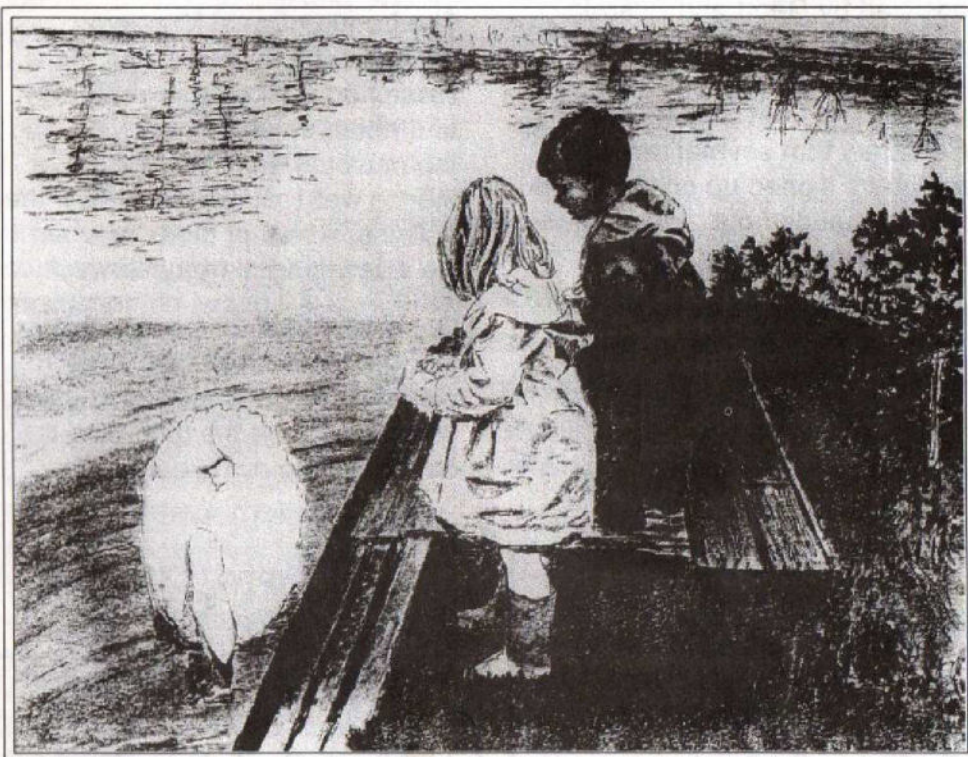




# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Issue: 5/99



*Nancy Larcombe*

# NABO News

# Editorial

I was delighted to meet so many of you at the NABO Lock day at the end of June. Braunston top lock certainly sees a lot of boats through on a Saturday and we had ample opportunity to talk to most of them. We were ably assisted by Geoff and Priscilla and I hope that they soon recovered from their labours. I understand from our Membership Secretary that several new members signed up on the forms that we handed out. I expect we'll do it again next year.

I must thank all those lovely people who have written to me recently; I think the letters section in this issue is longer than ever, and there is a wide variety of subjects and views. Keep on

writing! All letters are published and not usually edited, unless they are very long or repetitive. They may not go into the next edition; it all depends on the amount of 'urgent' news that I need to get in, but they will appear sometime.

I am looking forward to the AGM. The London Canal Museum sounds such an interesting place. I switched on the radio yesterday and heard someone interviewing the museum administrator about the ice well that remains under the building, a relic of the time when ice was imported from Norway!

Come along on 20 November and find out more! And help NABO along. Why not consider whether you would have the time, and the desire to help next year?

*Wendy*

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## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT

I've had a busy month, attending meetings on NABO's behalf. The launch of

BW's Membership Scheme was reported in the last issue, since then, I've been to a National Inland Navigation Forum meeting, BW's annual National User Group meeting, and BW's second AGM.

The Forum brings together the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of all the major national organisations concerned with navigation on inland waterways (except the RYA, which claims it is but isn't). We exchange views on major issues, from the Recreational Craft directive to reciprocal licensing, from towpath cycling to dredging and flood warnings. We usually find we are very much in agreement! We also exchange information on what we have been told by the powers that be and surprisingly, sometimes people tell different organisations quite different things (even, sometimes deliberately). We also try our best to "sing from the same hymn sheet" when responding to consultation; this can involve a bit of give and take but the impact when we do all say the same thing is well worth the effort.

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### **BW considering licence discount for retired boaters**

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BW's User Group Meeting was very useful. Besides an opportunity to meet the new Chairman, George Greener, several key matters were discussed:

\* BW is considering license discounts for retired boat owners who have had a boat on the system for many years. This isn't just a "promise if you'll go away", its people are looking into it

seriously. I have been pressing BW on this issue for many years without success; at last my persistence may finally bear fruit.

\* BW has agreed to hold further discussions on navigable channel dimensions on rivers and broad beam canals. Last year it had said these would only be resolved at the Public Inquiry to be held (eventually) by the DETR, so this is a welcome step.

\* BW will spend about £2 million this year on dredging. It admits this is too little, and calculates it should spend about £4-£5 million. The problem is that dredging isn't part of the "backlog of urgent maintenance" that the government has provided extra funds to clear, although it is part of the "arrears

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congratulated for recognising the problem and looking for ways of dealing with it.

\* BW has admitted that it does very little at present to control cycling and that more needs to be done. It is seeking powers to do so, through changes in its bye-laws and towpath management agreements with local councils. Speed limits and the fitting of bells or horns are on the agenda.

The annual general meeting in contrast, was a pure public relations exercise. The money BW pours into lavishly photographed, expensively printed promotional booklets and slick, expensive videos would pay for a lot of canal repairs. I recognise that marketing and promotion are necessary, and that nowadays you have to produce something that looks good, but there seems to be no limit. Perhaps the Chief Executive should have a good look at the cost of all this and weigh it up against the long term benefits of such lavish productions. A more modest approach might well go down better with users - after all, we are paying for it.

