

INLAND NAVIGATION ISSUES, NEWS, AND VIEWS

NABO



NEWS

- **Replies on moorings problems**
- **MCA, RCD & bollard safety matters**
- **Glossary of terms**



Issue 1 – February 2009

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Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are always welcome. Two pages, or three with photos, is usually long enough for most readers, which runs to about 800 to 1000 words. The Editor uses Mac, but Word formats are OK, or plain text.

All copy is re-formatted before use, but if lists, tables or emphasis are beneficial to your articles, we will do our best to reflect the styles.

Letters or articles on paper also welcome, typed if possible. Please ensure we can read your name!

Pictures and illustrations

Colour isn't needed so you can send it as a greyscale JPEG if it saves you time or hassle. Please contact the editor if you wish to send other artwork electronically.

2009 CALENDAR

Council meeting*	NN Copy date
7th Mar	14th Mar
18th Apr	25th Apr
6th June	13th June
11th July	18th July
5th Sep	10th Oct
21st Nov	AGM
28th Nov	5th Dec

**Members are entitled to go to these meetings. Please arrange with Chairman or Gen. Sec.*

WRONG PERSON OR ADDRESS?

If you are getting a concessionary copy of this magazine as holder of a position you no longer hold, please give us details of your successor via our Freepost mail address, or email: **news.09@nabo.org.uk** or **admin.09@nabo.org.uk**

USERS BRIEF OPPOSITION



Ann MacIntosh, Conservative MP for the Vale of York, came to the Houses of Parliament to meet with a delegation from waterway interest groups in January, to be brought up to speed on current issues. Ann is the nearest you can get to a 'shadow waterway minister' and, despite the Shadow Cabinet reshuffle just a week later, she still seems to be on the Conservative's Environment and Rural Affairs team.

After a slide sequence from Clive Henderson, IWA Chairman, summarising well the growing funding gaps facing BW and EA, she was introduced to arguments about: whether waterways should be under Communities and Local Government rather than DEFRA; whether the Government is right to put restoration as second priority; and whether a 'National Waterways Authority' could be set up without destroying the individual characters of the canal network, the River Thames, the Fenland rivers, the Broads and smaller independent waterways.

She was left in no doubt about the value of waterways to the community, the value to BW of its property portfolio, and the advantages of freight transport where appropriate. She was encouraged to continue supporting the Inter-Departmental Group, which Jonathan Shaw, the previous Waterways Minister, set up to gather support, if not funding, from other departments, e.g. Transport, Health, Sport & Culture etc., whose objectives benefit from the waterways. Also to continue the revision of Waterways for Tomorrow, the Government policy statement.

It was a full meeting well supported by senior user group representatives. NABO's Vice Chairman was there to field any questions she might have had regarding private boating and certainly the strength of support for the waterway cause would not have escaped her.

Thanks must go to Will Chapman, Save Our Waterways, for setting up and chairing this meeting and we hope the waterways are in a stronger position should there be a change of Government

STOP PRESS - BE REASSURED

Your Chairman has confirmed with BW HQ that:-

- There is no national policy restricting return times on BW Visitor Moorings. You can return whenever you like within reason, unless signs say so, in spite of what some patrol officers and wardens may be saying.
- If you are being charged for a licence when your boat is for sale at a marina, there is a much cheaper 'Trade Plate' licence your broker can get for you.

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



Although the waterways may be frozen, not all with the canals is cold and quiet. The user groups, including NABO, are active on all the issues that are before us, and I am pleased to report that there are some good examples of user group cooperation in progress. You will have read about it in the previous article. For my part, I attended a meeting with other groups, arranged by IWA, on canal routine maintenance levels, and we are active with groups on mooring issues with our Simon Robbins in the lead. This is essential if we are to have any impact on the politics of the waterways. Each user group has a niche of representation, but collectively we can work together on major items.

But overall, the big worry is the funding of the waterways. There is a backlog of maintenance in many areas, and little prospect of correcting it in the foreseeable future. The Business Plan published by BW at the end of last year is quite revealing and lays out the costs and shortfalls in different areas. It is worth reading, and a link to it is on the NABO website. Without wishing to be an apologist for BW, there are a few crumbs of comfort here. At the moment, on average, 80% of the routine maintenance being funded, so on the face of it, the gap is (only) 20% at a cost of £30m each year. You may not realise that Boat licences and moorings are raising only about £20m each year out of a total spend of £200m. The balance is made up of Government grant (about £55m) and commercial activities. It is these commercial activities that are substantially supporting the canal maintenance programme. In the current recession conditions, what will happen to this income? Also we know that the Treasury is very keen

to find ways of raising cash to support banks, car makers and the like, and there is a fear of a cash sale of assets that will deprive BW of further income or the opportunity for further income. These are important issues for all of us, and there is no shortage of people worrying about it, just very few answers. I am forming the view that it is not NABO's place to get too deeply into this. There is plenty to be done in support of members interests in safety, mooring, navigation and licence issues without taking on this one. I want to support other groups, contribute where we reasonably can, and keep the membership informed.

On moorings, BW persist with the policy of auctions for their on-line moorings. NABO is opposed to this as it has disadvantaged those who have been patient on the Waiting Lists, sometimes for many years, and the highest bidder is not in the spirit of canals for all. BW have long said that they are required to do this by their 'Godfather', DEFRA, in order to demonstrate competitive charges. I say there are plenty of ways to demonstrate this; auctions is one option, but not the only one. BW showed their true colours in the Corporate Plan, and I quote this text from it.

"The trial is working well and we believe it will lead to some increase in overall mooring income....."

So no highbrow justification of demonstrating competition, just old fashion money. Did we not always suspect it was so? Many of us as continuous cruisers or marina moorers are not involved, but if you are, and have some feedback, I would like to

hear it. It will not be long before we engage with BW again on this issue.

In the same part of the Plan there is some other text:

“We plan to reduce the number of moorings as new off-line marinas are built There is therefore no mooring volume growth planned. ... “

This takes me neatly into the next issue, and that is on continuous moorers, and availability of residential moorings. BW is putting a lot of energy into licence evasion at the moment. There are examples of over-the-top policing coming to our notice, which is regretful; but tightening up on evasion is in everybody's interest. If something happens to you, and you are uncomfortable with what patrol officers are saying, please do use your Regional Secretary to make contact with NABO, and we can at least tell you what is happening, and assist if there is need for resolution. NABO agrees with the current Mooring Guide for Continuous Cruisers, and does not support continuous moorers.

