represent boatowners. What constitutes "representing boatowners" includes many things, but primarily it consists of representing boat owners' views, ie your views. So, if there is something you are unhappy about, or think we are doing wrong, do write and tell us.

NEWS

... from the Council meeting held on 15th January, 1994

Venues for future Council meetings were discussed and the possibility of using boat clubs in the area SE of Birmingham is being considered. Any member who can suggest a suitable venue please contact Neil Hutchinson.

A suggestion that NABO should organise a rally at Market Harborough was declined after discussion with Council officials. It was revealed that BW intended to remove the toilets at the basin in Market Harborough as part of their redevelopment proposals. The same thing is reported to be happening in Coventry basin. We will take this up with BW.

Job descriptions are being prepared for all Council posts to ensure as little overlap between jobs as possible, and to improve the representation of NABO at local waterway meetings.

The Treasurer reported healthy bank balances and that a letter of thanks had been received for our contribution of £50 to the end of garden moorings case costs.

There are now over 1400 members. New members are

slow but this is possibly caused by the closed season. The appointment of a recruitment officer was agreed and Colin Paillin was appointed. New membership leaflets will be enclosed with the Boater.

Harry Winter has difficulties in attending meetings as SE area rep and wishes to pass this task on to another. He will continue as technical officer. Peter Lea is willing to co-ordinate the area but needs help in attending meetings. Any volunteers? There is no co-ordinator at the moment for the NW area and Neil Hutchinson agreed to do this until a replacement had been found (see appeal on page 6).

Concern was expressed over the proposed development at Hawkesbury junction where 12 residential berths are to be provided at a price of £18,000 for a 25 year lease. It is not clear whether this was an additional provision or a reduction in the number of existing berths at Hawkesbury. We will investigate.

A meeting with the NRA to discuss concerns of river users is to be arranged at the NRA's invitation.

NEWS

Improvements to Stratford canal byeweirs

BW have announced that they will be carrying out improvements to the byeweirs at locks 55 & 56 (the locks at either end of Bancroft Basin) in Stratford. This should solve a flooding problem on the towpath and around the Bancroft basin during busy periods and in wet weather when storm waters also flow into the canal.

BW do not mention how much this project will cost, but claim that this year over £17 million will be spent on major repairs and improvements, in addition to the £50 million spent on day-to-day maintenance.

New Chairman of IWAAC from 1st January, 1994

Giles Baker has not been re-appointed as Chairman of IWAAC.

On 24th January, Environment Minister, Robert Atkins, announced that the new Chairman is to be Audrey Lees. Miss Lees is a planning advisor who has recently delved into the planning system of North Cornwall. She is experienced in trunk roads, education assets, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Groundwork Foundation. She was appointed to IWAAC in April 1993.

A detailed report on IWAAC starts on page 10.

Parliamentary Waterways Group

NABO is an associated member of the recently re-formed Parliamentary Waterways Group, and Peter Lea attended the two most recent meetings in October and December last year.

These meetings discussed new regulations being introduced by the DoT for passenger-carrying boats, which may

possibly be extended to all boats on the inland waterways. They could even include a 'driving licence' for all skippers. NABO will be joining the campaign to get the DoT to relax their proposed rules.

For more details, read the next of NABO's regular articles in Canal & Riverboat.

NEWS

Licence Refunds

NABO has been successful in its attempt to get BW to rethink its policy of licence refunds, which we reported on in the last Boater and Newsletter.

We can confirm that BW have not implemented the new refunds mechanism and have sent the policy back to the licensing unit that developed it. Consultation will occur before a replacement refund mechanism is introduced. We are pleased to see BW respond in this positive way to user concerns. Hopefully similar problems in the future can be avoided with better communication for which we, as well as BW, can work harder.

Information given by BW to the Inland Revenue

In the last Boater we mentioned the Inland Revenue's request for information about boat owners from BW, and that BW had resisted the request but had eventually been forced to hand over the details. A member asked NABO to complain to the Inland Revenue about their overzealous methods.