Over the summer, we're responding to consultation on the EA and BW joint license proposals (a "gold license"), writing to civil servants on the latest draft of the noise and exhaust emission

controls in the Recreational Craft Directive, looking at the latest draft of BW's Waterway Standards, and commenting on the latest Boat Safety Scheme changes. I'm also meeting one of the Regional Managers to discuss dredging - and taking a holiday on my boat.

An update on the Recreational Craft Directive . The seventh draft of the noise and exhaust emission control regulations contains some minor improvements (in particular it exempts rebuilds of existing installed engines). However it would still eventually doom most existing vintage or vintage-style engines, put many small engine repairers out of business, and change our waterways scene beyond recognition. Most slow revving twin and three cylinder diesels, such as Bolinders, Gardners, Kelvins, Russell Newberries, Rustons, etc, would become history. BW, the British Marine Industries Federation, the DTI and all the major UK user groups strongly oppose the proposals. NABO is putting our views to the DTI and various EC Commission officials in Brussels, and we will be writing to the appropriate Commissioners once they have been appointed. We hope the directive will eventually include either an exemption for all existing craft, or an extension of the exemption for historic craft to

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modern "replicas" which would include modern canal craft, barges and old-style motor boats. The directive's progress through Brussels bureaucracy is slow, and it will be months before it is laid before the European Parliament. We hope our determined opposition will ensure these proposals never see the light of day in their present form.

I must thank NABO member Geoff Monk for pointing out a mistake in my article about end of garden moorings. BW was denied permission to appeal to the House

of Lords in the Swan Hill Developments Case. He also points out, quite rightly, that most canal acts will have exemptions for moorings at wharves, etc, owned by riparian owners, similar to those in the Grand Junction Canal Act.

And finally - an ex-working boater living in Braunston tells me BW have given MacDonald's a franchise to open the first-ever float-in takeaway! I can't remember whether it's to be below Braunston bottom lock or at the turn

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## **P**SEUDONYM'S **V**iew from the **C**ouncil

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Another sunny day, another Council meeting - for those of us not holidaying. Roger reported on his holiday on the K & A. As a remainder waterway it puts other waterways to shame; with BW staff charming and anglers friendly. The lock-keeper at Devizes introduced himself, asked Roger's name and then proceeded to use it all the way down the flight. No comparison with my trip on the Trent and Mersey and Staffs and Worcs. I saw a computer screen and stinging nettles.

Do BW want boats on the Huddersfield? BW staff were pointing out all the obstacles,

shopping trolleys and such, instead of removing them to make passage possible.

Full length boats can now navigate Salters Lode as long as time and tide are right and the Middle Level Commissioners have given permission.

At Hebdon Bridge the Local Council has written to boaters directing them not to move their boats whilst a two day fishing match is on. If you are in the area, have fun.

The BW AGM has happened and the new chairman, Dr George Greener, gave a speech as did the Minister, Alan Meale.

N° 178189



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Apparently Dr David Fletcher is the "unsung hero of the waterways".

There was a very expensive presentation which included Tony Mason of AWCC supporting the membership scheme. Unlike IWA who thought of "Waterways for All", volunteers doing canal restoration and waterways festivals, first.

NABO believes that anything that gets money to restore the track is good, but using the money from the Grant in Aid to finance the membership scheme hardly seems to be playing the game. A limit needs to be set on how much is to be spent on the scheme otherwise it could become a bottomless pit.

Happily our membership is still increasing and we are keeping our old members as well as gaining new ones, which is very good news. Still needed though are people to attend meetings and

report back, especially in the Oxford and London areas.

As for the last edition of NABO News ..... - suggest that your Buckby can (incidentally only so called if it was made at Buckby, otherwise it should be called a water can, if you really want to be a purist - or an anorak), is in the wrong place, or you have too many flowers on your boat, and we receive loads of letters. Ask for your views, give you money off your subscription - what do we get? A very few replies. Are you happy with what the authorities, and NABO, are doing?

Finally thanks to the member who wrote to Wendy correcting me about the colour of fire extinguishers. Guess what! I am not the technical expert and this advice has saved me from buying new extinguishers.



## WHICH REGION ?

Some confusion has been reported from some members as to which representative they should contact for information or help. Other than those covering specific projects, such as Phillip Ogden (disabled boating), Nigel Parkinson (Engineering), etc, then basically your representatives cover regions which are the same as BW. If you are unsure which region you are in, then ring the rep you think it might be - they will soon tell you whom to contact, if you happen to have picked the wrong one!

If there is no rep for your area, then contact any Council member who will try to help you out. Maybe you'd like to volunteer to help! We always need people to attend meetings and a debrief if you feel you want to help in a less committed way.

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## MIDDLE LEVEL NAVIGATION

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The Middle Level Navigations offer a quiet and peaceful haven for cruising during the busy holiday time when boats may be 'rushing a ring' or queuing for locks on the more popular waterways.

The navigations can be entered from the river Nene via Stanground lock or the tidal section of the Great Ouse via Salters Lode lock. Both these locks have a dual role as sluices as well as navigation locks. Whilst the sluices are open dangerous undertows may be encountered. Boaters must not enter these locks without the attendance of a lockkeeper. Booking a passage in advance is essential

STANGROUND LOCK - 80ft long x 11ft 6ins wide. Lockkeeper Alan Rootham 01733 566413

While at the lock take the chance to purchase an OUSE KEY which is a special type of windlass, needed to work Ashline and Marmont Priory, as well as the Great Ouse locks.

A sanitary station key can also be purchased here, £2, for the facilities at March, where there is also a free pump out. While on this subject, it is wise to use those on Peterborough Town Quay also free and include a pump out. Both Fox's at March and Bill Fen near Ramsey offer all the usual Marina facilities.

The sanitary station key opens the gate in the security fence around Lodes End lock.

SALTERS LODGE LOCK 01366 382292 is 12ft 6ins wide and 62ft long. However it is possible for longer boats to go through on level water when tidal conditions allow.

Any boat over 60ft wishing to navigate Salters Lode lock MUST phone the Middle Level Commissioners (01354 653232) or call at their office in Dartford Road March. The lockkeeper can only pen you through when times and tides are agreed by The Commissioners. (You will observe that much of the Fenland is below sea level any mistakes locking with tidal waters are unthinkable. I live there!)