There are still too many of these on the system, and NABO is keen to find a solution, partly because it is costing such a lot, partly because visitor moorings are routinely not available to others, and partly because we are keen that BW remains within the powers of the Waterways Acts. You will have seen in the last NN, that Sally Ash from BW gives no clue as to their plans, and I have no further update on this. Geoffrey has written one of the letters for NN this month which gives food for thought. I repeat a previous plea; it is very important that your Council gets to hear the moment that BW announces anything on Roving Moorings. I am particularly concerned that something is announced locally, and without a national announcement. If you hear anything, please let your Regional Secretary know straight

away, so that we can pursue the matter. But the reduction of legitimate on-line moorings and the difficulty of getting planning permission for residential moorings is part of this overall issue. There is little point in repeatedly chasing boats away, like sparrows on the fence, and even less point in charging them for it.

In thinking about our ownership of the waterways, Stuart and Tony Haynes have, over the years, spent a lot of time and effort creating the internet based Waterways Report system. For those with web access, I acknowledge not all, it is possible to report faults on the waterways system, and to be sure that they are directed to the right navigation authority. This is a wonderful tool but sadly underused. It's another example of how we can all engage in supporting the navigation authorities, and give direction as to how our licences fees are spent. Part of the funding issue is for us all to have some input into the priority of how the available money spent. If you were “King for the Day”, would you spend an extra £1m on any of the following: Dredging, the Cotswold Canal, removing graffiti, towpath repairs, painting lock beams, sanitary stations or bollards? Or something else? These decisions are going on every day, and unless we speak up, we will only get the minimum of what others want to give. We have been talking to BW about the report system tool, to see if they will adopt the concept and make it official. The main thing is for us is to use it, and put on record any defects that you are aware of.

Enough of this. Our boat repairs are done; just needs a lick of paint. I bought a tank of diesel last year, so it's time to flood the systems and get going for the season.

David

THE BATTLE OF THE BOLLARDS

Stuart Sampson reports from the second Customer Standards meeting

If you remember my article '*Holding Points on Hold*' in the October issue, you will know I have been appointed as one of the 'experts' on the BW Customer Service Standards Advisory Panel (CSSAP), but, even with 33 years of private 'pleasure' boating experience, I am probably one of the least qualified of the six boating-related delegates present. However, despite our unanimous view that BW shouldn't put in any more bollards at narrow locks, the project has rolled on inexorably and we have as little chance of stopping it as we would have stopping a fully laden Humber gravel barge on a hand-held centre rope.

What we have to remember is that the CSSAP is purely advisory and the real decisions are made by the Customer Services Transformation Board, which comprises Directors of Engineering, Customer Operations, and Communications & Marketing – Messrs Stirling, Moran and Salem. Certainly 'face', if not bonuses, would be at stake if they bowed to our opinion to reverse a policy that had already cost seven figure sums.

Unfortunately the topic of locks has been so dominant that the cycling expert has withdrawn from the meetings. However, to quote from BW's draft notes, "*Locks are the single most dangerous thing that BW offers its customers.*"

Safety head explains

At our second CSSAP meeting on the 21st of January, one Tony Stammers, BW's Head of Safety, came and gave us a better understanding of how BW tackles Risk Assessments. We were all fired up to give him a hard time but he wasn't the sort of person to deserve it. However he did have to admit he wasn't an experienced canal boater, having a background in shipping. We also learnt that the bollards are being installed in many cases by outside contractors. Clearly there is plenty of scope for the reasoning behind the measure to get forgotten if the job is being 'outsourced', and little chance of it being questioned.

I don't think anybody is totally against adding extra ways to control a boat in a lock, the main objections being poor implementation and seemingly untimely expenditure. However it came to light that these so-called risk reduction measures had not themselves been properly risk-assessed, particularly when in use by inexperienced boaters. Nigel Hamilton, a hotel boat operator of some standing, was adamant that the use of ropes in narrow locks added risks rather than reducing them. This was supported by all those around him, including NABO's other member present, one David Lowe, with considerable experience in barge and commercial narrowboat carrying.

There is no doubting that ropes are inherently dangerous, particularly when being used at unsuitable angles to attempt control of a wayward 15 tonnes of boat under the impact of thousands of litres of water per second. Ropes can trip, trap, snag and instil a sense of false confidence. They can hang boats up and drag them onto obstructions that they would otherwise float clear of. No wonder people feel safer using locks the way they have been used for two centuries, or even the way BW says they should be used! There is a proposal that the Panel should visit a narrow

lock to see a demonstration of how ropes and bollards can help. We will just have to wait and try to keep an open mind.

Cill marking

At the meeting, the other lock controversy re-appeared – cill markers. With a curved cill, BW used to mark the upstream limit of the cill, but are now marking the downstream extent, i.e. where the cill meets the walls. This is causing problems with long boats catching on the bottom gates when trying to clear the marks, and in some cases, theoretically not being able to fit the lock at all!

This measure was leading to an unacceptable situation where Tim Parker of Black Prince was having to tell all his hire fleet customers to ignore cill markings. The CSSAP recommended they revert to the old standard, but it also called into question another CSS item about BW publicising waterway dimensions – where do you put the measuring tape when measuring the length of a lock? Answers on a postcard to the address at the back of this magazine!

OK to drop em?

Another safety matter of interest is that BW's Stanley Ferry workshop is to investigate inconspicuous ways to slow paddle descent so one can just remove the windlass and let the paddle run down safely. Some are already designed that way, e.g. on the Hatton Flight, and some ground paddles have deliberate slack in the mechanism so the paddle boards have a soft landing while the rack is still descending.

Vegetation

The panel had covered in detail most of the standards at the first meeting but a number remained, two covering vegetation. The promise of a *'hedge to edge cut once a year'* is there, but *'3a7: BW tries to maintain waterway vegetation at fit-for-purpose levels that reflect customer usage'* was deemed superfluous and unmeasurable. A new standard is needed that covers all dangers under foot from hedge to edge, including hidden potholes and bits of missing bank, with particular regard to people disembarking from boats, prams passing bikes etc.

