



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Issue: 1/98 January 1998

**NABO'S Council Members
Annual General Meeting 1997**



Photograph by Robert Coles

**Aboard "Sparkbrook"
suitably decorated for Christmas**

NABO NEWS

Editorial

Firstly, I would like to thank Nikki Timbrell for all her assistance; she is a hard act to follow, having taken the newsletter forward to the high standard that you see today.

I would like to make my column as helpful to all members as possible and wonder whether it could be used as an information exchange; those tips that you pick up on your travels on the cut, that could be of use to others.

For instance, whilst travelling back from Henley this summer, we moored "Thurzaway" one evening on the Grand Union at King's Langley just north of bridge 157 - almost opposite the small weir. The towpath is quite good and there is an adjacent footpath through a large sports field - ideal when you have a dog to walk, like us. The only snag appears to be some locals who think it funny to set boats adrift in the middle of the night. The mooring ropes were carefully untied and/or the pins pulled

out from 3 of the 4 boats moored that night. Has anyone else had a similar experience along this stretch? Let me know, so that we can warn others if it is not an isolated experience.

If you have any other warning tales, or places to recommend: pubs, shops, marinas, tales of good or bad service then please contact me.

As your new Newsletter Editor, I am looking forward to a long and happy relationship with you all !

Wendy Hook



Contents

Chairman's Comment	3
Signs of the Times	6
Annual General Meeting	8
NABO responses	11
Regional Round up	17
Fire Safety	18
View from the Council	19
BW Meetings	20
Waterways Recover Group	22
River Review	23
Open Letter to BW	
- Stourport Basin	24
Your letters	26
Council Contacts	28

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National Association of Boat Owners

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Chairman's Comment

I would like to thank everybody who came to our AGM and helped make it a success.

Thanks also to Council, who have re-elected me Chairman. I will try to live up to their confidence.

New to Council are Geoff Barnett, Sue Burchett, John Denton and Geoffrey Rogerson. Sue volunteered to be Secretary to Council; John joins Christine on Council with responsibility for strategic planning (this means he will try to get us to do our jobs more effectively!). Geof and Geoffrey are our representatives for the North-West and South regions, respectively.

Council agreed we should try to get more members to attend their local river or canal users' meeting on NABO's behalf. This ensures we have the benefit of local knowledge wherever possible, and takes some of the pressure off our regional reps. We particularly want to get more representatives on river navigations. If you think you could be interested in helping in this way, please contact your regional rep, or Roger Davis, or me.

Following up the resolution passed at the AGM, Council has decided there should be a River Section within NABO, to represent owners of boats on rivers and focus on matters which affect them. We will also try to increase river boaters' representation on Council.

We also decided the 1998 AGM should be held at Gloucester, and the

1999 AGM (if the then Council agrees!) at Nottingham. This will give members who can't easily get to Birmingham a chance to attend.

On the consultation front, we have been busy lately. I have responded on NABO's behalf to papers from BW on changes to short term licence conditions, the River Cam Conservators on restrictions to moorings, and the EA on the abolition of the closed fishing season on canals. Brief reports on the first two appear elsewhere; as far as the last is concerned, we're against it. Nigel wrote our response to BW's trust/maintenance standards/canal re-classification proposals, ably helped by Philip Ogden; Nigel has attended a further conference called by BW to discuss the responses they received and the way forward. We and other user groups called for national standards on channel dimensions to be based on each waterway's original profile, so a meeting between representatives of key national user groups and BW's David Fletcher and Stewart Sim to agree policy has been arranged. I will be attending on our behalf. Nigel has been to the Environment Agency's half yearly National Navigation Users' Forum, while I have attended two Parliamentary Waterways Group meetings.

We are all very disappointed at BW and the EA's decision not to renew the reciprocal licence arrangement. The EA's statement says "overall the arrangement appears to have created

little additional traffic. It was used by a relatively small number of boat owners." This is somewhat at odds with the figures quoted at their meeting, that 1400 visiting BW registered boats came on to EA waters while only 200 went the other way. We understand the imbalance was great enough to make the EA ask BW for a payment to compensate for lost visitor licence income, and BW refused. I can only say that both organisations show a measure of greed and short-sightedness.

The New Year will no doubt bring fresh issues - and, I hope, plenty of water and good boating to you all!

PROPOSED CHANGES TO SHORT TERM LICENCES

BW has proposed to end all licences for powered craft for periods shorter than one month, and to introduce charges for the use of locks at entrances to the BW "system" which use a lot of water or are expensive to run. All this would start on 1st March 1998. They argue that some boaters (particularly owners of trail boats and some boats in river marinas) are "cherry picking" the system and paying too little; that river swing bridges, some river locks and sea locks are much more expensive to operate than other structures and can use millions of gallons of water, and that the profit on day licences is so small some agents don't want to sell them.

We say the abolition of both day and weekly licences will drive existing



users off the system or encourage them to boat without licences, in the knowledge they are most unlikely to be caught. The increase in costs will deter new users who might otherwise take up trail boating as a low-cost option. We believe there is considerable scope for increasing the cost-effectiveness of the system for selling short-term licences.

We pointed out that a usage-based charging system was considered and rejected during BW's licence system review some eighteen months ago. It should not be introduced now on a back-door, ad-hoc basis. If this is started at some locks, the principle would be established and the door then open to charges elsewhere. Which locks are "more expensive" to operate (we've seen no costings, of course!), and where do you draw the line? The "millions of gallons of water" argument is a red herring, because the water flows down the rivers and out to sea anyway.

We have not had a final decision from BW yet, but expect more bad news for the hard hit boater

RIVER CAM MOORINGS

We had an urgent appeal from one of our members who moors on the River Cam recently. The Cam Conservators propose to throw a number of (mainly residential) boats off their moorings to make room for rowing boats.

