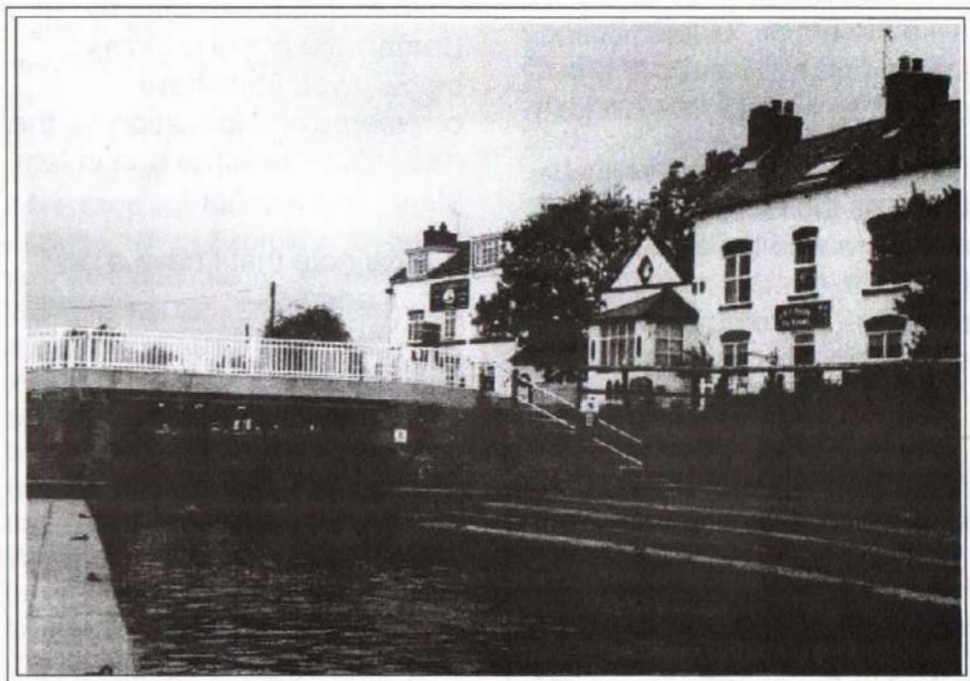


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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Issue: 1/00



Trent Lock, River Trent/ Erewash Canal

NABO News

February 2000

Editorial

Little did I think that I would be writing to you again in another issue of NABO News when I said "goodbyes and thank you" in the last edition.

Due to some unfortunate circumstances I have been asked to act as "Guest" Editor for the first two issues of this new Millennium!

I am glad of the opportunity to thank all those very thoughtful members who have taken the trouble to contact me with kind remarks regarding both my editorship, and my health.

I am pleased to report that my problems will not stop us boating and I am, in fact, looking forward to an extended cruise starting on Good Friday and ending on 9 June. We plan to complete the Avon ring - first time through Tardebigge - and then just to go where our bow points!

Contact me at the address below if you have comments or information for the next edition which is due in late March or early April.

Please note that I have a new Email address.

Wendy

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National Association of Boat Owners

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THE CHAIRMAN'S SPOUTINGS

I have been caught out by the Winter Stoppages. We read the stoppage list, as sent out by BW, made our plans and arranged to go south to Apsley for the 18th of February. We believed the stoppages were such that we could do this comfortably. On checking with a list pinned to a sanitary station we find bridge 99 on the G U isn't closed from the 24th January till 11th February as advertised but from 31st January until the 18th of February. BW has now admitted making an error in their original list. They have called a meeting to see if it can be rescheduled or finished early. This will be very helpful for, as well as being Chairman of this Association with my other hat on, my husband and I are involved with the Waterway Recovery Group. We have arranged to do some work in co-operation with the CNOA and the Apsley Paper Trail on the river Gade. This involves both us and the CBOA getting boats there.