Reporting those near misses

So, if you have twisted your ankle or your boat has stuck in a lock - **please report it, even if you might count it as a 'near miss'**. I asked if they had carried out a comparison of incidents in locks without bollards relative to those that had them already. Answer, "No – insufficient data". While they live in blissful ignorance of the real world they can only assess risks using sometimes ill-informed imagination. Let's have the facts.

Next?

BW has set up a limited access website for CSSAP discussion and documents for debate to go on between meetings, so I can hopefully update you on the issues in future magazines even before the next meeting in the summer. What I can do next time is tell you a bit about BW's length inspection policy, now I have a copy of the Length Inspectors' Handbook. Yes, there are Length Inspectors. No, BW didn't give me a copy because there was nobody else to give one to! I feel it may give some insight as to how we can help keep an eye on our waterways.

PLEASE REPORT NEAR MISSES

WHAT THE NABO PEOPLE DID FOR US

Council thought you would be interested to know the type of enquiries received from members, together with the advice given. This is a sample.

No apologies for laying this out like the Ombudsman's report, and the similarity doesn't end there. In cases of complaint, both NABO and the Ombudsman often advised people to follow the navigation authority's official complaints procedure.

Mr A contacted the treasurer for the access code for ASAP supplies. This was given immediately.

Mrs B contacted the Yorkshire secretary for help in finding a mooring on the River Ouse. She was given a list of available moorings.

Mr C contacted the Yorkshire secretary for advice on navigating the River Trent. He was sent leaflets on the subject, including NABO's own guide.

Mr D contacted our Moorings Guru with a Council tax issue. He was directed to recent NABO News articles on the subject and given support.

Mr E contacted the same guru having been evicted from his linear mooring. He was given advice and directed to further information.

Mr F contacted the guru about a problem with a disputed end-of-garden mooring: he was threatened with eviction. He was given advice and directed to the Complaints Procedure.

Mr G enquired about mooring terms and conditions on a private arm. Relevant advice was given.

Mr H contacted the vice-chairman asking that NABO set up local activities. This is a good idea, but Council has a problem with manpower.

Mr J contacted the rivers representative for specifications regarding navigation lights. The appropriate information was given, including collision regulations!

A group of moorers in London asked for details of the mooring conditions. These were given.

Mrs K spoke to the chairman when they met on the waterways. She had been overlooked for a mooring vacancy when she had been at the top of the waiting list. He directed her to the Complaints Procedure.

Mr L contacted the Northwest Secretary about the discontinuation of the water supply at his BW mooring. He felt the lack of the facility should lead to a reduction in mooring fees, but instead, has received a 15% increase. He was given advice and referred to a local pressure group.

Mr M contacted the chairman about the intention of a private mooring owners intention to fill in the mooring site and sell it for redevelopment. He was advised to contact the local BW office and the Birmingham Canals Navigation Society.

Many members have contacted Councillors re the recent licence consultation, and have been advised to write directly to BW, with copies to the chairman.

IT'S AS GOOD AS NEW AND FAILED ITS BSS!

David Fletcher explains

There have been a number of reports recently of nearly new GRP and steel cruisers coming up for their first BSS examination and failing because of some feature in the original build of the boat. Owners are not surprisingly upset by this. How can it happen?

In this country, new boats built in the European Union, including the UK, that meet the EU's Recreational Craft Directive (RCD) are not required to have a Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) examination for the first four years.



The RCD is a piece of EU safety legislation, adopted for the UK, by a UK law. However it is not aligned with the detailed requirements of the BSS, which is based on previous UK custom and practice, and requirements from the sponsoring navigation authorities, BW and EA. Items like lack of access to fuel filling pipes, caps marked 'Fuel' rather than 'Diesel' or 'Petrol' and vents below the filler so that fuel can spill before the tank appears full, are examples.

So it is perfectly possible to have a boat built, particularly in Europe, that does not comply with the BSS. UK builders are more aware of the BSS requirements, and you would expect this not to be a problem.

It is usual practice for all experienced boat builders to self certify their work as compliant with the RCD. With the best will in the world, things do get overlooked, with the complexity of individual builds. RCD compliance is policed by local authority Trading Standards Department, so if you have been sold a boat that is not RCD compliant, there is some redress there.

Also, in four years, there can be changes to the BSS. It is hardly possible for a builder to predict what the BSS requirements are going to be, looking forward. Fortunately there is little change planned, and this uncertainty is faced by all boaters with a boat over 4 years old. So there is nothing to be done here.

So what can be done? Firstly the BSS and RCD will never be aligned. This would require two immovable objects to cooperate. No chance!

But if you are having a boat built, or buying a boat that is less than four years old, you need to protect yourself. It has always been recommended that you involve a surveyor in any purchase, but I suggest that you involve an examiner who is qualified to check for RCD and BSS requirements too. You need to know if it will pass, so that you are not surprised later. Of course you could also get the seller to have an examination done and BSS certificate issued before you agree to buy.

If you have had problems with the misalignment for the RCD and BSS please do let me know.

Proofreader's advice - Think of *advice* (noun) and *to advise* (verb) when remembering how to spell *licence* and *to license* (and *licensing*)

THE LONDON BOAT SHOW

Andy Colyer was there

Just into the new year, while the ice was biting at the hulls of our boats, I spent four interesting days living at the London Boat show. I was there to show people around a Dutch barge floating in the dock outside the ExCeL exhibition hall, on behalf of the company I work for (Will Trickett Boats). It was my first time at the show, and I was quite excited about having a good nose around a range of boats that are not part of my world.

The show is very glitzy, as this is the place for yacht and mega yacht builders to show their boats, such as Fairline and Sunseeker. I thought the variety of boats was good, but there was very few wooden boats as such – I may have just missed them!

There was so much to do – and I was supposed to be working! However, I did manage to run around the show each morning, before the punters weaved their way through the massive array of stalls and outside to the ‘marina’. A dash at lunchtime, in reality about 4pm, and at the end of the day, were my chances to see the sights. These included, seeing some of the restoration work on the Cutty Sark, Brush Boarding (– indoor surfing and falling over), watching the Navy being beaten by some young kid in the radio controlled sailing boats race, and looking over some great and some not so great boats.