Note that those longer boats will, at present, be unable to wind at the end of Ramsey High Lode, Wood Walton Nature Reserve and New Dyke at Holme Fen. All well worth a visit. You can always tow a boat in backwards to effect your return!

The Middle Level has a very interesting history and you will miss much if you just use it as a transit route from the Nene to Great Ouse. The Navigations were built as part of the great



engineering works to drain the Cambridgeshire Fens. They are such a success that in places you can look down onto houses that are on drained land, now much lower than the waterways.

At Benwick you can see where the land shrinkage has caused tilting of the houses that were built on rafts on the Fen. The houses lean at different angles, as do the telegraph poles that line the roads.

Holme Woods (Crown Property) contain the lowest point in England. Here, in a clearing, you can see 'The Post', a lamp standard from the Great Exhibition which was sunk into the fen, in 1851, with the top at ground level. Now it stands many feet above the

ground and date marks on it show the change in land levels as the fens dried out.

Last time I boated from Whittlesey to Ramsey I saw five kingfishers, many heron and three barn owls without trying! The wildlife and habitats are worth seeking out.

The Middle Level Navigations are well worth a visit, but think ahead, and phone first - especially if you have a longer boat and intend passing through Salters Lode lock.

I will be pleased to give further information or answer queries. (No I don't work for the Tourist board, I just love the waterways.)

SADIE DEAN

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# TRADITION ON THE CANALS

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Christine Denton's personal view in our last issue has brought forth many views some in support, some not. The following will give you some idea of the response:

*"I applaud Christine Denton's comment about courtesy on the water. I agree with everything she says on that subject. However her second point about tradition on the waterways is exactly that and a personal view that is not uncommon and ,respectfully, total hypocrisy. Tradition is a hyped word. I would accept fundamentalism as being what I think they would wish but can not face. Fundamentalism means that the person accepts the values back at the beginning embracing the limitations that involves.*

*Take our boaters of one hundred years ago. In 1899 with their steam engines or petrol/diesel. The traditional steersman of that period would be bemoaning the use of these noisy smoky modern contraptions that spook the horses. He would hark back to the traditional hardy steersman of 1799 who had to care for his horses and had far less infrastructure to rely upon.*

*A traditional boater nowadays has refrigerators, running water (hot and cold) a multi-fuel stove with back boiler for the central heating backed up by an Everspacher or Alde central heating unit. There will be a traditional engine designed within the last 60 years and still being produced to meet current safety and emission regulations. But don't worry on the*

*outside all is well as they have a buckby can to augment the 900 litre water tank, and mop on top never to be used because the pressure hose is so much more effective. There are the obligatory spot welded rivets all over the bow. How many traditionalists are prepared to go boating without a weed hatch?*

*What really lets Christine Denton down is her comment about fenders. Fenders are not so much to protect your boat as to show courtesy to other boats by making sure that in an accident you mitigate the damage you may inflict upon others.*

*To me traditionalists are boaters who compromise. They compromise the historical truth with the minimum of personal convenience.*

*We can never hang our posterior out over the gunnel anymore thank heavens.*

*I have three very very large pots of flowers on top of the boat that give us as much pleasure as they give those on the tow path. I have a 1,000 watt brass search light on the bow of the boat. Now that is a new tradition I am trying to encourage. I want to meet again, the idiot that came into the Islington Tunnel when I was half way through. He could not pass me or reverse out because his boat was a traditional boat and he did not want to damage the paintwork!!!! " "*

*"By the time you read this, we will have sold our boat and moved back into a bungalow. I thought though that I would respond to your letter/ article.*

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We are behind all your comments except one! Especially in the area of courtesy. We were generally cruising with just the two of us but the one on locking duty always went ahead at locks to be of assistance especially when there was a queue. People were generally appreciative and we can only hope that our courtesy rubbed off. How often have we been in the position of cruising towards a lock in full view and the crew using the lock very tidily close everything down and ignore our approach. Again there are the ignorant ones who are happy to waste water and not wait a few minutes to allow an approaching boat use the free water!

On the traditional side our boat was not in traditional dress and so we did not have Buckby Cans etc. Our ropes were always turned into a coil ready for use and off the deck - a task that all our crew were taught on first joining us.

So where do I take issue? Over the pots - "Rowen" had four and a Swan (our insignia) bursting with blooms. Why? Because we were "live-aboards" and we had no garden to leave behind. So please try not to be so offended in the future - the pots may be someone's only garden."

*"I write with regard to Christine Denton's comments on the traditional way of life on the canals. I couldn't disagree with her more! If mobile phones, refrigerators, televisions, etc had been available to the working boatmen of the past, then they would have used them. The only reason that they didn't use our modern conveniences was that they hadn't*

*been invented yet.*

*If the owner of a modern canalboat wants to put a Buckby can anywhere on the roof of their boat - why not? They are not attempting to emulate the boaters of previous centuries, they just like the look of it. They are also supporting the modern workers by purchasing the canalware painters of today.*

*Most people that I know prefer to look to the future rather than back to the past. They admire the traditions, but don't want to slavishly follow them. They live in an IT age and cannot see what the fuss is about when they use their computers, etc on board their boats.*

*Organisations, such as yourselves, are bemoaning the fact that there are few young people on the waterways today. This attitude of things being wrong unless they are done in the same way as the traditional boater may drive young people away.*

*It seems to me that there are several reasons why we are not getting many young people on the waterways.*

*They cannot afford to buy a boat that is of a reasonable standard and as they are used to high standards in their daily living they prefer not to buy one at all. If they have young children then this situation is reinforced. If they are working, unless it is an occupation that can be followed aboard, they cannot afford to keep a boat moored for all but a few weeks or weekends a year with the excessive cost over use that that implies.*

*Most of the young people that I have spoken to recently on the waterways were:*

■ *hirers (who are beginning to*

*Complain about the costs of hiring as against a foreign holiday)*

- *borrowing the family or a friend's boat*
- *living aboard, either with a job that can be done aboard, or working only in the winter and cruising in the summer.*
- *living aboard, mainly with the assistance of the Social Services benefits*

*I only met one young (under 25) man who owned his own boat. I asked him what drew him to narrow boating and he told me that he had spent a lot of time with his grandfather on his boat so it seemed a natural thing to do. "*

"Personal View seems to want our modern leisure boats to mimic the old working boats in their traditions. Surely we can have our boats and accoutrements as we want them.