A member has contacted us as he is being asked to pay Council Tax at the 50% rate on his Holiday Home - a boat on long term moorings. This is made more interesting by the fact that the Council has declared that it is unfit to live on. We have been assured

by BW that this should not in fact be charged so we will be helping this member to sort this out. If anyone else has any information that could help or knows of anyone else being charged in this way, please let me know as soon as possible as it could be of assistance to us. We know Council Tax is charged to people who permanently live on their boats but you don't have to pay when you are absent from your mooring for between two to four weeks. Don't forget to ask for your money back when you go cruising or even have a change of scene.

The gas regulations are getting sillier by the day. I really believe that the gas industry and the Boat Safety Scheme have this time shot themselves in the foot by specifying room sealed equipment that is not actually available. Your boat may be lit by candle or paraffin lamps and heated by solid fuel stove, with the dangers of both a blocked chimney or the fire door flying open and the coals being shot into the boat - both of which are known to have happened recently. But that's fine by BSS standards.

In a house I can choose what appliances I like and choose

when to have them checked. Fair enough, if I never had them checked and it blew up then I would have a problem. BSS say that there were two deaths last year attributed to Carbon Monoxide poisoning on boats. One of these through running a petrol generator inside a cabin so what difference would be made by room sealed appliances? Perhaps we should ban ropes on boats as they might cause accidents or ban boats as they are obviously "unsafe". The need for a Boat Safety Scheme in the first place was pretty doubtful. We have never been able to get figures to justify the "rules" and very much doubt whether safety has improved. The latest batch of gas "rules" shows how absurd the BSS has become.

If you need a BSC in the near future and you have gas on your boat I then recommend that you make sure that your Examiner / Surveyor is NOT Corgi registered , At present a non registered examiner is unable to fail a boat on tests that he is not allowed to conduct. Another absurdity.

We received the information that the total number of boat safety certificates issued is 58,332. Passes stand at 39,749 certificates. 14,404 failure certificates have been issued

which have now passed but 4,179 are still outstanding, This masks the true figure of failures, as some boats fail but do not get issued with a failure certificate, as the work necessary to pass is done promptly. This is beginning to cause hardship as boaters get caught in a catch 22 situation. They either can't or think they can't get a safety certificate, they then can't get a licence or insurance. They have now broken every rule in the BW rule book so along comes your nice patrol officer with a section 8 and they are homeless. This includes families and the elderly who have lived for years on the system without previous problems. I am not condoning non-payment of dues but some boaters need help rather than harassment. We tend to forget that there are people who can't read or write or aren't mentally agile enough to sort out the problems that have been imposed on them.

BW has gone back to the drawing board once again over the son of high intensity licences "what is not continuous cruising". BW assured us that the proposals were not to procure more income, the proposals were to deal with a mixture of "inappropriate behaviour" and obtaining something others were paying for". Again B.W. told us that they didn't

know the number of problem boats, but admitted that it was small. To sort this BW felt the need to bring in draconian measures and pry into our lives in a completely unacceptable way, as well as making sure that we moved 20 miles every 14 days. These rules would have applied only to anyone registered as a continuous cruiser.

The user groups were invited to a meeting to discuss this with BW. We were unanimous in condemning such blatant discrimination. Any rules should apply to all boaters not just a small minority. The proposals that we ended with were as follows:-

Pattern of boat movements- all customers

Without BW permission staying in the same place for more than 14 days.

Place

To be defined on the ground at a local level, by the Waterway Manager after consultation.

Parameters

- a) Normally round 10 km between non paying 14 day or towpath mooring.
- b) Not to return to that place within 28 days.

Nabo didn't agree to a).

We feel that each place should be defined. 6 miles is far too much in most cases. Blisworth is definitely a different place to Stoke Bruerne although they are only 2.5 miles apart. BW assured us that this wouldn't cause them any problems.

We now wait to see what BW actually come up with. The problem is one of mooring not of cruising.

Have we a member who can attach the chairman's computer (Windows 3.1 486 laptop no c.d. drive) and her Nokia communicator to the internet? Willing to travel!

Please note:

Simon Greer has resigned from NABO Council.

If he was representing any members, who still want NABO assistance, then please write to the Chairman at the address given on the back page of this newsletter.