The inland waterways were reasonably well represented, with two Dutch Barges, two wide beams and half a dozen or so narrowboats. It was great to meet some faces behind the names, such as Peter Nichols, Greeves, Ownerships and The Northwich guys. It was probably not too surprising to find almost everyone to be a cheery lot.



Flowers and Fairline at the James Bond themed champagne bar

One of the halls was dominated by the suppliers of engines, pumps, electrical wizardry and everything you could possibly need, want, or not, for your boat. There were more waterproofs than we could possibly need, even for another summer like last year!

My personal moment comes from looking out any Riva's at the show. I found no classic 1950's wooden vessels, but there was a Rivarama. A beautiful, elegant sleek-lined 8-seater sports boat, that just disappears into the water at the stern. In the midnight blue, it was just WOW!

There was so much to see, and so little time. I wished I could have looked at more boats. I would have liked to see more of the smaller cruisers and spend some time on the Navy frigate. A few pints at the bar, or some champagne at the James Bond Bar, was certainly deserved at the end of another long day. I probably should have bought some fancy waterproofs.

Towards the end of my time, I spent a great half an hour with the RNLi, which has to be the Boat of the Show. At only £2.5 million, it is barely a touch on the £16m Sunseeker, but has a life expectancy of 40 years. It also has a brilliant crew, who are always there for you, even when everything else is going wrong. What a great, dedicated group of volunteers. When everyone is coming in because the sea is too rough, they are often preparing to come out. It is my ultimate boat, and they would be my ultimate crew!



Don't worry, you can keep your shoes on! - Welcoming wheelhouse of a Dutch barge

Cosy cabin



Fore and aft of Volvo-Penta



Gratitude, a plea and power to the people

Thank you to all that responded to Sally Ash's article and the diesel issue. My plea is for more – letters that is – on any waterway related topics.

It is all very well responding on Internet forums, but bear in mind NABO News reaches parts no forum ever reaches. We have a list of some sixty worthy and influential people including lords, ministers, directors and editors, some of whom I know read NABO News as soon as it comes, even before getting out of bed! The letters column in this magazine gives you direct access to their eyes.

Use it wisely!

Musing on the four 'S's

It is all too easy to think that people connected with the waterways do it for the love of it. Many do, but this cannot be assumed when dealing with those from navigation authorities. They are just employees, even the most senior ones, and we have to keep reminding ourselves that we are discussing their day jobs, not matters of heart.

How they will see your point of view depends on how they place their four 'S's in order of priority. In alphabetical order these motivators are:-

- **Salary (+ bonus)**
- **Satisfaction**
- **Security**
- **Status**

Pleasing boat owners hardly figures on this list. It may add to **satisfaction** for staff in direct contact with boaters, and may also protect **salary**, if dealing with boaters is part of the job description or bonus requirements. It certainly doesn't seem to affect job **security** or **status**,

almost the reverse. Although we are paying for their services, we have minimal influence over whether they get promoted or fired.

This is why representatiing boaters can be so unrewarding. 'At the end of the day', or more correctly week or month, they have the same take-home pay whether they listen to you or not. Consultation is a fag to them and a battle to us.

What about our 'S's'?

For volunteers you can dispense with **salary**, there is none. By so doing you can assume **security** is not a variable either. It's a mugs' market - fix it at 100%!

So you are left with **satisfaction** and **status**. Being able to say you are an officer of a national body can have its buzz, but the real motivator is the kick you get if you feel you have changed things for the better.

It is a great shame that many navigation authority people are too thick-skinned and self-centred to capitalise on this. Basically they can be bad losers and presumably think that yielding would be bad for one or more of their own 'S's.

What they need to do is give credit where credit is due, so volunteers get a sense of achievement. This way volunteers and employees both get more satisfaction, relationships are improved and dealing with boaters should become a pleasure.

Finally

I was told the last mag was one of the best and showed I was better off not being chairman. Thanks, I will try to keep it up, with your help of course!

Stuart

Howard Anguish explains

Some boat share owners may be unaware that the publication of a draft code of practice meant for the hire boat industry has caused recent consternation within our community and the following is a brief outline of the current state of play.

In 2005 there was a finding by the Waterways Ombudsman in relation to the licence requirements for shared ownership boats which, in essence, said that as long as these vessels were wholly owned by their owners and that the owners did not gain commercially from their part ownership, then the boat should be treated like any other private boat. British Waterways included a paragraph in their licence terms and conditions to clarify the point and since then boats who comply with the requirements have been taking out or renewing their licences with no problems. Indeed, since the demise of Challenger – a company which did retain a commercial interest in some of the boats within their scheme – there are virtually no similar organisations and the vast majority of shared ownership boats are owned totally by their private owners. The relevant extract from the BW conditions is as follows:-

.....If you own a share of a boat, you should use the following criteria to determine whether you need a Standard or Business Licence. A standard licence will be issued for a boat owned collectively by a group of private individuals providing that all of the following requirements are met:

- 1. None of the share owners has any interest in the boat other than for personal, pleasure use.*
- 2. The licence holder (the boat's lawful keeper) is no more than two share owners two of the share holders, nominated by all other share owners to be responsible for meeting BW's Licence Terms and Conditions, including insurance and boat safety requirements.*
- 3. The Licence holder is the person (or people) named as the insured on the boat's insurance certificate.*
- 4. The licence holder, in consultation only with other share holders, is responsible for all decisions relating to control and administration of the boat throughout the year. This includes determining where the boat is berthed and who uses it when.*
- 5. The boat's livery does not display an association with any company engaged in the boat share business.*

Because of a number of incidents and accidents in recent years, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) – a government agency which, among other things looks after marine safety – was tasked to draw up a code of practice for the inland waterways hire boat industry. An in depth industry review was carried out jointly by the MCA, in conjunction with the British Marine Federation (BMF) and the Association of Inland Navigational Authorities (AINA). The latter of course includes BW among its members.

Because this consultation was directed towards the hire boat industry NABO was not directly involved in its findings although of course we were aware that it was taking place.