Apparently some of their coxes are having difficulty in steering rowing eights up or down river on their way to their training and racing waters. They occasionally steer too close to a moored boat, and their rowers even have to slip oars a bit for a moment when two of them have to pass !! Oh dear, oh dear!!

There is a dark suspicion that one or two of the local officials may not like having residential boats around, and might have whispered to the rowing clubs that a complaint or two wouldn't go amiss - but such suspicions are unworthy

The Cam's consultation paper proposes to ban or severely restrict moorings along a considerable stretch of river, to leave a channel up to 24 metres wide for rowers. The interests of other river users has not been taken account of at all. Its arguments leaned heavily on a "Counsel's opinion" which attempted to interpret navigation terms, but showed a lack of understanding of them.

We pointed out that on a number of navigations a great deal narrower than the Cam (for instance, the Grand Union canal at Tring) racing rowing boats co-existed perfectly well with other craft both moored and under way, and there was no question of one set of users ousting another. We

reminded them that the Cam Conservators had a duty to consider the interests of all users, and that the consultation paper signally failed to do this. It also failed to consider the impact of the proposed restrictions on boating visitors. We pointed out the boats in question had been there for many years, and the existing navigable channel was quite wide enough to accommodate all users with a minimum of inconvenience.

We hope the Commissioners will reconsider their poorly thought out proposals in the light of our and other users' responses.



SWEATSHIRTS AGAIN

Apologies to all of you who ordered sweatshirts or t-shirts and have been disappointed. As reported in September's NABO News, we had to part with our supplier because he wasn't filling our orders. We are looking for another supplier, and hope to have one soon. The delay has been because most suppliers aren't interested in small orders particularly for differing sizes and colours. In the meantime, if you have an order outstanding - and particularly if you sent us a cheque and haven't had a refund - please contact Roger Davis or Andrew Sherry.

Signs of the Times - Again



Cross channel to port



No overtaking of convoys by convoys



... on your starboard side



No passing or overtaking

Just when we thought we already had far too many signs along our waterways (See NABO News 97/6) the Environment Agency has announced its intention to introduce a whole new series of navigation signs on its rivers.

A coloured leaflet entitled "A boaters Guide to Navigation Signs" has been sent to all licence holders to explain the meaning of the new signs which follow European standards.

Our River Users' Co-ordinator has expressed the Association's concern that a proliferation of new and unnecessary signs is the last thing a cash-strapped Agency should be promoting.

Many of the new signs will be irrelevant on our small-scale, non-commercial waterways and some are so abstract as to be meaningless.

We normally try to be supportive of the Environment Agency for the enlightened way in which it consults with its users, but on this occasion we do not recall any specific prior consultation on the introduction of new signs and their introduction was kept rather low-key.

Had we been consulted we would have responded appropriately. We just hope now that other navigation authorities who are equally short of funding will NOT follow the lead set by the Agency!

Stephen Peters



The waterways being approached are considered to be tributaries of this waterway



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Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday 22 November with about 30 Council and members attending.

The Chairman reported a very busy and successful year, with some good results and worthwhile publicity.

The three complaints made to the Ombudsman, Lady Ponsonby, resulted in one being upheld, when BW were found guilty of maladministration in not consulting users over the massive rise in license fees. The other cases - the

Boat Safety Scheme and a senior executive's handling of complaints were not upheld, but the Ombudsman stated that BW had not kept its

promise over the licence discount to holders of a Certificate of Compliance or BSS certificate and they had not responded to letters in a correct manner.

The chairman reported his regret that Lady Ponsonby was not to seek reappointment. There had been a good relationship between her and NABO.

Many meetings had been held including those with the chairmen of IWAAC, the Parliamentary Waterways Group and Angela Eagle - Minister in charge of British Waterways.

This higher profile has been matched by better press and public relations with mentions in the waterways monthlies, the national press and on radio.

Meetings have also been held with staff from British Waterways, including

the Chief Executive. Partly as a result of representations by NABO to BW, a back-pumping scheme was put in place to cover the Midlands and south last summer. Responses have also been given to proposed changes to Licence and Mooring Permit Conditions, and Waterways Code for Anglers. NABO has been involved in fights for boater's rights from the River Wye, the Pocklington Canal and the Cam; campaigned for more funds for waterways; supported BW over licences for cyclists and opposed their

plans for Stourport and plans to abolish short term licences

A draft response has been drawn up to BW's proposals on maintenance standards

and a charitable waterways trust.

Council members have carried out detailed investigation into possible water savings; researched channel dimensions for NABO's response on the new waterway standards, and the Code for Anglers; opposed inappropriate plans for the basin at Stourport; won a victory over mooring agreements on the Staffs and Worcester

Meetings of the BSS Technical Committee have been attended and papers prepared for various bodies.

NABO has been represented on the river navigations, particularly the Severn and Trent and responses were made to the Environment Agencies proposed River Wye Order.

Membership secretary, Roger Davis, has carried out the mammoth task of updating and correcting the membership database, contacting and re-enlisting many lapsed members.

The marketing and recruitment continues to improve and a successful raffle has been held. It is proposed that Christine Denton, who is not standing for Council this time, be co-opted to continue this valuable work.

Thanks were made to Nikki Timbrell, the outgoing newsletter editor, who has ensured that all the issues were interesting and informative. As NABO's showpiece the newsletter goes to many M.P.s, civil servants, IWAAC, the Ombudsman, senior personnel on BW and the Environment agency and the heads of major user organisations. Robert Cole was also thanked for his lively photographs and Michael Wood for creating and regularly updating NABO's website.

The Chairman thanked Andrew Sherrey for his hard work in keeping the books up-to-date and in good order.

Outgoing committee members, Neil Walker and Phil Bland were thanked for their contributions over many years.

Condolences were expressed to the family of John Griffiths, who tragically died in September.