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BOAT SAFETY SCHEME

1. NEW BSS BOOKLETS

Members should be aware that the requirements of the Boat Safety Scheme changed on the 3 January. Revised parts 7 and 8 affect gas installations and appliances. The new standards apply not only to new installations but also to modifications made to existing installations and replacement appliances.

A new issue of the blue/grey booklets has been produced by BW and all boaters would be advised to obtain copies from Watford. The Booklets are clearly marked 'Edition 2 October 1999'.

Destroy previous editions to avoid confusion.

Members should be mindful that BW require that boats should comply at all times, not just at the 4 yearly intervals when the examination is due. This means members need to read the updated Standards and make the necessary modifications now.

This year sees the application of the BSS to two new trenches of boat on EA waterways: a) Those built in 1991 and after b) Those built in 1959 and before. Boats built between these dates should already comply. The bottom line is

that many craft must now comply with the rules for the first time. Please let NABO know what problems (if any) you encounter and what it costs you to obtain your pass certificate.

Without it, you will be refused a licence.

Copies of the new booklets are obtainable from

BOAT SAFETY SCHEME,
Willow Grange, Church Road,
Watford. WD13QA.

Tel 01923 201278.

Fax 01 923 201 240

2. OUR REACTION

NABO Council discussed (yet again!) the BSS at our Nuneaton meeting, Sat 22 Jan. The sentiment was that for the average boater the scheme is now over blown, over complicated and over expensive. Council felt elements of it are not necessary and that the Scheme contains much that is a hotchpotch of mismatched standards and ideas.

Seemingly nobody has produced actual figures to show it has been effective in reducing accidents. Indeed current figures may even point to a worse recent safety

record. As far as actual costs to boaters are concerned, we are the only organisation that has surveyed its boating membership and have real figures to back up our views.

Boaters were originally promised a simple MOT type Safety Scheme. (60 checks?). Today we have over 350 checks. And that's not the end of it! It would seem if this is your second test and your boat receives a Fail Certificate you will now have only 28 days to correct any faults. The previous 6 months period of grace has been severely curtailed!

Council expressed the unanimous view that the scheme should not be further extended until the wrinkles that already exist, in significant measure, are ironed out. Any constructive thoughts to the Editor please.

3. THE NEW GAS REGS

The latest revision to the Boat Safety Scheme concerning gas installations and gas appliances came into effect 3 Jan 2000. A sort of New Year present to boaters from the BSS!

NABO expressed its concern about specific aspects of the changes during the consultation period late last year and we stand by our criticisms. Our chief

misgivings relate to the BSS specifying gas appliances that are not even manufactured yet!

It is now unacceptable to replace old appliances with similar models. All gas appliances apart from cookers must be room sealed. This mainly affects water heaters and refrigerators. All appliance burners, including pilot lights must have a flame failure device that completely closes off the gas supply. There are exemptions in respect of existing vessels but all new and replacement appliances must comply with the Standard.

We have made enquiries and have had difficulties finding manufacturers who produce equipment which comply with the new regulations. We know Electrolux are working on a prototype sealed combustion fridge but one of the largest producers of marine cookers is not even working on developing new appliances in 2000. The limited range of marine cookers presently available includes one model which costs nearly £1,500.

We have not been able to locate any compliant instantaneous water heaters and the problem we anticipate is that all these new bits of kit are likely to be priced at a premium and may be difficult to obtain. Another example of the

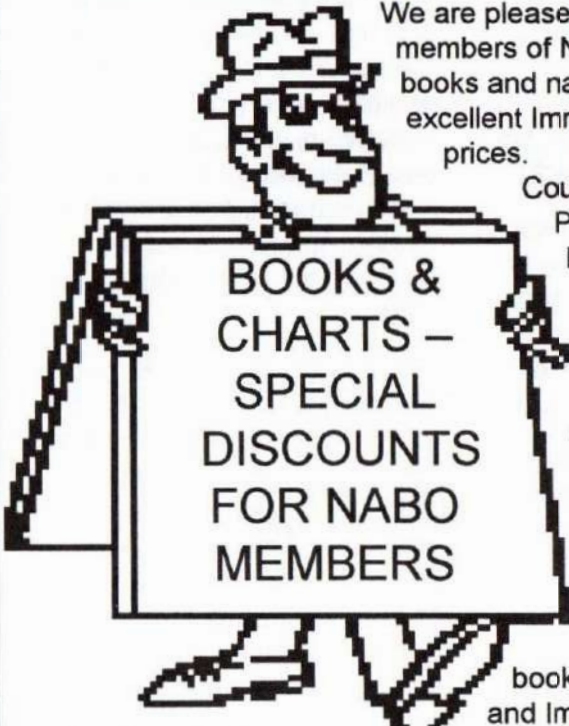
BSS imposing excessive costs and difficulties on boaters.