The Council, having considered the matter on the 15th January, decided that a complaint to the Inland Revenue would probably not be in boat owners' interests and would almost certainly be ineffective.

Possible residential moorings at Cowroast

BW called a meeting on 25th January of all boat owners with moorings at Cowroast on the Tring summit of the GU canal. The object of the meeting was to discuss proposals to apply for planning permission for more residential moorings at this site - GU South have 175 boats on the houseboat Moratorium for which they have to find suitable moorings soon. Site facilities

would be improved, charges would go up, and as present moorers moved on, they would be replaced by residential boats. Cowroast moorers objected strenuously - these moorings are already expensive, and are popular enough to have a waiting list of 50 boats, including 2 which have been let down by BW over other moorings on the Tring summit.

NABO BUSINESS

Services to Members: the NABO Council's 10-point plan

1. NABO will endeavour to represent the interests of owners of boats on all inland waterways of the United Kingdom.
2. An up-to-date list of names, contact addresses and telephone numbers of Council members will be distributed regularly to members and waterways bodies.
3. Correspondence from members will be dealt with promptly and efficiently and a NABO representative will repond personally to all matters raised.
4. NABO will endeavour to hold up-to-date information on matters relating to navigable waterways in the United Kingdom and keep members informed of all relevant new regulations and legislation.
5. NABO will represent the interests of its members by maintaining contacts with BW, NRA and other navigational authorities, and , where possible, other appropriate bodies.
6. NABO will be pro-active and endeavour at all times to respond to proposed changes in regulations or legislation likely to affect boat owners.
7. Members will be kept informed of the actions of NABO by means of periodicals.
8. NABO will endeavour to ensure that all inormation disseminated to members will be truthful, accurate and up-to-date.
9. Membership fees will be maintained at an affordable level consistent with good services to members.
10. The Council of NABO will canvass the opinions and concerns of members and take them into account when deciding on policy and actions.

Is there anyone in the NW?

NABO is without a representative in the North-West. Would any member who lives or keeps a boat in this part of the country be willing to take this on? Please contact any member of the Council for details of what would be involved.

Potential member

We have had a membership enquiry passed on to us by Canal & Riverboat which has the address apparently cut off. The enquirer has a 26' narrowboat moored at West Stockwith. If anyone knows of a similar boat at that location, perhaps they could ask him to write again.

REPORTS

Pricing of permanent BW pleasure boat moorings

A meeting was held at Watford on 25th January to continue the discussion of moorings pricing which was attended by NABO, IWA, AWCC, 7 waterway managers and 3 head office staff. You may remember the proposed grid mechanism reported on in December 1992 which has site facilities on one axis and location factors on the other axis (see table below).

This is still being proposed using a scoring system for site facilities, which all at the meeting agreed to be reasonable.

Scoring site facilities

Security (25 max): Fencing around site 5; security lighting 5; supervision/security boat/house 5 -10; public excluded 5;

Position (15 max): Winding hole within 10 mins cruising 5; Privacy (not overlooked) 5; off-side/marinas 3-5.

Edge/Top (5 max): Hard edge and top 5.

Depth (10 max): Deep enough for mooring hard to bank 10; to 300mm of bank 5.

Water (10 max): Available without moving boat 10; available on the mooring 7; within 10 minutes cruising 5.

Chemical WC disposal (10 max): On site 10; within 10 minutes cruising 5.

Other facilities (10 max): Refuse, toilet, pumpout, telephone: each scores 2 on site, 1 if 10 minutes cruise. Power on site 2.

		FACILITIES					
		score	81-100	61-80	41-60	21-40	1-20
		class	5	4	3	2	1
LOCATION							

REPORTS

Pricing of BW moorings continued

Car parking (10 max): Designated parking place adjacent to boat 10; within 200m of site 5.

Access path (5 max): Good hard surface 5, surfaced but some puddles 2.