The Chairman stated that, with Neil's departure, the Council needed a new secretary and he asked for volunteers to speak to him during the break.

With regard to the future, he felt that NABO's role would continue in importance. Changes could come, some quite dramatically, and responsibilities could change hands.

The Boat Safety Scheme is certain to change; regulations will increase; pressure will rise from other users, particularly the environmentalists. NABO must respond to these on behalf of the boater, as it has always done.

Peter closed by stating that it had been a great privilege to be chairman. It had been hard work but he has had a lot of support. He was convinced that without the efforts of everyone on Council and NABO members, boaters generally would be worse off than they are today.

The Treasurer presented the accounts answering any questions as they arose. They were adopted unanimously.

The proposed resolution was discussed and many points considered. It was explained that the proposal was made with a view to increasing membership amongst river craft owners who, at present, did not feel that NABO was for them. It was felt that a separate section would prove divisive but that wider membership should be actively encouraged. The following amended resolution was put to the meeting and passed unanimously:

"We urge Council to expand representation of river users within the organisation and to consider the establishment of a rivercraft section within the Association."

The Council proposed that the Annual subscription rates should be unchanged. This was passed unanimously.

As there were 16 vacancies on Council and only 12 nominations, there was no formal election and all standing were elected.

The Auditor, Ann Tillman, was proposed and elected for a further year. This ended the formal business of the meeting.

A coffee break followed, when our fund-raising representative added to the funds by informing us that there were no cups/mugs and that if we wanted a drink we would have to purchase a NABO mug (*clever trick, Christine - Ed*).

During the break Sue Burchett volunteered to join the Council as Secretary and was immediately co-opted on with the agreement of all present.

Nigel Parkinson spoke about British Waterways proposals on maintenance standards and a waterway trust. He emphasised the importance of taking the proposals for a charitable trust very seriously as they will totally change the way in which the waterways are managed. The Charity Commissioners are not concerned about how a charity undertakes its work, only that it doesn't transgress; their rules. At the moment BW is responsible to the Government for its actions and is accountable to the appropriate minister.

(See pages 11-13 for fuller report on NABO's responses to these schemes - Ed)

Discussions have been held at many levels regarding the standard to which waterways should be maintained and whilst they are not all agreed to boater's satisfaction, at least they are being looked at.

General discussion followed regarding the state of the towpath after Fibreway have installed their cables. Restoration of historic structures is incomplete. The lack of restoration, particularly under bridges, discarded debris - frequently in

the canal was deplored by all present. There appears to have been a general lack of supervision.

It is requested that we all check the towpaths in our own areas and record their state, taking photographs where possible of

any inadequate work, polypropylene pull through and ducting discarded etc. Send the details and photos to us and we will co-ordinate a response. If workers are still present on site, then phone the 24 hour helpline (charged at local rate) and report it immediately.

Discussion also included worries regarding the Environment Agency wanting to abandon the close season for anglers, BW extending the cycling permit scheme, and problems with end of garden mooring.

Thanks to Penny Barber for arranging drinks and sandwiches at lunch time.



Nigel Parkinson

COUNCIL RESPONDS TO BW PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

In the October NABO News we set out BW's plans for the future and those of you who were able to be at the AGM were able to discuss them with Council. We have now responded to David Fletcher on the three topics we were being consulted on and this article is to tell you what we said. If you want a full copy of our responses please contact Peter Lea.

First though, a reminder of what BW proposed:

- To ask the Minister to reclassify some Remainder waterways as Cruising waterways in return for a set of Waterway standards which differed from those in the 1968 Transport Act and were supposed to reflect modern usage.
- To establish a membership scheme in support of BW.
- Options for the future management of the Waterways. Chief among these was to set up a Charitable Trust, with members, which would take over BW's functions locks, water and property and which would be free to develop the waterways as the Trustees saw fit. Other options included selective closure and/or privatisation and a deal with Government to give BW more commercial freedom.

We responded to all these issues separately because they are not interlinked and are at differing stages of development.

Our Response on Reclassification and Waterway Standards

We said enthusiastically that waterway standards were a good idea, but should not be tied to reclassification and that the standards proposed were not yet sufficiently detailed. For example, lock sizes, maximum craft dimensions and depths at mooring points are not in need to be added to the channel dimensions in the draft. For rivers, we made the point that the dimensions needed to be related to fixed water levels and gauges provided for boaters. We pointed out that the channel dimensions proposed were less in many cases than good engineering practice would provide for a waterway able to pass a 7ft wide boat and that the generally proposed depth of 900 mm was less than that seen as necessary by a BW Survey in 1970 (1220mm) and Fraenkel and Partners in 1975 (1200mm). Both these surveys were based on the needs of boats with a draught of 3ft and there are still plenty of those about. The proposals for BW Rivers have similar shortcomings.

We also addressed the lack of detail of standards for towpaths, the environs of the network and the facilities to be provided, whilst supporting the need for the standards to cover the needs of all users.

The Minister had already told us that reclassifying waterways 'at the stroke of her pen' was not a realistic expectation and that any reclassification would have to be carefully justified. Nonetheless, we ask

for all Remainder Waterways to be regraded as Cruising Waterways rather than the limited list proposed. The need for a guaranteed future in order for companies to find the funds for development (which then provides income) was pointed out and we made specific mention of the need to reclassify the Tifford Canal and the soon to be restored unnavigable portions of the Montgomery and Pocklington canals, all of which were omitted by BW from their list.

We also asked for an assurance that BW had no plans to downgrade the larger waterways from Commercial to Cruising to reduce standards of maintenance.

We concluded by asking for the opportunity to comment on the next drafts of Standards and explaining how we looked forward to developing these proposals into a workable form.



Our Reply to the Proposal to Initiate a Membership Scheme.