Any modifications to existing LPG systems will have to meet the new British Standards 9BS 5482 Part 3) requirements including the provision of non-return valves on multi-cylinder systems. All flued appliances will be tested by the BSS examiner to ensure the safe passage of combustion gases to the external environment. This latter test was excluded from the

previous standards. So your water heater which passed last time could register a failure next time round.

NABO asks members to keep us informed of problems and costs associated with the BSS particularly as a result of the introduction of these new requirements.

Steve Peters, Technical Rep



We are pleased to announce that members of NABO can now purchase books and navigation charts from the excellent Imray range at concessionary prices.

Council member, Stephen Peters, is offering to supply books and charts through his own trading company at up to 20% off RPP to NABO members only. Non-members can also obtain the same terms by joining NABO when placing their orders.

The publications on offer include inland water-ways charts and maps, reference and guide books, coastal pilotage guides and Imray C Series and Y Series navigation charts. Books and charts covering European waterways and overseas cruising areas are also available.

If you would like more information contact:
Stephen Peters at PQS BoatHelp, Tel / Fax 01564 824927.

DON'T BE BEASTLY TO BW

A member recently resigned from NABO because of what he perceives to be our 'increasingly confrontational attitude.' Our membership secretary dutifully reported this to the NABO Council, and we do not dodge the issue. So how softly should we tread to avoid offending refined taste?

It is very easy for people to accuse any consumer group of being confrontationalist. After all, a main function is to represent members' interests in disputes. Our Regional Representatives are busy in dealing with various issues on behalf of individual members.

The attitude of BW officialdom too frequently invites conflict. This is a direct quote from a letter sent to one of our reps, asking for NABO's help in sorting out an 'end of garden' mooring dispute:

"I am beginning to question the viability of keeping a boat in this country, what with extortionate increases in licence fees, depletion of standards on the system, and a management that act like the Kray Twins rather than people who are there to provide a service to people who pay for it.

I would, at the drop of a hat, transport my boat to France where, whilst they may not like our

beef, they do have a much cheaper and fairer canal system and, believe it or not, actually encourage boating. However, I do not see why I should be browbeaten into leaving by a bunch of bureaucrats".

This member returned from holiday abroad to BW accusations of being 'the owner of the illegally moored boat', with threats to enforce its removal from the system. We have reports that Section 8 notices are again proliferating on various waterways. NABO is here to help you in disputes. We don't want to lose members, and we do not seek confrontation but we will continue to represent your interests.

Another member writes "BW told us that 'your views matter' and that by filling in their consultation forms and sending them to 'Dave at Watford' we could help him show the Minister that there were thousands who wanted the canals (and BW) to prosper. And we did it, BW - 10,000 replies show that we supported you".

But does BW support you, the boater? For example, what consultation took place before the decision to abandon the closed

season for fishing? Fishing For More Money'? Year long fishing seems a fait accompli doesn't it? Boaters deserve better treatment than this.

BW's published accounts show that fishing brings less than £900,000 each year. And by some miraculous coincidence £900,000 is the amount of extra money that BW will screw out of us boaters with the 7% increase. That is additional to the £13 million they already take from us. And yet, far from looking after boaters, they ignore our opinions whenever it suits them. If BW really are only interested in money, then watch out they might start closing canal sections for fishing matches. Or permanently... if the price is right! Of course, the bottom line for us is that we are stuck with BW and its management. It looks as though we are stuck with the loss of three blissful fishermen-free months, too. Stuck we may be, but at least

we can make a form of protest!