My boat is my country cottage and my gret delight is that it moves. It is also my home for the whole summer so I do have flowers, herbs and this year, tomatoes and peppers

I have cabin lace at the windows (something Victorians and later never had - no windows?!) as well as along shelves and I like some brass. My traditions are adapted to me.

As far as where things should be - ropes are in the most convenient place for me, a single-handed boater. My chimney (and on two previous boats) have always been at the front of the boat and my cans at the back near me. Filling them with water stops them toppling and means they can be lifted down at low bridges. In

over 10 years on different boats they have never marked the paintwork!

I have noticed that full-time boating friends do not have all the lace, brass and bargework knick-knacks, nor do the working boatmen wear white shirts and waistcoats to work, rather the working garb of today - jeans and tee shirts,

Boatowners are a diverse crowd, some too non-conformist to live on land, so live and let live.

A comment on courtesy - I do agree that it seems to have deteriorated over the years - perhaps more of us started boating by hiring and were taught the rules of the road by the yard.

However, I must say that on the Rivers Ouse (Ely and Bedford) and Cam, where I am at the moment, I have had a lot of help.

As one boater said, "If you moor on the river, everyone knows you and you'd get a bad name if you didn't wait at locks and help others."

I would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to this personal view. I have not selected letters, but have printed all those received in their entirety

Perhaps there are some lessons to be learned by us all.



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# TOWPATH TELEGRAPH

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## **Annual General Meeting**

The NABO AGM will take place at the London Canal Museum, New Wharf Street, London on **Saturday 20 November 1999 commencing at 10.45 am**. Coffee/tea will be available from 10.30 am. Please see the next issue of NABO News for details of the business of the meeting.

## **Stoppages:**

NABO will receive a copy of the Stoppage List for this winter by the end of August. If you think you will have any problems, please contact a Council member to see if there are any stoppages that will affect your plans.

All licence holders will receive their own copy by the end of September.

## **Courtesy on the Canals**

NABO has received a number of examples recently from all round the country, but particularly in the Southern Grand Union, Braunston and Kinver areas, of BW employees and officials being rude to users. We would like anyone who has such an experience to make a note of exactly what was said; who said it; the time and date; and let NABO Chairman know so that a complaint can be made. BW cannot treat their customers in this way.

However, this is a two-way procedure, - members must be considerate and not be rude to BW staff, particularly lock-keepers and lengthsman. Conversely, if you have received good service, then let us know - credit where it is due!

## **Boat Safety Scheme - LPG Use**

As a consequence of the revision of the British Standard BS5482(3) relating to the installation of gas systems in craft it has been necessary for BW to amend parts 7 & 8 of the BSS as they are based on the British Standard.

The key changes are as follows:

- \* All gas appliances, apart from cookers, must be room sealed
- \* Any modification to the existing system must meet the new British Standard requirements and any replacement/non-serviceable appliances are replaced with room sealed appliances.
- \* All appliance burners, including pilot lights must have a flame failure device.
- \* All flued appliances are to be tested to ensure the safe passage of combustion gases to outside the vessel.
- \* Multi-cylinder LPG systems must be equipped with non-return valves.

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A full copy of the draft Boat Safety Scheme proposals is available from the Boat Safety Scheme office (Tel: 01923 201278).

Comments are invited to be received by 30 September. It is BW's intention to introduce the new requirements immediately after the consultation

### **Reminder re BCN Keys**

Don't forget that you need a key at certain strategic points of the BCN to enable you to unlock the paddle gear.

### **Advance Warning**

The Trent will be closed below Meadow Lock on August Bank Holiday 2000. This is whilst a new bridge is swung across by Railtrack (not something that BW has any control over!).

### **Worcester Festival**

There will be a charge of £2.50 for mooring and a maximum period of 48 hours at Chapter Meadows.

The fees, which will be collected by a Riverside Warden, will apply for each stop not just overnight mooring. The money raised is to fund the mooring improvements. This charge will not be applicable to those paying for Festival mooring, but will apply before and after the Festival dates.

### **Marinas**

Concerns are being expressed at all the proposed Marinas in the

Midland area, particularly the one halfway down the Atherstone flight. Where is all the water to come from? BW seem to be buying and building new marinas. Are BW phasing out linear moorings?

### **Long Itchington Embankment Winter Stoppage**

BW has agreed to review the possibility of mooring north of the embankment for those who moor to the immediate south and wish to visit Birmingham for the Millennium celebrations. Please submit your request to the Regional Waterway Manager

### **Towpath Maintenance**

Our reps have received many complaints and comments about the overgrown towpaths. We understand that BW's current policy is only to cut the water's edge once a year in the autumn.

Unfortunately BW's grant covers maintaining the canal, not the towpath, so there is no point in chasing them nationally to do something. If you experience problems at a particular point, then contact the local manager as they can sometimes find the funds to help. (You could always follow the example of a boat I saw recently with a strimmer and lawn mower on top. Apparently the owner cuts the grass and trims the



edge where-ever he moors, if it is needed! - Editor)

### **Caldon Canal Silver Jubilee**

To celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the re-opening of the Caldon Canal on 28 September 1974, the Caldon Canal Society, together with the Stoke-on-Trent and River Churnet Boat Clubs, are inviting boaters to join them over the last two weeks in September. On the weekend of 18/19 September boats will cruise the whole length of the Caldon Canal between Etruria and Hazlehurst Junction and the length to Leek and Froghall.

The following weekend there will be a gathering of boats at the Stoke-on-Trent Boat Club, Endon Wharf.

For further details contact Mrs G Salt, Secretary, Stoke-on Trent Boat Club, Post Lane, Endon, Stoke-on-Trent ST9 9DT. Tel: 01782 534537

### **Consideration for Others**

Can we all try to have more consideration for other boaters?

We all enjoy the peace of the waterways, and whilst we know that engines/generators must be run to charge batteries, etc, can I remind everyone to keep such machines running to the minimum and not before 8am or after 8pm. You know it makes sense!