We were not able to be as supportive of a membership scheme as of other proposals, mainly because there appear to be few benefits for the Waterways or our Members. Whilst we agreed that a large membership could most convincingly bring pressure to bear on Government, if mobilised effectively, we were not convinced that a large membership was likely. What particularly concerns us is that BW presented no evidence that the scheme was feasible nor did they suggest any

benefits from membership which might make someone without an existing interest in canals want to join. BW cannot borrow money to start the scheme off, so the capital will have to come from the maintenance budget. (It won't come from the lease car budget will it!). So, if the scheme fails to cover its costs, boaters seem likely to be stuck with the bill. Council is not prepared to support that. Worse, even if the scheme were a success, BW have no Treasury promise not to simply reduce the annual grant by the amount that the members provide. This would mean that lots of BW time was spent on the membership scheme, to provide no real benefits. We also pointed out that other membership schemes spend a large part of the subscription on the costs of serving their members and thus were of limited benefit except in terms of political muscle.



Our Response to the Proposals for the Future Management of the Waterways

NABO Council thinks that a new way ahead is a good idea, provided that our concerns can be fully overcome. We are glad to see someone thinking about things at last and pleased to help with the development of new ideas.

- Our first requirement for every scheme is for some parameters to assess it by:
- It has to be right for the long term, and right first time.

It must preserve the special nature of our waterway system.

- ALL users to pay for the benefits they receive, so these benefits must be costed.
- It must eliminate the maintenance backlog.
- It must be financially viable.

We agreed that selective privatisation and/or closure did not meet these criteria and so should be ignored.

We thought that an agreement with Government to allow BW more commercial freedom was worth investigating, provided there was a system of checks and balances to preserve the system and its nature. This, we said, was a potential vehicle for Public/Private Partnerships.

The Trust proposal was also interesting and worth work to develop the detail. At this stage it remained too conceptual for a firm positive or negative response so we pointed out the Key Areas where further work was needed before we could make a decision:

- The Trust's Deed, Aims and Objectives will have to be fully developed and consistent with the parameters above. We would not support an aggressive, commercially led development organisation.
- The Trust would have to be accountable; to Government, to Users, to its members and to the public. We think there has to be an independent regulator.
- There must be a long term commitment, evidenced by a

Statutory set of maintenance standards. The 1968 classification system would need to be replaced by a duty to make all waterways available to the public, in the condition set by the maintenance standard, supported by a clear definition of which waterways will be maintained for freight traffic.

We asked for much more detail of the make up of the Trustees and the selection process. We believe that a significant number of Trustees must be elected or selected by users and Trust members.

We wanted more detail of the financial arrangements and business plans. Any contract for maintenance must recognise the benefit provided to informal users and run for at least ten years, (better fifteen) to show up any short term creative accounting. Insuring structures which are near collapse will be difficult if not impossible so there will need to be a residual Government guarantee. We pointed out that Charities cannot trade, so we would expect trading subsidiaries to be subject to the same degree of user control as the Trust itself.

The Trust will need to have a duty to establish reciprocal licensing arrangements with other authorities and to balance the needs of SSSI's etc against the purpose for which the waterways were built.

Pricing Policy and Monopoly issues need to be resolved, so that the Trust and its subsidiaries cannot unreasonably penalise one class of user as BW are doing at present. Again, this is a job for an independent regulator.

Overall, we are most pleased that BW has got past wringing its hands and complaining about lack of money and started to do something about a long term plan. We remain concerned that there is not yet a forward vision beyond 'more freedom to develop the waterway system to make it financially self sustaining'. NABO Council, on your behalf, will do its best to help with the development of ideas and to ensure that all proposals are properly examined. We will keep you in touch with what happens next and need to hear your views as things develop.

NP

" On Inland Waterways, your Captain understands that after spending some 3,000 on a joint operation involving British Waterways, the South Northamptonshire Canal Partnership and the Sou. Northamptonshire District Council, a 1km stretch of the towpath on the Grand Union in Bugbrooke has been re-opened.

Excellent news and drinks all round, but your Captain is still trying to work out what an 'all weather walking surface' might be."

Extract from: The Captain's Log, Boating Business magazine, Nov.97

Do you know of any towpaths left like this ?

Surface uneven, or with pot holes; pipes discarded under hedgerows, or even worse, in the cut ?

If the work is still going on, then phone the BW Fibreway 24 hour helpline (01203 - 565666 - charges at local rate) and report it immediately.

If it has been completed (!) then make a record, take photographs and let NABO know so that we can take the matter up.

ON THE TOWPATH

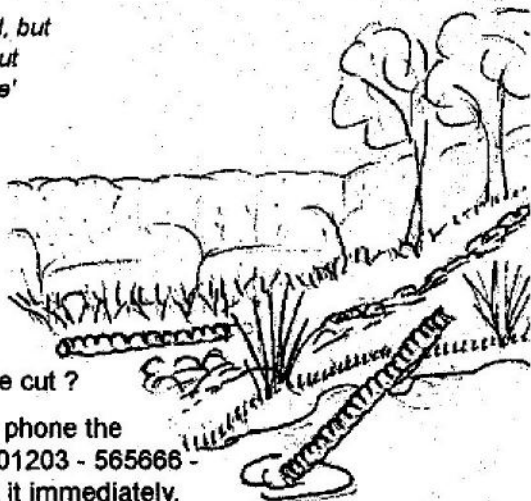
IWA Towing Path Policy

A Consultation Draft of an updated document has been released giving details of their policy.

They are seeking views on all aspects of the document, especially on any areas that will make it more useful as a guidance tool for campaigning and waterways management work. Any comments are required by 31 January 1998.

You can obtain a copy from: Neil Edwards, Executive Director, The Inland Waterways Association, 114 Regents Park Road, London NW1 8UQ.