So, there it is. NABO has a function, and it will often bring us into confrontation with a flabby, bureaucratic and self-serving BW. We do want to be nice to BW, honestly, if only its officials will embrace the apparently alien concept of customer care.

Anyway, to comfort less aggressive members, please remember that BW isn't exactly bereft of public relations allies. As another member wrote. "To say I am sick and tired of reading praises directed to BW by sycophantic Canal Magazine columnists would be understating the case by a million miles." We want some genuinely good news to report.

Until then, don't shoot the messenger.

Graham Till

Visit NABO Web-site: www.nabo.org.uk

Web-master Michael Wooding:

Your thoughts and comments about our site are welcomed.
Michael can add in your links if you phone him.

Also try the waterways Newsgroup: uk.rec.waterways

TOWPATH TELEGRAPH

NEWARK DRY DOCK

Our North East Rep, Peter Foster, tells us that BW plan to close their small dry dock at Newark (ie the ex-lock dock) because maintenance costs are too high. Peter has pointed out that the alternative large dock is quite unsuitable for a good number of boats in the area. The reason is that any boat with V bottom needs support to the dock sides; this is not practicable for a small boat in the big dock. BW, as usual, are driven by the accountants and do not seem overly concerned at this important loss of facilities to local boaters. Peter sees the dock as representing a great opportunity for someone with a bit of get up and go private enterprise. Any takers?

EMERGENCY STOPPAGE

Nigel Barnes, BW Engineer, advises us that the Stainforth & Keadby Canal at Keadby Rail Drawbridge will be subject to an unscheduled stoppage. We are told that Railtrack is doing emergency works to their failing bridge between February/ March which will result in closure of the Navigation. Towpath access will be maintained during the works.

NEW NABO TECHNICAL OFFICER

Following changes in Council Membership at the last AGM, our Engineering Officer, Nigel Parkinson, has relinquished his role. On behalf of all boat owners NABO thanks him for his considerable efforts over a number of years. In particular Nigel has suffered the worst of the trials & tribulations of the Boat Safety Scheme.

Stephen Peters replaces him. Stephen also continues his role as River Users Co-ordinator. His first job has been to respond to the new changes in the BSS affecting LPG installations and appliances which became effective on January 3. He will be assisted by Trevor Rogers and James Mason, both of whom have extensive technical and Boat Building experience.

Your new Technical Officer says that, apart from ongoing BSS matters, he wants to extend the NABO service by inviting members to make use of his massive library of technical information and catalogues of current and obsolete equipment. Answering your problematic enquiries will be a personal challenge!

WHO'S YOUR MP ?

As part of our campaigning, it is often useful for NABO to know which MP covers which bit of the canal network. There is always the difficulty of knowing whether the MP we want covers your mooring or your home. As a rule of thumb it is the MP who represents you at home that needs to be contacted. So if you know where your constituency boundaries are and who represents it please let NABO know. If you live on your boat and you move about a lot your constituency is located where you were on the 3rd October. If you want a vote, register as a voter in that constituency anytime before the next election.

CHRIS COBURN ON PUMP OUTS

BW and the EA have been working towards providing ever improving and more widespread pump out facilities. Lee Sanitation has developed self-service equipment that is now reasonably vandal resistant and proving very successful in most locations. Perhaps, I could say, as well as vandals, abuse by careless operators can also cause unnecessary cost and downtime inconvenience to other boaters. It is on the latter

that I would like to focus, particularly regarding the use by boat owners of their own self-pump out equipment

Lee Sanitation has supplied hundreds of self pump out sets over the years and, more recently, we have been asked if an effective attachment could be made to ensure the discharge hose is secured, ensuring clean and positive delivery to the desired destination. i.e. not all over the sanitary station floor! Because of the varying destinations the best we have is an elbow which can be tied in place.