## **Awareness on the Towpath**

Avoid conflict

Use discretion to avoid exacerbating a situation.

Always stay with your boat and crew whenever possible.

Do not threaten with a weapon or missile of any kind.

Do not leave valuable, wallets, purse, etc, in sight.

Close doors while working locks and swing bridges.

Keep a cheap or broken camera in sight

Know exactly where you are on the waterway, bridge number, road number, land mark, etc.

Have local emergency phone numbers to hand

Plan and time cruising through known difficult areas: early morning starts during school holidays are recommended. Plan your overnight moorings in advance.

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# COUNCIL TAX AND BOATERS

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This subject is still concerning a lot of boaters, the following letter being the latest received:

*"I wonder if you can help me. I am sure I have read in a recent NABO news, an article regarding council tax for residential boaters. If you have anything on the subject could you let me have it, or, could you put me in touch with someone who has some experience with the subject. The reason for my enquiry is that I have a residential mooring at Norbury Junction, but do not live on my boat. Last week, I had delivered to my boat a council tax demand from the valuation office, stating that I am in category A and would be charged accordingly.*

*On speaking to my neighbour, who does live on her boat, the valuation officer who spoke to her gave the clear indication that they felt entitled to charge residential boaters and in fact, all boats were being considered as "holiday homes" and would be rated as such.*

*If I lived on my boat I would not mind paying the tax, however, all the service I get, I feel are included in my BW residential licence fee and I am being asked*

*to pay simply because my mooring is classed as residential. Having got what I consider to be one of the best mooring spots on the system, I do not want to antagonise BW, however, there is a limit as to how much I will pay to be there.*

*Can anyone give me some advice.*

I can do no better than to print the following from the Residential Boat Owner's Association and to reprint the letter received from Adrian of the Dutch Barge Association (from the last newsletter).

*I write with reference to the letter from Leslie Burke in the 3/99 newsletter.*

*NABO members may be interested to know that the RBOA has done a considerable amount of work on this over the last few years. We have finally extracted practice notes from the government, complete with examples of scenarios that we drafted.*

*If you do not live on your boat, you should not pay council tax. If your boat is your sole or main residence. You may pay council*

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*tax on the boat and the mooring, you may pay tax on the mooring alone, you may pay a portion of tax on the mooring, you may pay nothing but the mooring is subject to non-domestic rates. Confused? We sure were which is why we've done all the work on this!*

*Basically, council tax legislation goes back to the old rating legislation which is all about rights over land. The extent of your rights determines how you are assessed.*

*It may be worth just clearing up a couple of common misconceptions. If you are on the council tax valuation list you MUST pay. This applies even if you should not be on the list. If at a later date you are removed, you will get a refund.*

*So, if you get a bill pay first and argue later. If you don't pay you'll just finish up in the county court where the presiding judge will know little about boats and will care less. Being on the valuation list gives the council a legally enforceable debt against you. It's a bit like the separation between Inland Revenue Collectors and Inspectors, for those of you who've enjoyed an encounter with them!*

*Another popular complaint is that*

*boaters feel they receive no services from the council so shouldn't pay anything. The local council has a legal right to collect council tax. What they do with the money is up to them, they do not have any enforceable contract with you to supply anything at all. Telling you about all the marvellous things they do on the leaflet that comes with your bill is simply a marketing ploy from the council. If you don't like what they're doing with your dosh, you sort it out via the ballot box.*

*If you'd like a copy of the council tax guidance notes together with a couple of articles from the RBOA magazine "Soundings" and a helpful flowchart, please send £3.20 to RBOA, PO Box 46, Grays, Essex, RM18 8DZ. RBOA membership details from the same address. All cheques payable to "RBOA".*

Penny Barber  
Finance Manager  
Aston Students' Guild  
The Triangle  
Birmingham  
B4 7ES  
Tel:0121 359 3621 extn 4033  
(automatic switchboard)  
Pager: 0941 111285  
Tel:0121 359 6531 (Guild  
switchboard)

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Dear Editor

The application of Council Tax to residential boats is complex, and was inconsistent around the country. As a result, Clive Wren (for RBOA, the Residential Boat Owners Association) and myself (for DBA, the Dutch Barge Association), had several lengthy discussions with the Valuation Office (VO, the government body responsible) over almost two years, to clarify the situation and agree a standard approach.

The VO was very co-operative, and this proved to be a worthwhile exercise. The result is Practice Note 7 issued by the VO, which guides local valuation officers in the application of the tax to boats and the decision as to which band a taxable floating dwelling should be in.

You should be able to obtain a copy the Practice Note from your local VO, but be prepared for some head-scratching reading as, despite the best efforts of all concerned, the underlying legislation forces the Note to be rather technical.

For a simpler but less comprehensive summary, visit the "Old News" page of the DBA's web site, [www.barges.org](http://www.barges.org).

Further, RBOA will (for a small

fee) mail you a somewhat more detailed version.

With respect to your neighbour's case, you should be aware that it is the "mooring", not the boat, which is subject to the tax. So he is probably right. If he lives at his mooring, he is almost certainly taxable. Moreover, if his boat is not away from the mooring for at least several weeks a year, it is possible that the value of the boat will be included in the banding decision.

I hope that this information will be useful to those of you in this situation.

## **DON'T FORGET**

Earn yourself an extra six month's membership of NABO, at no additional cost!

Introduce a new member and claim the additional time.

Send the Membership Secretary the new member details and subscription, together with your name and address

# River Review

## Linton Lock

The ownership and management of this lock passed from the Linton Lock Commissioners to British Waterways on 18 June 1999, as a result of an order by DETR. This means that the whole of the River Ouse navigation from Goole to Swale Nab, the River Ure Navigations and the Ripon canal are all the responsibility of BW. All queries should be addressed to the Waterways Manager responsible for the River Ouse navigation. He is Keith Boswell, whose address is: British Waterways, Naburn Lock,

Naburn, York YO1  
4RU. Tel - 01904  
728229, fax - 01904  
728860.