If you wish to make any comment, let NABO know so that we can consider them when writing our response. Comments will be needed by 14 January 1998.



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Engine Diesel <input type="checkbox"/> Petrol <input type="checkbox"/> Steam <input type="checkbox"/> L.P.G. <input type="checkbox"/>	Inboard <input type="checkbox"/> Outboard <input type="checkbox"/> H.P. _____

Maximum speed of craft (M.P.H.) _____

Normal Mooring _____

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ROUND-UP OF AUTUMN MEETINGS

Fradley, Lapworth, Birmingham & Black Country and Norbury

Most of the time, at all the meetings, was taken up by presentation/discussion of the proposed **BW trust**. A somewhat disturbing feature was the way the idea was being 'sold', followed by some individuals at these meetings commenting such as *"it has got to be the way forward"* or *"it must be better than what we have now"*. I fail to see how such a conclusion can be reached after a short slide show of a vast and involved subject - a considered opinion will require far more thought and certainly more questions.

The **Fibreway** programme has been delayed resulting in new contractor. 600 men are now working 7 days a week to catch up. London/Birmingham virtually completed by end of October. Phase 2: Birmingham / Warrington involving Staffs & Worcs, Trent & Mersey and Bridgwater starts next January. Richard Mercer of BW, who is supervising the project, has given his assurance that he will investigate any complaints received. Ring BW Fibreway Helpline: 01203 565666.

A **weed cutter**, that collects as well as cuts, costing about £60,000 is being purchased and will hopefully be ready by the end of next March for the BCN. Weed gets worse as pollution improves. To be initially used at Bradley Arm, and possibly followed by Tipton and Wolverhampton.

Discussing stoppages, BW queried whether it is worthwhile to have Christmas/ New Year openings - the clear message is that boaters must use them to enable representatives to have a valid argument.

It was expressed quite forcibly that the regional stoppage meetings need to be reinstated.

There appears to be a strategy developing of **mooring charges** on BW specific sites being increased over and above the nationally declared increase of inflation (3.3%). Members should ensure that the matrix policy/consultation is being observed.

After vandalism, the top lock of the Wolverhampton 21 is locked, being opened by BW Sanny key. Discussions are taking place to design a universal 'locking up' square key to cover all situations -to be discussed nationally.

It was stated that despite objections from NABO and other involved organisations, work on the pontoons mooring scheme for Stourport upper Basin will commence shortly. Good luck to all you boaters when carrying out manoeuvres in the wind. Visitor moorings in the Basin will be allowed overnight only - no daylight moorings. The local waterways manager is not too bothered however, because the scheme is flexible and can be altered at little cost. Surely an effort should be made to get it right in the first instance - it should not be all that difficult unless of course you have to juggle about using pontoons of a particular configuration which have already been purchased.

It appears that BW are not going to object to the EA proposal to end the **Fishing Close Season**.



NEW FIRE EXTINGUISHER APPROVALS REVEALED

Until recently your fire extinguishers only complied with the Boat Safety Scheme if they were approved by BSI (the Kitemark), The Loss Prevention Certification Board (LPCB), the Fire Offices Committee (FOC), or the British Approvals of Fire Equipment (BAFE) scheme. Now, as part of the introduction of the Euro standard EN3, two new bodies have been approved to certify fire extinguishers. They are the French company AFNOR with the CNMIS test laboratory, used by ANAF or a 1Kg dry powder extinguisher, and the UK company SGS, used by Firemaster for 1Kg 1000MP and 2Kg 2000MP extinguishers. The logos of these 2 bodies are shown below.

Be aware that Firemaster also make 1000DP and 2000DP fire extinguishers which are also certified by SGS but these do not have an 'A' rating (for solid material fires). These extinguishers do not meet the BSS requirement for minimum capacity of extinguisher (5A/34B) and so may not be appropriate for your boat.



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PSEUDONYM PERORATES

ON THE LATEST COUNCIL MEETING

Moley, Ratty and Monitor have all retired so I, *Pseudonym*, shall be your new eyes and ears at the council meetings. That should teach me to keep my mouth shut and not volunteer for anything in future; but perhaps not!

I found my first council meeting most enjoyable and I can't understand why there aren't queues of people wanting to help NABO to improve the water-ways for us all. I was struck by the mix of people on council, which included live aboard, owners of river boats, sea going boats, historic boats as well as floating cottage owners.

Now for the actual meeting. There was much praise for EA. for its record in consulting us and also its attitude of apologising when things go wrong. It would be nice to say the same of BWV. But unfortunately it was the usual story of no consultation, too short a time given to reply when we are consulted and no replies to letters sent.

Denis Smith is really getting stuck into the Stourport saga and is beginning to get a few concessions. He still has a long way to go, but judging by the look on his face when he was telling his tale of the conflict, he won't give up until he has won.

Stephen Peters and Peter Foster are determined that River users will be well represented on council. Hopefully NABO will attend river rallies to wave their flag. Getting a flag was also discussed NABO is trying to raise its profile amongst both river, estuary and sea going boaters.

Our reps were all briefed. I am surprised

that they didn't resign on the spot. Their work load seems impossible but hopefully they are good at delegating as there seems to be an awful lot of meetings to attend, all with strange sounding names or a list of initials.

Discussing fishing and cycling proved enlightening. Did you know that not all fishermen want an end to the closed season? Apparently their families would like to see them sometimes - Hurray Are cycling permits and charges to be done away with on the Kennet and Avon? It seems that turning out en masse appears to work. Perhaps we should look at their methods more closely.

Will the using of red diesel come to an end in 1999? There is a proposal for an EEC directive to abolish the present deregulation. With the amount of tax that is paid on derv this will really hit hard. But is it enforceable? Will boats and others selling red diesel need two pumps? Commercial boats would still be allowed to use the red stuff.