Some sanitation stations are not on main drains and BW are concerned that an unexpected influx of large tank boats could cause a problem at these locations. Also, careless hose discharge experience has not endeared self-pump out to some BW staff. We have proposed a simple stand pipe connection. This would show where self-pump outs are welcome and overcome the problem in "holding" the hose end.

I am sure self-pump out standpipes will prove successful for users and following the installation at a few trial sites, we hope BW will quickly, and widely, install standpipes

throughout the system. This will not be a great cost to BW and a major improvement for all-year and/or budget boaters.

I strongly suggest, when the trial standpipe sites are installed, any happy users should make the point of encouraging BW to quickly install more such sites, by sending a short complimentary note to them.

Chris Coburn, Lee Sanitation Ltd.,
Wharf Road, Fenny Compton,
Warwickshire)

Middle Level Closures

The Middle Level

Commissioners have given notice that the following locks will be closed for maintenance work:

Salter's Lode until 12 March
Marmont Priory until 5 March

There is an unofficial web site giving information for boaters on the Middle Level run by Greg Chapman. The address is:

[http://www.the-fens.freeseve.](http://www.the-fens.freeseve.co.uk/mic/index.htm)

[co.uk/mic/index.htm](http://www.the-fens.freeseve.co.uk/mic/index.htm)

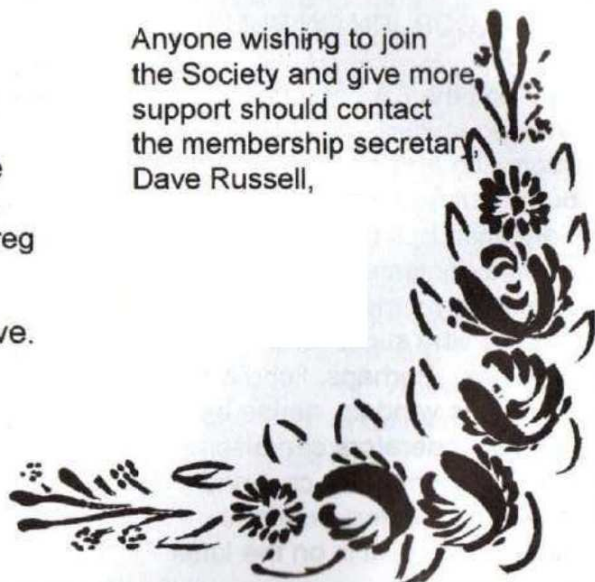
Derby & Sandiacre Canal

The City of Derby Local Plan asks the direct question: 'Should the Plan continue to protect a route for the restoration of the former Derby and Sandiacre Canal?'. The very active Derby and Sandiacre Canal Society has been energetically trying to preserve this route for the benefit of boater, and it is surely a matter of interest to many NABO members.

Public consultation on the plan seems to have attracted a low number of responses. We urge members to express their support by writing to:

Department of Development and
Cultural Services
Derby City Council
Roman House
Friar Gate, DERBY DE1 9BR

Anyone wishing to join the Society and give more support should contact the membership secretary,
Dave Russell,





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 Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP21 7QG**

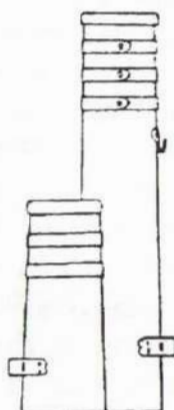
Aylesbury Canal Society would be delighted to welcome NABO members at this event. Contact them for any more details required.

DEREK PEARSON

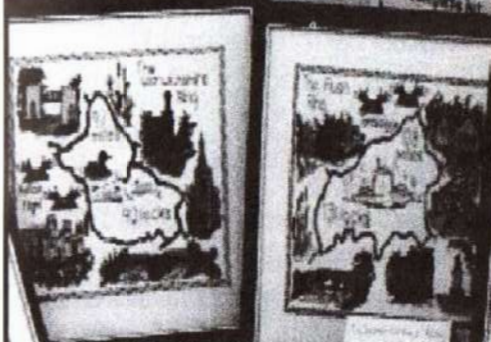
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NABO Chairman Meets Waterway Officials

Sue Burchett, NABO's new Chairman, met senior civil servants to discuss waterway matters at the end of January, Sue and Peter Lea, NABO's President, spent one and a half hours discussing current topics with Brian Glicksman and Colin Jones of the Department of Employment, Transport and the Regions. Sue said, "Regular discussions like these give us an opportunity to discuss important issues face to face with government".