It has come to light, however, primarily through the vigilance of a NABO member that the definitions of vessels in the draft code included shared ownership boats and it was conceivable that these terms might contradict the Ombudsman's ruling mentioned above.

The extracts from the relevant paragraph from the MCA's draft reads:

Definitions

1 'Hire craft' means power driven or unpowered vessels of every description excepting houseboats, used for sport or pleasure on inland waters at anytime and not intended for the carriage of more than twelve passengers, which are :-

- a) let or hired under an arrangement with no skipper or crew being provided, whether or not that arrangement is on a pre-contract basis, or;*
- b) the subject of a bare boat charter arrangement, or;*
- c) owned by a club for the use of its members without skipper or crew being provided, whether or not the user makes any separate payment for such use of the vessel, or;*
- d) owned by a body corporate for the use of its employees without skipper or crew being provided, whether or not the user makes any separate payment for such use of the vessel, or;*
- e) the subject of any form of shared use arrangement (including timeshare) without skipper or crew being provided, excepting where the vessel is wholly owned by her users and no other person or organization receives money for or in connection with the operation or management of the vessel, other than as a contribution to the direct expenses of the operation of the vessel on an individual voyage or excursion.*

Para 1-e is the section which has caused disquiet among boat share owners, not least because it seems to be going some way to reversing the Ombudsman's decision. The ramifications which that could cause would be draconian because it has been estimated that it could add substantially to the cost of owning and operating a shared ownership boat.

As a result NABO has written to the MCA and also to BW to get them to rethink this definition. One suggestion has been to end para 1-e at the word 'users' in line 3. Additionally, a petition has been drawn up by Allan Richards who was the NABO member who first drew this matter to all shared owners attention. At the time of writing it had been signed by over 320 share owners, an expression of how strongly the feelings are about this matter.

LATEST - After putting this article to bed I have been contacted by the MCA who have invited NABO to attend the next meeting in London on March 12th. I will, of course, be attending this meeting to put forward the point of view of boat share owners and should be in a position to report back to members in the next edition of NABO NEWS. If there are any further developments of note I will advise you by Bulletin.

Howard

A serious glossary of terms

As promised, a serious list. We have tried to centre it in the magazine so you can tear it out and use it as a key to other editions.

- AINA** Association of Inland Navigation Authorities
Promotes matters in common between the navigation authorities, e.g. consistent signs
- APB** Associated British Ports
Navigation Authority for tidal reaches of the Trent, Humber and Ouse
- APCO** Association of Pleasure Craft Operators
Trade body for hire and hotel boat operators
- ARA** Amateur Rowing Association
Does exactly what it says in the title
- AWCC** Association of Waterway Cruising Clubs
National body with cruising clubs rather than individuals as members. Otherwise with a similar brief to NABO
- BCU** British Canoe Union
As it says on the tin
- BHCF** British Hire Craft Federation
Trade body for hire boat operators
- BMF** British Marine Federation
Trade body for coastal and inland boating businesses
- BSS** Boat Safety Scheme
The boat construction safety requirements for an increasing number of British navigations, mainly aimed at reducing fire, explosion, pollution and third party risks
- BSSAC** Boat Safety Scheme Advisory Committee
Committee of user and trade representatives to give feedback to BSSMC. Has NABO rep.
- BSSMC** Boat Safety Scheme Management Committee
Does what it says in the title
- BSSTC** Boat Safety Scheme Technical Committee
Committee that discusses the 'nuts and bolts'. Has examiners, boffins and NABO on it
- BU** Business Unit
Geographical division of BW in England and Wales.
- BW** British Waterways
The main canals navigation authority we love to hate
- BWAF** British Waterways Advisory Forum
Has waterway interest and user groups as members, links with BW at Board level. Independent chair
- CBA** Canal Boat Builders Association.
Exactly what it says on the can
- CBOA** Commercial Boat Operators Association
What it says in the title

- CC (CCer) Continuous Cruiser
A boat/owner with no permanent mooring who is truly itinerant and complies with BW's Guidelines
- CM Continuous Moorer
A boat/owner with no authorised mooring who does not comply with BW's Guidelines
- CSS Customer Service Standards
BW initiative, includes MSS, Minimum Safety Standards
- CSSAP Customer Service Standards Advisory Panel
Group with individually invited members including users, trade and BW employees to advise on CSS
- DBA The Barge Association
Once stood for Dutch Barge Association. For owners of bigger boats and smaller ships here and abroad.
- DCLG Department for Communities and Local Government
Government department overseeing development and regeneration, a possible alternative home for waterways
- DEFRA Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Government department overseeing waterways. Has only 3 or 4 civil servants with direct waterway involvement.
- EA Environment Agency
Generally refers to the Navigation and Recreation department which is the navigation authority for the Thames, Medway and Anglian rivers
- EAHF Environment Agency Harmonisation Forum
A dormant body arm of the NNUF set up to get consistency between EA navigation regions, if and when EA gets the powers it needs. See TWAO
- EFRAKOM Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
Select Committee of MPs from all parties which investigates affairs of DEFRA
- GOBA Great Ouse Boating Association
Self explanatory
- HBS Horseboating Society
Does exactly what it says in the title
- HNbOC Historic Narrowboat Owners Club
Does exactly what it says in the title
- IWA Inland Waterways Association
A long-standing charity promoting conservation, restoration and use of waterways. Does not claim to represent members as such, nor emphasises boating over any other use.
- LANT Lower Avon Navigation Trust
Navigation Authority for the lower Warwickshire Avon (merger with UANT planned)
- MAIB Marine Accident Investigation Board
Investigates on fresh waters too
- MCA Marine & Coastguard Agency
Increasingly wanting to regulate inland boating
- MLC Middle Level Commissioners
Navigation Authority for the Middle Level Navigations