BW is keen to see an increase in the number of boats visiting this area as they say that they are now able to guarantee security of access and that the facilities at Ripon and Boroughbridge have been improved. They emphasise that there will be no fees charged for passing through Linton Lock as anybody with a BW river registration or canal licence will be able to use it as an integral part of the national network.

## DEREK PEARSON

### *FENDER AND CHIMNEY MAKER*

**Narrowboat 'Wylo'**

**White Lion Wharf**

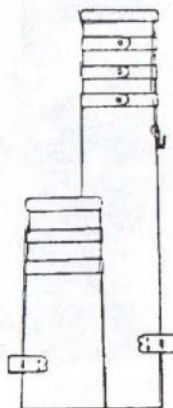
**Startops End**

**Marsworth, Tring**

**Herts HP23 4LJ**

**After 9.9.99, please phone  
for whereabouts!**

Telephone: 0836 242565



## Safety Considerations

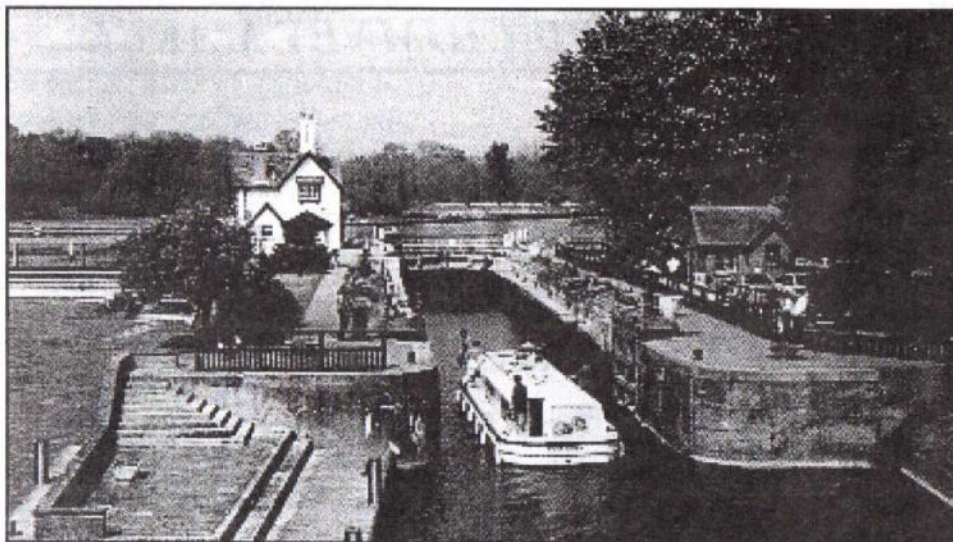
Considerable concern has been expressed over firms setting up to hire equipment such as pedaloes at Barrow on Soar and in Lincoln on Brayford Pool. This has caused dangerous situations when they are met under the Glory Hole by large narrowboats. The Local Authority can do apparently nothing as no permission is required to set up such a business. NABO is concerned for safety and is monitoring the situation, If you have any information please let us know.

NABO is also concerned about the use of unsuitable boats on rivers. There have been cases where narrowboats have set out upon such waters with their front doors wide open. Boaters are reminded that all doors and windows must be fully

closed and sealed to prevent water entering the boat.

A lot of narrowboats are not sufficiently powered to cope with increased river flows and it is important that they take the advice of the lock-keepers - they do know what they are talking about. The rivers are running faster than ten years ago. Riparian development with the road and roof drainage being passed into the rivers can cause sudden rises in levels.

The Environment Agency are not always informed of planning applications and they do not have powers to do more than object. They are concerned about the situation. It might be improved by height gauges being installed on all bridges on rivers.



Goring Lock

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# NATIONAL USER GROUP FORUM

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Notes from the meeting held on 8 July 1999

Attention was drawn to the DETR's Framework Document which gives BW responsibilities for heritage and the environment which it didn't have before, as well as the duty to help other organisations responsible for running waterways. The current 3 year funding commitment may be extended by government for a further five years if BW's performance is satisfactory. Two-thirds of BW's income can be ring-fenced from the annual expenditure and carried forward for specific purposes. This means that BW can now negotiate three year contracts to get better value for money. BW is entering into long term contracts with riparian local authorities and the new regional development authorities. Money is being put to one side for land acquisition and development and the water transfer grid study is going forward.

## **Maintenance backlog**

The backlog of urgent repairs to potentially dangerous structures is now down to £83 million and it is anticipated it will be eliminated over 7 years: the

government has agreed to this. £13.3 million is to be spent this coming year. However, there are also "statutory" arrears of maintenance which are not potentially dangerous but which would cost £165 million to put right. This included dredging. This situation need to be dealt with or they will become potentially dangerous and add to the £83 million. Expenditure in the coming year included £6million on the arrears of maintenance, including £2 million on dredging. This is insufficient to make progress in clearing the dredging backlog. The £2 million will pay for dredging 152 km of canal.

## **Membership Scheme and Trust proposals**

Nearly 1,000 survey replies have been received and the response of overwhelmingly positive.

Market research has been commissioned. BW acknowledge that the membership scheme won't make money.

The new museum trust is doing

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well and the combined museum has been designated officially as one of the country's top museums. It is raising funds for the Anderton Lift and the Forth & Clyde restoration. It has also acquired several railway company archives relating to canals at a nominal cost.

Boat Licences and charges. Continuous cruising and freight transport consultation papers are coming out this summer. BW's bye-laws are being revised and consultation will take place in due course. An updated Moorings Matrix table will be circulated to all user groups once the new charges are in place. The proposed 7-metre limit on trailable boats is being revised.

NABO strongly urged discounts for pensioners and young first-time boaters. BW acknowledged that the precedent is there (the 10% discount for historic boats) and has agreed to look into it.

### **Cycling**

User groups felt that more control over cyclists was required, BW conceded that they were doing very little to control cycling and that more needed to be done. The bye-laws need changing to give

them power to impose speed limits, warning devices (bells, horns, etc), BW is insisting on, and getting, grants from local authorities towards towpath management as well as maintenance.

### **Waterway Standards**

These have been updated and are available in draft form. Users groups have been invited to comment. New environmental standards are being developed.