Subjects covered included BW's proposed membership scheme, the boat safety scheme, and government funding to clear the backlog of maintenance. Also discussed were NABO's initiative with BW to encourage more new boaters and help existing ones on fixed incomes, and the progress on negotiations with BW on navigable channel dimensions on wider waterways.

BW received over 16,000 responses to the consultation on a membership scheme, and the replies represented millions of people across the country. There was support for a scheme, though less ambitious than that

originally proposed. Mr Glicksman assured NABO that there was no intention that any scheme would dilute the voice of boating interests.

NABO reiterated its support for a practical and cost effective boat safety scheme, but explained that the present scheme had lost the confidence and support of boaters because it was too complicated, too expensive, badly run, and the goal posts kept changing. The DETR considered that in the wake of disasters such as the Paddington crash, no politician would be interested in supporting anything which might be perceived as reducing safety requirements.

Brian Glicksman outlined the government's support for BW's efforts to clear the arrears of maintenance. Extra funding had been promised to clear the urgent arrears within six years, and BW was now discussing how best to tackle the remainder of the statutory maintenance backlog, Dredging was very much part

of this agenda. Ministers were broadly sympathetic with BW's aims. Peter Lea asked whether BW's success in raising money through private/public sector partnerships would lead to a cut in grant in aid from government. The DETR would not rule this out in future, but pointed out that it was unlikely in the short

term because it would neither encourage BW to develop the partnerships nor help it overcome the maintenance problem.

The meeting concluded by agreeing the exercise had been valuable and should be regularly repeated.

DETR CONSULTATION - Drink Boating

A Consultation paper has been issued by the DETR to discuss drinking and boating. Some people feel this is a problem and want rules for boating similar to those that regulate motorists.

It is understandable, after the 'Marchioness' disaster, that skippers in charge of large, commercial vessels, or those carrying fee-paying passengers should not drink whilst in charge of the boat.

Using the same rules for such vessels and the family narrowboat or cruiser seems to be taking things a little far. We all know the boater who enjoys his pint and is still competent as well as the idiot who is a danger to everyone, including himself, when stone-cold sober.

Copies of the consultation paper can be obtained from:

Shipping Policy 3A
DETR, Great Minister House Zone
4/12, 76 Marsham Street,
London SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0171 890 5416

www.shipping.detr.gov.uk/consult/alcohol

NABO Newsletter

Advertising

NABO welcomes advertisers in the Newsletter. Council member Derek Hackett is your contact and he will advise you on rates and deadlines. Please phone him on 07976 984709.

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LETTERS

Continuous Cruising - Where Does NABO Really Stand?

Can someone clear up an apparent contradiction in NABO's position?

In NABO News December 1999 it says NABO believes the laws of continuous cruising and towpath obstruction are sufficient, and that what appears lacking is BW's lack of will to enforce the law.

Yet in the August 1999 issue the reply by the then editor to Brian Taber's letter on the subject says that NABO does not support continuous cruising licence abusers, and that 'BW needs more modern powers and we would hope to see their bye-laws updated.'

These two items seem directly contradictory, so please, where does NABO really stand? You surely can't have it both ways.

Yours sincerely,

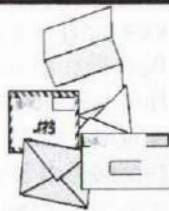
Raymond Smith, Ashton under Lyne:

Mr Smith raises a valid point that reflects debate within NABO, including that at the AGM in London. We are keen to maintain democratic evolution of policy and make no apologies for that.

Actually, there is nothing contradictory in the two items. In our view there are two separate

issues. Regulations regarding Continuous Cruising should not be used to address other, only tenuously

related problems e.g. towpath obstruction. It's rather like using parking restrictions to deal with kerb crawlers, not that we regard CCs as curb crawlers.