The river Cam has a conflict between the residential boats and the rowers, with the rowers wanting the boats removed to allow them more room for their oars. NABO and RBOA are supporting the boaters whilst the local IWA is supporting the rowers.

Council had a look at how it should perform in future, with an interesting discussion on breeding alligators and draining swamps. As John now has the job of keeping the council focused he should soon be a swamp expert. I think this shows a serious conservation attitude. Breeding alligators around Watford could be an interesting Project.

BW HOLD FURTHER CONSULTATION MEETING

British Waterways held an additional National User Group meeting on 10 December, to debate the responses of user groups to the mega consultation (which seems to fill more newsletter than the BW Bill did). There were no real surprises in the other user group responses and a consensus on the options was either already present or quickly built during the meeting.

All organisations welcomed the new move by BW to find a strategy for the long term; all were hoping to be able to participate and assist or be kept abreast of activity as plans developed.

The specific issues went much the same way.

Reclassification of remainder waterways was supported but BW were asked to look carefully at the list they had proposed. Although BW gave an assurance that they had only chosen waterways where they could show the Government there would be no additional cost as a result, the benefits of upgrading in providing businesses with security and the incentive to invest were stressed as good reasons to include other canals.

The proposal to introduce new maintenance standards received a warm welcome in principle and BW stated it was their aim to dredge canals to the original profile where this was not prevented by engineering factors. There will need to be additional detail put into the standards and a special meeting under the

auspices of the National Inland Navigation Forum will consider the specifics; to press for sensible depths, adequate channel widths and the maintenance of our waterways in a condition to allow them to be used for the purpose for which they were built. However, to sound a note of common sense, new standards DO NOT mean any instant improvement. Until BW have the necessary money, standards will remain as goals to be worked toward and as a tool to assist BW in setting and allocating priorities in their budget. Some channels, towpaths and the provision of services for all users are likely to remain below standard for some time.

The reaction to the possibility of a new long-term framework, other than a trust, for BW was broadly welcomed as a step down the road to a solution. BW had thought that users were less keen on this than they actually turned out to be and it may be that a sufficiently innovative framework, accompanied by more sensible financial constraints, would achieve much that a Trust could, without the need for legislation. In any event BW are already at work on a new framework document. Again User Groups asked for a sight of this and the opportunity to participate in its development.

The creation of a stand alone membership scheme was given a resounding thumbs down. No-one thought it likely to hit membership targets or generate any additional income although it would cost a great deal of money and management effort.

There was a long discussion over the Trust proposals. BW were keen for users groups to commit themselves wholeheartedly to this as THE way forward, at which point BW would press DETR to let us have details of how the Trust might work. User Groups thought that the devil remained in the detail and that there was no possibility at present of accepting the Trust proposal as any thing more than potentially beneficial. Full acceptance would depend on a detailed development process underpinned by full disclosure of, for example, the underlying assumptions, the financial arrangements, development strategies and the precise composition and appointment of the Board of Trustees. BW did agree to ask DETR for clearance to start the process.

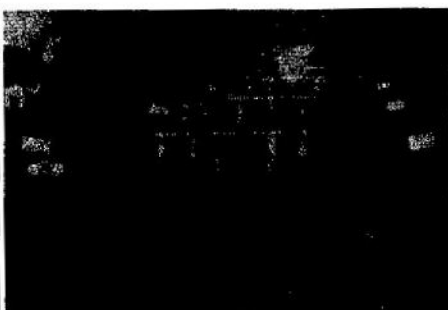
As well as responses on the three formal options several Groups commented on the potential for the creation of a single National Navigation Authority. Whilst many organisations see this as a splendid aim, the practicalities and inter-authority politics are very complex. If the Trust were a success, other navigation authorities might see the benefit of transferring their responsibilities to the Trust which should be constituted to allow this sort of transfer. NABO proposed this approach in our response.

The next step is for BW to circulate all the responses they have received, together with a summary. The Minister, Ms. Eagle, will be advised of the consensus among users and

asked to authorise the detailed development work that is needed.

We again enthusiastically welcome this constructive approach to consultation and support the development of options to carry the waterway system into the Twenty-First Century. We will participate wholeheartedly in developing these options but expect that all the information we seek will be made fully available to users.

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River Review



This is the first of a series of columns specifically for those members with an interest in river craft and river use. Any contributions, letters, etc, would be welcomed by the editor.

News from the River Medway

Good news from the Environment Agency for boat owners in Kent. The Agency intends to spend over £700,000 pounds on improving navigation structures and facilities on the Medway.

The quest for short term moorings on the upper part of the navigation will continue together with replacement of weir structures and renovation work at Allington Lock.

New sewage disposal provisions have also been installed at a number of sites

The planned improvements result from consultations by the Agency to identify the needs of users on the river. (What a pity BW does not respond in a similar fashion to users of its river navigations such as the Severn and Trent).

On a more gloomy note, the record drought continues to cause concern for 1998. The Medway is presently running at only 29 per cent of its normal seasonal flow and the Agency is predicting problems if the winter remain drier than average.

Further good news or bad news (depending on your viewpoint) is that preparation of the proposed new Medway navigation byelaws is continuing and a draft should soon be available for public comment. These new byelaws will introduce the Boat Safety Scheme on to the Medway for the first time once they have been approved by the Secretary of State.

NABO Council is considering various means of catering for owners of boats based on rivers (including wide beam and sea going boats in a positive manner. Look for a further article on this subject in the next newsletter. Watch this space !

Waterways Ombudsman

The New Waterways Ombudsman is Mr Stephen Edell, previously ombudsman for the Building Societies and the Personal Investment Office, and he is a solicitor by profession. He took over from Lady Maureen Ponsonby on 1 September.

Concern has been expressed by many waterways organisations regarding the role of the Waterways ombudsman. General opinion, supported by NABO, seems to be that the Ombudsman should be appointed and financed solely by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and be independent of all navigation authorities.