MSCC	Manchester Ship Canal Company <i>Navigation Authority for the Bridgewater Canal and the MSC</i>
NABO	National Association of Boat Owners <i>Represents boat owners on inland and estuarial waters - You should know that by now!</i>
NNUF	National Navigation Users Forum <i>EA's formal link with national boating user groups</i>
NT	National Trust <i>Navigation Authority for the River Wey</i>
PLA	Port of London Authority <i>Navigation Authority for tidal reaches of the Thames and its estuary</i>
PWG	(All Party) Parliamentary Waterways Group <i>Special interest group for MPs. Groups including NABO, and some individuals, are associate members</i>
RBOA	Residential Boat Owners Association <i>Precisely what it says in the title</i>
RFERAC	Regional Fisheries, Ecology, Recreation Advisory Committee <i>Advises EA regions. Members appointed as individuals. Navigation only part of recreation part.</i>
RTA	River Thames Alliance <i>A wide ranging group of interests concerned with the future of the Thames, includes EA and NABO</i>
RYA	Royal Yachting Association <i>Promotes all boat related activities in and around the UK</i>
SOW	Save Our Waterways <i>A non-aligned pressure group for general waterway promotion</i>
TBA	The Boating Association <i>Once stood for Trent Boating Association but claims to represent all river boaters</i>
TBTA	Thames Boating Trades Association <i>As it says on the tin</i>
TWAO	Transport and Works Act Order <i>A means to get statutory powers. EA tried to use one to replace and harmonise powers it inherited from individual rivers authorities. See EAHF</i>
TWT	The Waterways Trust <i>Charitable body overseeing museums and other waterway interests, e.g. the Rochdale Canal</i>
TYHA	The Yacht Harbour Association <i>Includes inland marinas</i>
UANT	Upper Avon Navigation Trust <i>Navigation Authority for the upper Warwickshire Avon (merger with LANT planned)</i>
UGM	User Group Meeting <i>More local meetings arranged by BW Business Units</i>
WO	Waterways Ombudsman <i>Independent 'arbitrator' for unresolved individual BW complaints involving maladministration but not policy or legal matters.</i>

WOC	Waterways Ombudsman Committee <i>Committee to appoint, oversee, facilitate and ensure independence of the Ombudsman</i>
WRG	Waterways Recovery Group <i>Exactly what it says in the title. Arm of the IWA</i>
WUSIG	Waterway User and Special Interest Group <i>Involves waterway interest and user groups, links with BW at Director level. BW chair. More specific and less strategic than BWAf</i>
WWG	Waterways Working Group <i>A Thames EA consultation group</i>

NABO AGM - DEBRIEF?

Howard Anguish looks back with 0/0 hindsight!

Although I wasn't able to attend the meeting at the Stafford Boat Club last year, I have been there before and have always been impressed with the setting and facilities. After speaking with a number of people who attended the meeting it seemed that the majority of members also felt that the venue was ideal in many respects although it has also been suggested that there were some aspects that let it down. One concerned the location, which is unexpectedly tucked away between houses in a housing estate and a number of people admitted to getting lost! It was also felt by some that it might be difficult to get there if you rely on public transport – the case with many who live on their boats I imagine.

The purpose of this note, therefore, is to ask if you would like to suggest a suitable venue and also to solicit any suggestions you may have to attract a larger audience to the meeting. Some thought to assist you in coming to a conclusion are:

- A central location ideally situated within reasonable distance of a railway station and/or suitable bus routes.
- It needs to be capable of seating at around 50 people at least.
- It should have some rudimentary catering facilities – tea and coffee making at least.
- Last but not least, it should be reasonable to hire.

Council would also welcome your views on the content of the meeting. By Constitution we have to hold the usual formal business part of the AGM – minutes, election of officers, accounts etc – but this doesn't need to take a long time, and we would really like to make the day an enjoyable one for everyone who attends. In recent years we have had a number of very interesting speakers who have covered a broad spectrum of waterway subjects. However, is it time for a change (and if so what would you like to see) or would you like to continue in the traditional way. We have enough time to give consideration to all your views which we would welcome, ideally by the end of March. If you would like to contribute please let me know your ideas (contact details at the back of NABO News) – or indeed contact any Council member.

We really want to hear your suggestions so we can make the next AGM the best ever!

A DIFFERENT SORT OF REVOLUTION

Stuart asks, “Can



ever match



?”

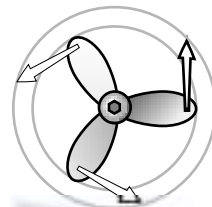
Readers of *Waterways World* may have seen an article making claims for a new design of propeller manufactured by a firm called Axiom. They may also have shared my initial scepticism and disbelief that anything further could be done with the marine screw, since it has been honed and refined ever since Brunel built the *SS Great Britain*, and probably before. It has such functional beauty that it is a shame to hide it under a boat. Surely a propeller with blades shaped like spades can't out-perform something that looks so much at one with its fluid environment?

The familiar marine screw blade is made with a sinuous twist so that the 'pitch' is the same over the full length of the blade. Nearer the middle, where it is moving the slowest as it revolves, it is at a shallower angle to the flow than it is at the tip. This means that you would expect on each revolution of the screw a cylindrical, flat ended 'slug' of water is passed through it. The length of this slug is the pitch of the propeller.

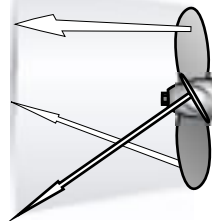


Wouldn't it be wonderful if that happened in practice? Unfortunately it doesn't, and it isn't too difficult to understand why if you look at the screw from end on.

When a blade of the screw rotates it pushes water away at right angles to its inclined surface, and this is not just backwards, it is also outwards at a tangent. So, as well as causing what the mathematicians call 'Grad', the intended pressure gradient backwards, it also causes what they call 'Div' – divergence, and 'Curl', a twisting motion.



Instead of the ideal cylinder of water, what actually comes out is a rotating cone of water. The divergence is not only wasteful of energy but it also annoys the environmentalists, stirring up the roots of their beloved aquatic plants and muddying the waters for the fish. It also draws more water than necessary from under the stern of the boat causing the dreaded 'squat'.



Apart from the squarish outline of the blades of the Axiom screw, one is also struck by the lack of twist on the blades. This means that the pitch of the blades is less towards the middle and the theoretical slug of water leaving the screw is concave ended because there is a less flow through the middle. I can see this counteracting the divergence effect and effectively focussing the stream, improving the general efficiency. I would also assume the screw needs to draw less water through nearer the middle and so the streamlining of the boat's swim would be less critical.