Swans & Removing Fishing Line

Many of us have seen swans with fishing line, floats, shot, etc wrapped around their necks, nearly always because they have swallowed the hook. It is not always fatal but both distressing for the swan and the onlooker. Ideally we need to remove as much line and tackle as possible. Stress can cause death as much as an injury can.

With confidence and a firm grip, you can get the swan out of the water. Patience is needed to tempt the swan to take bread from your right hand. When he is close enough, grab his neck with your left hand and all in one swift motion lift him out of the water. You are unlikely to cause him harm as his neck is about his strongest part. On coming out of the water, put your right arm round his body supporting his weight and

keeping his wings closed. He will flap like mad but your arm around him will restrain him so he can't do any damage to either you or himself. It is best to cover his head and eyes with a cloth - an old teatowel is perfect - he will then stay calm. Pull any slack from his mouth but do not pull or attempt to remove the hook unless you can remove the hook with your fingers, which is most unlikely, as the hook is normally well out of sight. Cut the line as close to the beak as possible. It is better to do this operation with two people and to have your scissors and cloth at hand before you start. It's far easier for one person to hold the bird and then the other has two hands to untangle the rubbish. Place the swan back into the water. This whole episode shouldn't take more than 30 seconds or so.

Keep a close eye on the swan for 24-48hrs. If he appears to get a lump in his throat or has difficulty feeding, specially trained assistance may be required. Contact a Swan Rescue Centre, although other professional bodies are willing to help. The Swan Rescue Centres deal with these problems daily. They are normally very helpful and will come out and collect the swan if necessary. Also many of these rescue centres offer courses and tuition on all aspects of swan rescue. The

swan's gizzard can cope with the hook once it has made its natural way there. Its gizzard contains stones and grit which he picks up from the water bed. These work together so as to demolish the hook and stubborn food which can then be passed harmlessly through the bird.

Lumps in the throat are usually caused by the hook tearing the throat lining thus causing food to get trapped in the tear eventually becoming infected causing the swan's death. This is definitely a good reason for fishermen to use barbless hooks. Firstly they are easy to dislodge, whether it be a swan, fish or any other animal. Barbed hooks stay in place even when tension on the line is reduced. Barbless hooks are quite likely to fall out or in the swans case may easily be digested. Many fishermen are happy to use barbless but others are not. Why?

Mr C. Fountain

Towpath Totems

I was interested to read Wendy's comments in last month's News concerning the proliferation of totems which seem to grow with alarming rapidity along the tow path.

In a recent cruise along the Grand Union Canal as far as Tring Summit and then along the Leicester Section, I lost count of the expensive baulks of timber

with their colourful and doom laden signs blooming like petals at the top.

On arrival at our winter moorings I asked a member of the BW staff if this was as widespread as was the arrival of Giant Hogweed years ago.

I was informed that these notices were to conform to the Health and Safety at Work Act. Really? If so, it appears to me this response is well 'over the top.' Most of the totems complement other notices planted by electricity generating companies and by individual angling societies. I was further told that the cost was in excess of £25,000 for just the Worcester/ Birmingham Canal.

Whilst I am all in favour of safety and no doubt BW are ensuring that they cannot be held liable in law for negligence, or contributory negligence in the event of an accident it seems that fishermen still either cannot read or have decided to take the risk as I have seen at least three different anglers fishing within the totem fish free zone.

It does strike me rather forcibly that there are no notices relating to the unsociable antics of the 'Praying mantis' resembling cyclist, who tears along the tow path regardless of pedestrians, animals or anglers that may be using the tow path. Is this not a safety

matter too? Can people actually get hurt through dangerous cycling?

Please BW don't take me seriously. Don't put up more notices, otherwise I can think of many other activities occurring daily on the tow path which may fall within the general remit of Safety. I would be so pleased if all the notices suddenly disappeared. By the way, can I claim against BW if I collide with one of these totems when making my way back to my boat from the pub in the dark? Should they be illuminated or perhaps be painted in fluorescent paint? Now my mind is wandering.

Greasy Ocker

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