Location factors

BW have decided that the location factors should not be scored. Apparently some time was spent by the Board on trying to value them, but they concluded that location factors important to one person would not necessarily be important to another.

Waterway factors: Choice of routes; availability of system/probability of stoppages; condition of local waterway; "difficulty" eg no of locks; local attractions (eg pubs).

Immediate site environment: Ambience; risk of vandalism; friendliness of staff/quality of service; availability of other sites in the vicinity.

Broader environment: Rating as a tourist area; proximity to centres of population; accessibility by car; property values in the neighbourhood.

Conclusion

The problem of course with not having a scoring system for these factors is that it will enable managers initially to set their own prices simply by selecting a "suitable" location category. It would be difficult to argue that the site is overpriced other than by people moving to other sites. Although market forces will affect the price of a mooring, it is unsatisfactory to rely on market forces when there is not free competition. BW effectively control prices in one way or another (eg end of garden/farmer field moorings, leases to private operators etc) for most of the moorings on most of the canal system.

The other problem is how to weight the relative value between facilities and location. For example, should a step between 2 location categories be twice the value of a step between 2 facility categories?

If you have any ideas on how to value location factors or how to weight the relative facility/location values, please let Jon Darlington know.

REPORTS

Changes in the structure of IWAAC: Jon Darlington reports

Recent events have again caused doubts to be raised about the role of IWAAC. A letter was recently sent out to those who normally receive IWAAC minutes which included the following:

"The nature and work of the Council has changed during 1993. The primary purpose of the Council will be to offer advice to the Minister and to British Waterways, particularly on long term, strategic issues. This will be largely in the nature of a report which is currently being researched and discussed by the Council.

The number of formal minuted meetings has been reduced, and may be reduced still further, or even eliminated, as matters which were previously brought to the council are normally dealt with by the British Waterways Customer Complaints procedure or by the Ombudsman. The Council will, of course, continue to fulfil its statutory obligations and will continue to consider all relevant matters brought to its attention. The best way of dealing with these, however, may not be by discussing them at a full Council meeting.

Generally it is felt that formal minutes no longer accurately reflect the work of the Council. This matter will be discussed at the next meeting on February 17th. It is not proposed at this stage that a formally minuted meeting will be held on that day."

In our response to the letter we point out that there seems to be no provision in the 1968 Transport Act (under which IWAAC is set up) for matters to be dealt with in any other way than by the Council or some form of Committee, and that it is best practice to take minutes of meetings, particularly where the issues discussed are of public interest.

Many people are already concerned about the lack of independence of IWAAC. A further apparent move in that direction would, if IWAAC views credibility with waterway users as desirable, be inadvisable. In the present climate of increased accountability by public bodies, maintaining a high level of transparency and abstaining from every appearance of evil must be the right way to proceed.

REPORTS

Changes in IWAAC (continued)

We have learned that the minutes of the next meeting will now be taken, but we do not know about subsequent ones.

Another development at IWAAC is that Giles Baker has not been reappointed as Chairman, though he will remain on the Council. His term ended on the 31st December and it had been expected that he would be reappointed.

It is fair to say that Giles has not received a very good press recently, and perhaps not surprisingly. Certainly it has been my impression that he seems to automatically take the view of the Board or DoE. But having said that Giles does listen to alternative views, and has been known to change his opinion having listened to reasoned representations we have made to him.

Generally Giles has views which I disagree with, sometimes strongly, but for all that I believe him to be a fair minded man. Being the cynical person I am, I am bound to think this is possibly why he has not been reappointed. His successor (see

News pages) is also bound to be someone whose views are contrary to ours, and might be rather less fair minded too.

A third development is that David Stevenson, chairman of IWA is, it has been unofficially reported, not going to be reappointed to the Council of IWAAC in March. This will leave a Council with very depleted user representation and possibly he is the only private boater on the Council without close waterways business connections.

The DoE and BW are statutorily bound to take notice of IWAAC, and if IWAAC make proposals involving boaters and navigation without having those interests properly represented on their Council, there will be every possibility of destructive changes to the waterways.