### **Representation on National User Group**

The Government want BW to consult more widely and to involve local authorities. BW are reviewing the structure of the National User Group and the scale and type of representation and they might move to segmented meetings.

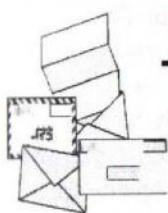
### **Miscellaneous Items**

A consultation paper about the joint BW/EA licence review has been prepared as user groups are to comment by 1 September.

BW is against the RCD exhaust noise and pollution control proposals and will assist as much as possible. The NINF lock measurement paper is agreed subject to

*Continued on page 31*





## LETTERS

Dear Editor

You should be aware that there are already different classes of boaters on the Sharpness Canal.... those who pay for their moorings and those who pay nothing.

The new charges by BW are a long overdue attempt to crack down on those boat owners who exploit the "continuous cruising" excuse by moving their boats from place to place to avoid paying for a permanent mooring. Many of these people do not even leave this length of canal from one year to the next. In the past six years I have paid some £3,500 for moorings for my narrowboat while others who make full use of all facilities have paid nothing. BW complain about lack of funds but collection of monies from the cheats would go a long way toward improving the canal for the honest majority.

*Brian Taber  
Gloucestershire.*

*How I agree with you! NABO's position is that NABO supports legitimate continuous cruisers (who do not put any more strain on the system to justify a swingeing increase): NABO does not support the abusers of this licence who effectively moor in one place and "shuffle" along the towpath. BW needs more modern powers to deal effectively with the situation and we would hope*

*to see their Bye-laws updated. -  
Editor*

Dear Wendy,

In the last NABO News you printed a letter mentioning the problems encountered when approaching Castleford Junction from the Wakefield direction. If the traffic light shows red, BW are understandably adamant that boats may proceed neither right, left nor centre. Unlike the author of your letter, most inland boats do not have VHF.

Especially when there is a bit of fresh and/or a wind, it is tricky holding a boat until the light goes green. If one turns to stem the flow, the lockkeeper may assume one is going home!

At successive User Group meetings the Calder Navigation Society and local boat clubs have asked for BW to provide something to tie up to. At last we have a new Area Manager who understands the problem but has no funds with which to address it. Please would you ask any other NABO members who have had problems here to write to the BW Area Manager at Lock Lane, Castleford, WF10 2LH, pressing for a suitable facility to be provided. All we need is, on the Calder's south bank, are two or three stanchions or piles with cross members and bollards to

---

which a boat may be tied. There are plenty of examples on the Thames and BW already have some of their own on the Severn.

*Keith Noble*

*Honorary Secretary*

*Calder Navigation Society*

Dear Editor

**Bradley Swing Bridge, Leeds & Liverpool canal**

This swing bridge, between Skipton and Bingley, carries a minor road. Nevertheless, it is made of metal, with a proper road surface upon it, and it is very, very heavy. It is impossible for one person to open it, and barely possible for two people: it becomes manageable with three people. So much effort is involved that on two previous occasions when my husband and I have attempted to operate it, each of us in turn has damaged our backs.

I have twice written to David Blackburn, Waterways Manager Leeds & Liverpool Canal East, about this bridge. I was told that it is owned by North Yorkshire County Council, who refuse to do anything about it. This may explain the situation, but it doesn't excuse it. If my understanding is correct, boats have a right of navigation which must be maintained by British Waterways. If this bridge cannot be operated by one person (if everyone on a

boat gets off to operate the bridge, the steerer cannot get back onto the boat as he/she will be on the non-towpath side: on the western side the boat cannot be tied up on the non-towpath side, then I maintain that it is not possible to continue navigation.

I am wondering whether NABO, for example, could sue British Waterways for failure to maintain navigation at this point. Hopefully, this would force BW to take action against North Yorkshire CC, and then just maybe something would be done.

I wholeheartedly concur with the suggestion in NABO News 4/99, that boaters call out BW for assistance whenever there is difficulty, and I shall certainly do so in future at this bridge. But in these circumstances, this action alone is unlikely to lead to any improvement in the long term.

I would be interested to read of other boaters' views especially those who have had experience of Bradley Swing Bridge.

*Carole Sampson*

Dear Wendy

Further to your editorial in NABO News 3/99 and Robert's letter in 4/99.

Upon reading of the member making cruel and unkind comments about the content of

---

NABO News, I felt extremely angry and upset on your behalf. Having second-hand experience of editing a magazine, I know how many hours of work are involved in collating, laying-out and proof reading a magazine. I think the member in question should be reminded that all NABO Council members are unpaid volunteers (I sincerely hope that above minimum expenses are paid). Such derogatory comments only serve to depress the person giving so freely of her time: we are lucky that she hasn't, so far, resigned. For my own part, my husband and I both vie to get hold of NABO News first, whereupon each of us reads it from cover to cover before doing anything else. I love the tongue-in-cheek literary style, and I applaud the skill of those authors who can write as if they are speaking the words.

The member criticising the content should put up or shut up. Constructive criticism may well be accepted: negative criticism does no-one a favour.

*Carole Sampson*

*(Thank you for your understanding and kind comments. This subject is now closed for correspondence - any other complimentary letters will be read with great delight, but not published! - Editor)*

Dear Mrs Hook

During a recent canalboat journey from Chester to Nantwich I came across a large sign on the embankment above the river Gowy. The sign was white with black lettering and could be seen for some considerable distance. Not only did its presence detract from the beauty of the landscape, it also proclaimed that BW can afford to pay for such a grand (and temporary) proclamation of work being carried out. I could not see the purpose for such a sign. As a parish priest I know how much church noticeboards cost. Our most recent one cost over £300, is not as big as the Gowy sign, and was erected by volunteers.

I have written to BW in the hope that such unnecessary (and costly) canalside furniture may cease to be erected. Do you think that there is any hope of there being a change in policy? A little further along the Shroppie I was unable to get within two metres of the bank. Perhaps BW will give me the sign (when the work is completed) to use as a boarding plank?

Carry on NABO!

*Father Brian Williams  
Stoke on Trent*

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Dear Editor

I refer to the article in the June 1999 issue of NABO News page 8 -Planning Failure.