How the claims for the Axiom's zero 'prop-walk' come about is not so obvious, mainly because the explanation of how the effect is caused in the first place is far from obvious, although one would expect the curl to be involved. The notion that water is denser for the lower blades is fine as an aide memoire, but doesn't 'hold water' (sorry!), as water doesn't compress to any measurable extent except at extreme depth differences. In all other respects everything is symmetrical but a sideways force on a screw indicates something not symmetrical, so the blame must go to the prop's surroundings, notably to the counter above the prop. This funnels the water into the upper blades so it is already travelling through them quicker and the blades have less 'bite'. This is quite a reasonable idea because the effect invariably fails when the canal bottom is closer, acting like the counter, but below – just when you are relying on prop-walk to tuck your stern into a mooring!

I can't see why the Axiom should be less prone to this effect by design. Axiom claim a rather special blade cross section which improves efficiency in reverse and certainly this will help, but, short of a contra-rotating design, the blades must be trying to put some curl into the water and be less loaded when they are uppermost. Of course the behaviour of water round a screw when suddenly reversed is bound to be complex and turbulent, and if the Axiom can establish an orderly flow quickly under these circumstances then there is much less time for the prop walk effect to become established and noticeable.

I am keen to see the Axiom in action. If anybody has tried one, please get in touch.

A POINT TO PONDER

Caution - opinions expressed here will remain anonymous, are independent of NABO official policy, and statements herein have not been verified as true fact.

BW are going around telling everyone who will listen how strapped for cash they are. I would love to know which BW director is responsible for the lock bollards fiasco (and what happens to their bonus as a consequence). It seems BW don't know (or won't say?) exactly how much money has been misspent but low six figures seems to be the consensus. For BW licence holders that's £100,000 plus of licence fee increases gone before we start paying them!

At least we know why we have to pay a lot more this year! Failing to talk to

boaters in advance of the key decision again seems to have been at the root of the problem. I am sure we would all love to know who we have to thank for that one. More practically, will this gross incompetence and the financial loss that appears to have occurred be taken into account when BW Directors bonuses are considered this year?

BW's pleas for more funding might sound a lot more credible if they looked after the money they'd already got a bit more carefully.

Diesel Suppliers

There is no need for NABO to produce a white list of suppliers who are prepared to sell diesel to the spirit of HMRC guide lines allowing boaters to declare their percentage diesel usage as one already exists on the internet and has done since November.

http://www.choiceforum.co.uk/blog/links/diesel_split.htm

Brian Holt

I read with interest the piece on red diesel (page 8) which seemed very well balanced. However the statement that 'the price differential around the system shows some retailers must be making a healthy profit' is rather misleading.

I know from my own experience, and discussing with others, that the 'trade' or bulk purchase price for boatyards and other fuel suppliers (e.g. the 'coal' boats) can vary enormously around the system too. This seems to relate to quantity purchased at a time (and clearly the huge sales of all fuel products at Wheaton Aston will give Turners a major advantage) but geographical location also seems to play a part. Garage owner friends tell me the mark up on vehicle fuel at garages is very small - maybe 2p/litre - but is helped by high volume sales, and sales from the shop etc. This is why Turners are so cheap. Boatyards and the coal boat operators will pay more for their supplies - much more when turnover is small - and will need a higher mark up to cover overheads.

David Lowe

Don't decry volunteering

The recent *Point to Ponder* about volunteers seemed just a little on the negative side! I first became interested in canals around 15 years through volunteering with the Waterway Recovery Group which then led to boating and then boat ownership.

As a restoration whipper snapper I still have much to learn but a couple of personal observations: most restoration projects would not have happened without volunteers (some involved a huge amount of personal commitment); and working with British Waterway has been at best hard. For me, BW publicly using the word Volunteer is a positive step - it suggests that they know they can't just sweep us under the carpet. We need to get to a stage where BW does not only acknowledge that volunteers exist but agrees that volunteer does not equal dangerous (or liability or bad workmanship) and that volunteers have a valuable place in canal restoration (and that role may well evolve).

Canal restoration is a good thing for boat owners: more to cruise and more moorings - I, for one, am willing to work to help prove to BW that working with volunteers can work. Yes, there's a long way to go but I'm not ready to give up just yet.

Helen Gardner

Good for Helen - viewpoints in *Point to Ponder* are there to be challenged, and before anybody asks, I don't write them! Ed.



Why won't the subject rest?

Sally, what a most interesting article you have written in the above issue. We moor our boat in a marina on the Grand Union Canal near Stoke Bruerne locks and we boat throughout the year. We find the same group of boats moving short distances, many of them who have cars and drive them from location to location. All these moorings are generally of the casual type i.e. in the countryside near bridges and roads. So you may ask are they causing any harm. The answer is: Yes they are because they are not conforming to the 14 day time scale.

This is a circle that cannot be squared, as the problem will not go away. Just imagine you are a continuous cruiser, it is a really horrible winters day, and you have been moored in the countryside for a number of days, what is the incentive to move on.

The only place in our area that we see that this is not a problem is at Cosgrove where there is a very efficient mooring warden. Again this is part of the problem as mooring wardens cost money, but bring in no income.

Once you charge continuous cruisers more for a licence than boat owners

with a home mooring, you are almost giving them permission to moor wherever they wish and for however long they want. A difference in licence fees will only cause dissension within the boating community.

I, as a boat owner with a home mooring and now retired who will be cruising the waterways for six months of the year, would be paying less in licence fees than a continuous cruiser if this were to be the case.

Opinions will vary throughout the boating community, depending on what category boaters fall in, but I firmly believe again this is a circle that cannot be squared.

On the subject of licence fees, with the country going into recession and maybe deflation, a brake now has to be put on any further licence increases as the cost of boating is going through the roof. Boating cannot be regarded as a cheap option to housing anymore and like housing, with less money in the economy, boating will suffer and there will be even less income from licence fees, which demonstrates a classic deflationary spiral.

Just as a background, we have been boating 25 years, hire boats, shared ownership and now our own boat for the past 4 years and find it a most

relaxing and enjoyable way of life and would hope that the waterways will be there for future generations.

Geoff Wood

I felt that Sally Ash's article on the above was very lucid and thoughtful. It highlighted issues that I have been hammering on about for some time, namely how many boats can the canal manage, 30,000, 40,000, 50,000 ? and the need for planning for the long term future and the consequences of growth.