If you are concerned about IWAAC and its role, please write to Nigel Dorling, Water, Sponsorship and Navigation Division, DoE, Room A406, Romney House, 43 Marsham St., London SW1P 3PY.

REPORTS

Introduction from NABO's new Midlands rep, Colin Paillin

As your new Midlands rep, I would like to tell you what I hope to do during my term of office.

I hope to be able to attend as many User Group meetings as possible so that I can monitor the activities within the various waterways regions and either respond immediately, or refer issues back to Council for a more in depth consideration.

I hope to keep in touch with the membership. I have twenty years boating experience as an owner, and I currently own the 54ft river type narrow tug, Frederick II. I travel fairly extensively over the waterways network. Please stop and chat...the kettle never gets cold (nor does the engine!!)

Together with Penny Barber, I attended the West Midlands Canal Forum in early December. The Forum consists of users from all over the West Midlands.

A local Authority representative gave a slide presentation of the improvements they had already made to the towpath of the Northern Stratford, and gave information on what they hope to achieve in the future. This

includes sections which at the moment have totally disappeared. I felt that the presentation was well done and impressive. It will be interesting to see the rest of the work continue. Perhaps those of you in the area would keep me informed of any developments.

A spokesman for British Waterways gave a slide presentation and spoke about bridge repairs and re-building. He said that BW are keeping a closer watch on repairs undertaken by local authorities. Of course, where a bridge is a listed structure, there are strict rules about re-building and materials used. However, where bridges are not of any particular interest, a special eye is being kept on the work to ensure that the right materials and reconstruction techniques are being used. It is good to see that BW are giving value to bridges; perhaps the most striking feature of any canal aspect.

Finally, I would like to say that I would like to hear from any NABO member in the Midlands area who feels that they have a point to make, whether it seem large or small.

REPORTS

Report from the river users' co-ordinator, Stephen Peters

NABO is presently enlarging its sphere of activity by establishing formal contacts with river navigation authorities and river user groups where they exist.

A database of rivers and contact names and addresses has been set up and a diary of meeting dates and venues is available to Council and for members' information.

Understandably, there is a large number of such meetings throughout the country, and if any NABO member is able to assist by attending one local to his or her boating area or home, then please contact me.

Involvement in these groups is a vital component in obtaining recognition for NABO and our input will benefit all boat owners by ensuring that local matters are brought to our attention and can then be put into a national context.

A potentially useful contact has been established with the Head Office of the National Rivers Authority and it is intended that an exchange of views will soon take place to air national

navigation policy issues.

Having set up a comprehensive record of river navigations it would be good to see members making use of the wealth of information which is slowly accumulating. This includes stoppage notices, licence charges, guide books etc. Anyone wishing to avail themselves of this facility, or having queries or problems on river matters, is welcome to contact me.

We also, of course, need to increase our membership amongst river users, so offers of assistance with recruitment will not be refused.

I am a river boater myself, and I would like to encourage everyone with a boat on 'moving water' to put forward their news, views and problems.

Footnote: did you know that there are more pleasure craft on the non-tidal Thames than on the whole of BW's inland navigations?

REPORTS

Penny Barber reports on NABO's links with the RBOA

I was co-opted onto the committee of the Residential Boat Owners Association in August 1992 with the aim of providing a communication channel between the RBOA and NABO.

Please be clear that neither organisation has any influence whatsoever over the policies of the other - except for my big gob being a presence at both organisations' committee meetings!

I am a member of the RBOA and three of their committee members belong to NABO. I'm sure we are not the only ones with dual membership. I have no responsibilities within the RBOA beyond being the NABO representative. I attend approximately half their committee meetings.

When responses are required to official documents e.g. the BW Customer Charter, we try to give each other sight of draft responses. It is easy to miss an aspect which another pair of eyes might have noticed. We do not make any attempt to produce a uniform response. We consult solely to highlight omissions and pool technical expertise.