I understand from his column that Peter Lea is concerned about the Government's failure to properly incorporate planning guidance to support canal-side heritage. I recognise that this is something that we should all be concerned about. However, Peter does not give any specifics as to what structures NABO sees as necessary to protect and preserve, and what controls NABO would like to see exerted on new structures.

I raise this because, in the past, I have encountered some who take a very black and white view. That is, they wish all canal heritage structures to be preserved, irrespective of their state, usefulness and location. Additionally they object to any development that is not specifically canal oriented. They also implicitly assume that all other canal enthusiasts will hold similar views!

I, and I suspect many others, are interested in conservation, but only when old structures have a contemporary value. Buildings need both a use and to be maintained otherwise they will simply become an eyesore, dangerous and rotting. Heritage

buildings cannot be retained simply because of their past. To be retained they must find a modern use (good examples exist at Gloucester and Shardlow docks) otherwise they should be replaced by structures that do offer value to modern life. The proviso must be that developments should offer a sympathetic face to the canal, but not necessarily a canal oriented function.

The area surrounding Gas Street basin in Birmingham is a good example. When I first knew it in the late '60s it comprised many old warehouses, all in various stages of collapse. Now the whole area has become a vibrant centre in Birmingham. None of the new buildings have a canal function (except the ghastly bridge over the stop lock) but the general aspect is so attractive that the area is visited by numberless visitors and locals whereas in the past only dedicated enthusiasts even knew how to get onto the canal. Birmingham has retaken its position as England's second city, and the BCN is at the centre of it. This can only be to the benefit of the canals as they are kept constantly in mind and in the media, and youth grows up recognising the attractiveness and use of the canals. 30 years ago people simply regarded the

---

Dudley no 2 line and many lesser used BCN canals. Only by attracting non enthusiasts to the canals will funding remain available to maintain the canals. Gas Street basin is, of course, a honey pot location. There are many warehouses elsewhere on the system - in various states of repair. Some of these have found modern use whilst others decay. And as they decay a point is reached where they must be demolished, at least to the point where they are made safe. No legislation or planning guidance can retain structures for which no one can find a commercial value. For example, on the GU near Hay Mills, Birmingham, there is a disused wharf which has been untended for years. No one shows any interest because it is in an unfashionable location. Other structures have been razed in the Birmingham area to be replaced with attractive buildings and parks which serve the community. Examples abound: new housing and parks in several locations along the Garrison locks (where an old canal/rail interchange basin has been lost); the Merry Hill Waterfront on the site of the derelict Round Oaks steel works in Brierley Hill; City Centre residential accommodation by the Indoor Arena on the industrial site of Soho in Birmingham. By reusing old industrial sites further loss of

Green Belt can be minimised and transport needs reduced.

Perhaps Peter would like to share with us his views on balancing heritage and preservation with development.

Christopher Boxall

Dear Wendy,

I have recently retired through ill health and have been considering long term cruising on a narrow boat I was using *Life Afloat* with its valuable information and hints and tips including reasonably priced boats but I have now been informed that the magazine is no longer in circulation due to marital and monetary problems.

I am now out on a limb as most company's information is revolved around sales blurb and your magazine is aimed at present boat owners only. Is there another mag which bridges the gap between life on land and life on the canals or someone out there willing to take on the missing link. To give you some idea of the problem here are a few questions.

initial start up costs?

45 foot narrow boats priced between £31,000 and £35,000?

as a long term cruiser, what is the policy on moorings?

what is tow path rage?

These are only some of the

---

questions that spring to mind I hope you agree a mag specialising on the subject would invaluable. I hope you can help

*John Robinson  
Wilmslow*

*(I don't know of any magazine that can help Mr Robinson - do any members have any information that can be passed on? - Editor)*

Dear Editor

You asked for feedback: so here goes:

**Boat Safety Scheme:** I am fed up with BW continually moving the goal posts. My boat passed, but it won't next time without a lot of expensive work, including changing all the windows! If my windows are unsafe, why am I allowed to continue with them for 4 years? (I think the answer is that BW did not want us to realise how much it is going to cost us in total). We are told the scheme is ALL about safety; *some* boats that fail are classed as unsafe, this must mean that the remainder that fail are NOT unsafe, so why are they failed?

**"Tidy Towpaths"** (issue p9) is beautifully and emotionally written. But if the towpath edge is never mown bushes grow there and turn into trees. These hinder any towing from the towpath which is what it is for, and spoil the correct

appearance of a towpath and thus damage the heritage of the canal. I like to see flora between the walking surface and the hedge. If the writer doesn't mind being stung by nettles, or her leg broken by stepping into a hole hidden by vegetation when landing, does that give her the right to assume that others don't mind either?

**"There is to be a three week stoppage free zone either side of the New Year"** (P12). I

understand that Bow Locks will be closed throughout this period. Bow Locks are the nearest access to the West India Dock complex, and the only access to the only waterway from which one can see the Dome without going onto the Thames - which is expected to be horrendously congested with much larger craft than ours.

**Mooring Matrix** "not acceptable for a Waterway Manager to decide how much he wants to charge, stretch the facilities core to the maximum (sometimes charging for facilities the moorer provided) and then call the difference the 'location factor' score" But this is exactly what one regional manager openly told me is done.

*Ron Bingham  
Welling, Kent*



continued from page 24

minor changes. The channel

dimension paper is being discussed with waterway managers and BW agreed to remind managers of the national dredging policy.. BW agreed to hold further discussions on channel dimensions for rivers and wide beam waterways.

The new membership scheme will not provide any further funding for remainder waterways. BW is spending 1 million a year on them now. Control of overhanging trees has been incorporated into the waterway standards (headroom).

APCO complained about the prevalence of linear moorings and their impact on the visual amenity of the waterways and the financial viability of marinas.

Users raised the question of designating long stretches of towpath for moorings (usually with time limits) or (lately) for angling. It was generally agreed that this was unnecessary and undesirable, and towpath use should be on a first come, first served basis except where controls were really necessary.

BW have issued notes on towpath awareness. *(They are printed on p 17 - Editor).*

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