NABO also agrees with those who feel that his remit should cover all navigable waterways and not just those run by BW.

Although Mr Edell's appointment started on 16 September, BW still had not re-published the leaflet setting out the Ombudsman's Terms of Reference and his address when this newsletter went to press. An anonymous spokesman attributes this to printing delays. As we like to be helpful to BW, and are sure they want their complaints procedure to work properly, his address is: P O Box 406, Haywards Heath, Sussex RH17 5GF (phone 01273-832624). Wouldn't it be nice if no-one had to use it?

AN OPEN LETTER TO BRITISH WATERWAYS

Despite objections relating to the lack of visitor moorings; the dangers of winding/manoeuvring in restricted water space and visual impact, work is to commence shortly to install mooring pontoons in Stourport Upper Basin.

It is difficult to understand the determination of BW to proceed with a scheme which is opposed by all five organisations with vested interests in Stourport, namely ourselves, IWA, Staffs & Worcs Canal Society, Stourport Yacht Club and Stourport Civic Society especially when an alternative scheme has been proposed which would satisfy all objections and at the same time meet the security and safety requirements of the existing long term moorers and BW themselves.

There are a number of unresolved issues which require an answer:

1. On the assumption that the tens of thousands of pounds worth of pontoons delivered to the site in early 1997 were surely only purchased in accordance with at least some idea of the proposed layout

QUESTION

a) *Why was consultation with all interested parties (not only the existing moorers) not initiated prior to purchase?*

b) *Why had no mention of the proposed scheme been made at any previous User Group Meeting?*

c) *In the knowledge that the Basin is 'listed', why was no approach made to the relative authorities to ascertain any consent requirements?*

2. The original plan (with vital dimensions obliterated) was displayed in the Basin Office window on 1 July with a request for comments by 14 July at the latest. Some of the User Groups (but not NABO) were advised of the plan by letter from the local Waterways Manager, dated 8 July.

QUESTION

This was a breach of consultation procedures - why?

3. Following objections to the original plan failing to have any satisfactory response from BW an alternative layout (prepared by IWA) which would satisfy the objections was submitted to BW on 19 September. Local Waterways Manager had previously stated that finance was not an issue and therefore the reduction on total mooring berths was not seen as a problem. However, in a local radio broadcast he stated that this alternative plan was not considered acceptable as it would not accommodate existing boat numbers. Not so.

QUESTION

Why have User Groups not been given the opportunity to collectively discuss this alternative plan with BW prior to any decision being made? Is it because the pontoons already purchased would not be suitable?

4. A revised plan was received from local Waterways Manager on 20 October requesting comments. NABO responded on 25 October with a copy to the Chief Executive who replied by letter dated 28 October to the effect that a decision had been made to proceed with this revised plan.

QUESTIONS

a) *Why request comments to a revised plan when the decision to implement it had clearly already been made?*

b) *Why has NABO not received replies to this letter of 25 October and another dated 7 September? A 'double' breach of the (recently renewed) Customer Charter.*

5. We understood that BW have intimated that the mooring arrangements above York Street Lock are to be altered to 24 hour as far as the first bridge and 5 day (possibly doubling as winter residential) beyond.

QUESTION

Why has NABO not been notified?

6. On 26 November Board members of BW visited Stourport Basin. We are informed that it was a 'routine' visit.

QUESTION

a) *Were Board members aware / made aware of the pontoon mooring proposal and objections? If not, why not?*

b) *In view of the high profile of this issue, why were the representatives of the User groups not invited to have the opportunity to state their case?*

7. BW now inform us that a number of plans of different layouts have been produced (we have seen only 2) and yet the management is still saying that they are 'not too concerned if the layout does not work as it is flexible and can be altered at little cost'. More recently the

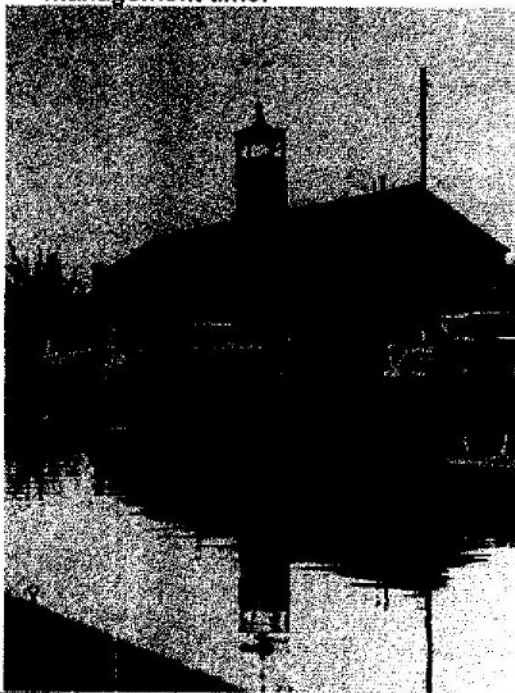
pontoons have even been described as 'temporary structures'.

QUESTION

Do BW not have the expertise to evolve a scheme in which they themselves have some confidence? - even if nobody else has.

On the basis that as paying boaters and taxpayers we have the privilege to complain and as public servants BW have a duty to explain, perhaps Chief Executive David Fletcher could enlighten us - after all one of his selling points for the BW Trust is that it will give "Users a real say in the management of the Waterways as Trustees". If this is an example

What a pity the consultation procedure was not properly initiated at the outset - it would have avoided so much loss of goodwill / correspondence and management time.



Letters



Dear Editor

Your article 'A Waterways Trust?' last month referred to BW having to return to the

Treasury all surplus income each year. Is this the same BW that pleads poverty! The one that asks its user groups to help raise more cash from the Government by writing to our MPs? The one that puts up boat licences 30% because it says its short of funds?