Information that comes to one organisation that might be of use to the other is passed on. There are many agencies and individuals with some waterway connection - we don't always make it to all mailing lists. The RBOA freely gives advice to us when a NABO live-aboard has a problem. We always refer the member to the RBOA as well as assisting directly. Both organisations thus increase their knowledge and contacts around the country.

The RBOA was formed thirty years ago to represent the specific concerns of residential boaters. They have accumulated a wealth of information, expertise and contacts which often go beyond the narrow definition of live-aboards' problems. Two books have been published - "Living Afloat" and "Getting Residential Moorings Right". The Chair, John McCormack, briefed MP Clare Short's researcher prior to her excellent performance during the BW Bill's second reading.

Membership of the two organisations differs in that the RBOA has more members on the

REPORTS

Links with the RBOA (continued)

Thames and in coastal areas e.g. Bristol Docks, than does NABO. Our membership has a bias towards canals and narrowboats, although we are pleased to see increasing numbers of river cruiser owners joining us. The difference in membership means that between us we gather information of a greater depth than either organisation might do alone.

The link between us helps both of us to focus our energies. We can ensure that any work we are undertaking is not being duplicated by other hard-pressed volunteers although we would not ignore the impact of a two-pronged attack if this were advantageous to both agencies. A further advantage is that by communicating, each organisation cannot be 'bought off' on a one by one basis.

It has been helpful for both organisations to pick the other's brains on the administration of a voluntary organisation. The RBOA has the benefit of experience, NABO has a clean start in the computer age (it ISN'T true that you can't get onto

our Council without a computer, honestly!)

There have been some comments amongst the questionnaire responses to the effect that we have paid too much attention to houseboats. Houseboats featured in our petition against the BW Bill along with many other objections. To those of you with reservations about our activities in the residential arena, please note:

1. Neither the RBOA or NABO have any interest in the small number of boat dwellers who do not wish to contribute to the running costs of the waterways by paying licence and mooring fees. Certainly we wish charges to be affordable and conditions of licences to be attainable by the average residential boater and we would therefore support arguments in these areas. We have no problem supporting the principle that some charge is paid by all boat owners.

2. We have no desire to take over the work of the RBOA. We aim to complement each other for the benefit of members of both organisations.

REPORTS

Links with the RBOA (continued)

3. Many NABO members do live on their boats or may dream of doing so, permanently or temporarily, one day.

4. Your personal common sense definition of a houseboat, that excludes you, may not tally with your waterway authority's opinion.

5. NABO petitioned against some of the clauses on houseboats in the BW Bill because they were clearly unjust.

NABO will always campaign for fair treatment for all factions of boat owners within its membership.

Useful addresses: John McCormack (Chair), "Bishop MacKenzie", Kingsland Basin, Whitmore Road, London N1 5QG.

Helen Freeman (Membership Secretary), "Hendricka do Schollevaer", 7 Duck's Walk, Twickenham, Middx TW1 2DD.

LETTERS

NABO and Festivals

Dear Editor,

G. B. Page, in the Oct issue, has taken the words out of my mouth. I was very concerned to think of NABO embarking on Festivals, when we hear the IWA constantly moaning about all the problems of running theirs. I have discussed this with passing boaters and have not yet met anyone who thinks it's a good idea.

Nancy Larcombe

This space is
awaiting your letter!

NABO REPRESENTATIVES

Council members contact addresses

Penny Barber
(Treasurer)

Christopher Barnacle
(Assistant Editor)

Phil Bland

Jon Darlington
(Chairman)

Melanie Darlington
(Production/Distribution)

Roger Hancock
(Secretary)

Neil Hutchinson
(Navigation Officer/NW Rep)

Peter Lea
(Vice Chairman/SE Rep)

Colin Paillin
(Midlands Rep)

Stephen Peters
(River Users Co-ordinator)

Christine Potter
(Membership Secretary)

Peter Sterry
(NERep/Publicity)

Nikki Timbrell
(Boater/N'letter Editor)

Harry Winter
(Engineering Officer)