Is this returned money the cash that remains before or after the Senior Management Performance Bonuses have been paid out? That's the bonuses that are a share out of the unspent budget. It all sounds very unsavoury and the tip of a big scandalous iceberg.

Then there is what looks like a new Bill on the way. Only by more legislation (which we pay for) can BW repeal the legal distinction between a Cruising and a Remainder Waterway. We are entitled to ask why this item wasn't put on the agenda 6 years ago when the last Bill was pushed through Parliament at great expense? As a petitioner then I can remember the ridicule I received from BW when I suggested the abolition of the distinction might be more useful to boaters than all legal stuff on Certificates of Safety. Whilst most boaters might think its a good idea to get rid of the Remainder/ Cruising Waterway distinction I ask what else will the Board try to slip through at the same time. Clause 27 again? The Extinguishment of historical rights. The best contribution that could be made to the successful running of our Waterways would be to have a few boaters on the Board. That sounds like a good slogan. 'We want boaters on the

Board'. Perhaps NABO could take up the campaign. I'll offer to volunteer to represent us up at Watford.

Simon Greer

Macclesfield Canal.

Dear Editor

In early May I was on passage, following a friend, down the River Trent. We had met the flood in the region of Butterwick (there was in fact a small aegre) so had increased speed to about 6 knots over the ground (taking into account the spring flood tide). Between the M18 and Keadby bridges we saw 2 or 3 narrow boats approaching and, as our normal practice, we slowed down to a speed that, again taking into account the tide, gave us about 1.5 - 2 knots over the ground i.e. steerage way. At this point I should say that both craft are 39 feet long, are semidisplacement or planeing hulls.

We passed the narrow boats and as far as we were able to ascertain, by looking astern to check, when we could safely increase our speed, there was not a problem with our wash.

A couple of weeks later we both had a letter from the Harbour Master, Associated British Ports, Hull, the controlling authority for that stretch of the river, saying that he had received a complaint from the owner of one of the narrow boats about our excessive wash, (it was actually quoted as being 2 meters high though this is obviously impossible), that had not only left the occupants worried as to their safety but flooded the forward compartment of the vessel.

Now I am not disputing the fact that there may have been damage to their vessel but I do totally reject the accusation that we were responsible.

The point of my writing to you is that I think the owners of narrow boats or any

other small craft who are used to navigating the non tidal rivers and canals should be adequately prepared for conditions that they might meet on other waters such as the River Trent. I would suggest that the basic precautions that should be taken under these circumstances are those of fitting a spray cover over the pulpit and closing the doors into the accommodation. I also note that some narrow boats have scuppers to drain water *out* of the pulpit but they are so close to the water line that, in adverse conditions, they are also capable of allowing water *in*. Cannot they have a flap fitted to prevent this? As a further question are these craft automatically insured to travel on tidal waters?

I have no experience of narrow boats but I do have some in smaller craft on this river and I know that it can be very hairy at times. I do not think that the wash we created was as big as that which can be created by a wind against tide. I have to be sure that when I go to sea the craft is fully prepared for the conditions that we may meet during the passage for the safety of the crew and the boat. For their own piece of mind, the skippers of other craft should be able to take the same precautions!

I do not know whether, subject to editorial constraints, you would wish to publish this letter or an abridged version, but I am sure that there are a number of boat owners who are not aware of the difficulties that can be encountered once they go beyond their normal cruising

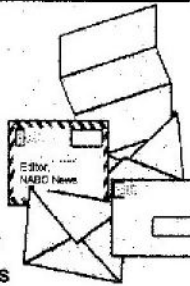
Adrian Davies

Dear Editor

Nearly £200,000 missing from BW Accounts?

Not being an accountant may I ask those better qualified than me (including BWB) for a second opinion about what appears to be a large discrepancy in the BW

accounts. If you take the declared Waterways Staff costs of £34,064,000 away from the Grand Total of all Staff Costs at £35,157,000, it leaves a balance of £1,093,000 for salaries of non Waterways



staff? These are referred to as "Senior Manager emoluments". To you and me that's salaries. So if you then add up the salaries of the Senior Managers by accepting the average figures declared in the accounts, ie one salary @ £60,000-£70,000 £65,000, another between £90,000-£100,000 =£95,000, the Grand Total of all Senior Managers comes to £895,000. That is a discrepancy of £198,000 between what is declared and what is actually spent on Senior Manager salaries. (By taking the £895,000 from the £1 093,000 and it leaves £198,000, or thereabouts, that's been paid out to Senior Managers that has not been declared as such in the accounts.)

If there are 10 such people, Mr Fletcher, Mr Duffy, etc, etc that's almost £20,000 extra each, per year, on top of their already substantial salaries. Could I have identified the size and scope of the secret Senior Management "payment-by-results-performance-bonus", rumoured to be a shareout of the unspent budget?

Simon Greer

*Woodbine Collage, Holehouse Lane,
Whiteley Green, Macclesfield.*

PS: Don't the BW Senior Managers control the rate at which the financial tap is turned on and off? 'Sorry boaters, we can't do any more dredging we need the money for our secret bonus!' Would BW like to offer an explanation?

NABO REPRESENTATIVES

Council Members - contact addresses

Penny Barber

RBOA Liaison/Disabled

Geoffrey Barnett

NW rep

Sue Burchett

Secretary

Roger Davis

Membership Secretary

Christine Denton

Marketing/Rallies

John Denton

Strategic Planning

Peter Foster

NE rep

Peter Lea

Chairman

Phillip Ogden

Special Projects

Nigel Parkinson

Vice Chairman/Eng. Officer

Stephen Peters

River Users Co-ordinator

Geoffrey Rogerson

S Rep

Andrew Sherrey

Treasurer

Nikki Timbrell