The '95 Act is already inadequate in coping with the current situation a mere decade on from its inception. A new or amended Act is needed that will provide BW with the powers they need for the next 50 years. It requires new thinking.

e.g. every new boat must have a mooring before it can have a licence (continuous cruisers would accordingly wither on the vine)

e.g. lengths of the system to have limits on the number of boats permitted at any one time.

e.g. maximum of 40,000 boat licences permitted to be issued ??

Not stopping in any one place for more than 14 days is a very good rule. BW are lukewarm regarding enforcement as "there is no money in it". Given sufficient backing and personnel the £25 fee for over-staying on 24/48 hour moorings should be extended for all those overstaying the 14 day rule.

The main problem at the moment is congestion and static boats. A roving mooring permit would do nothing to ease the situation but merely "legalise" limited movement. To charge for continuous mooring outside marinas

surely just adds to on-line moorings.

Sally raises the question of what to do about those boaters who do not want a roving mooring permit. Under the '95 Act there is nothing that can be done. Licence conditions are quite clear and the implication of a roving mooring permit is a restriction on movement. A roving mooring permit holder would still have to move to a different place every 14 days within an area. A continuous cruiser would by definition be required to move outside the area. Therefore suddenly there are two different types of 'place', one within the roving mooring permit area and one without. How on earth one differentiates between continuous moorers whatever that means and continuous cruisers I can't imagine.

I would also add that whilst Sally is right that many live-aboards do not want to move, there are also many boats not live-aboards that are moored on the towpath due to the owner being unable to get, or not wanting to pay, for a permanent mooring. I had a case recently where a friend had been asked to keep an eye on a boat as the owner wouldn't be back until March!

Sally refers to BWAf (or should I say APCO?) recommendations that continuous cruisers should pay a little more. BWAf, in their naivety, also recommended that boaters with a permanent mooring should pay a little less. The majority on the committee voted against any change or differential between continuous cruisers and others, but this seems to have been ignored.

Incidentally a £100 increase for 3,000 continuous cruisers equals £300,000. A £50 reduction for 27,000 boats with

a permanent mooring equals £1,300,000. Not surprisingly BW have not pursued the latter recommendation.

Finally NABO will support BW when we approve of lawful proposals but we will not accept BW attempting to introduce measures which are contrary to Acts of Parliament and the law of the land.

Geoffrey Rogerson

Dear Sally,

I am glad that you publicise BW's reflections on Continuous Cruisers. It is good to know what goes on behind the scenes, and even better to be asked for suggestions.

I have had a few years boating experience and would like to make some suggestions in support of Continuous Cruising, a way of life I have come to be fond of.

There are many benefits to CCing: not being stuck in one place and getting used to change, learning about the country and its people, adopting an energy-conscious way of life, learning about physics, live healthy in harmony with the environment. And those are just off the top of my head. So in short, living afloat is noble pursuit.

That is, if it wasn't for the negative attitude towards Continuous Cruisers encountered mainly in the canal media. Sometimes one feels like a second class citizen. But why is that? After all a boat is made for going places, and makes for a great home as well. Also it saves living space, frees up housing for other people. Obviously the resentment comes from the fact that some CCs are not going anywhere, but staying put.

The way to deal with that is to reduce misuse. But what happens instead is that all CCs are lumped together and effectively discriminated against.

The way to eliminate misuse is straight forward: clear, practical regulation and professional mooring wardens. In my own experience that works. Where there are no wardens, you soon have conditions like the Wild West. BW will have to spend money, but it's necessary.

However, where there's a stick there should also be a carrot: as well as discouraging misuse, proper use of the CCing status should be encouraged. I suggest that you let more people access the benefits of a great lifestyle. That would largely be done by improving facilities. BW could potentially free up huge financial untapped resources from existing and new 'customers'. A common misconception is that only retired people can be legitimate CCs, but the fact is that with modern communication technology many jobs can be done on the move, at least for part of the year.

Let me quickly give some ideas for improvement of the system, derived from my limited experience: security for boats in urban areas is always a concern and could be improved with more gates, wardens, etc. Also a provision of much better and more numerous mooring facilities including pay-for electric hook ups, washing machines, parking, in short, proper facilities one would expect in any other walks of life.

But most of all, what is needed are temporary pay-for moorings. The system at the moment provides short term visitor moorings on one hand, and permanent (for life) moorings on the

other with nothing in between. It very often happens that one has to spend a little longer in one place, and there should be plenty of moorings which can be rented by the week or month (with an upper limit). Those moorings would replace some of the current 'permanent moorings'.

One more thought: I have noticed that just outside urban areas, let's say when coming into London or Birmingham, the cruiser commonly faces long stretches of somewhat desolate landscape. It would seem that those areas have the most potential to be developed. Cruising there isn't much fun anyway, so to use them for new leisure and mooring facilities appears to be the obvious answer.

I am sure there are people that might deem my ideas utopian, but I would be grateful if you could let me know any good reasons against my suggestions. In any case, I hope that we can get away from a culture of negativity, and towards a culture of praising and improving the Continuous Cruising way of life.

Otto Dettmer

I am returning to you the application for a Gold Licence as I do not intend to take my boat to the canals this year.

I have been visiting the canals for many years now, but last year the whole experience was rather depressing.

Where-ever I wanted to visit and moor, I found the moorings full up. Mostly with 'constant moorers' some of whom had been there for weeks, even on designated 48hr moorings.

It seems that BW is not planning any action to relieve this problem.

If licences are issued for these 'live aboards' to moor where-ever they wish and for as long as they like, things will only get worse.

It is not possible to moor along the towpath because, in most places, the vegetation is too high and thick.

Otherwise the edge, if you can see it, is in such a poor state that you can't get near it.

I look forward to some news that things will improve, preferably in the near future.

Sadie Dean

It is Christmas Eve and I am filled with good will to all men, women and British Waterways (BW). My unusual generosity of character influences this response to Ms Sally Ash's request for views on licensing.

I must declare an interest – I am a customer of BW. BW customers seem not to get mentioned very much. Ms Ash's article failed to use this noun or that ghastly alternative - stakeholder! I pay to BW something over £6,000 each and every year. I spend about the same each year with Waitrose. I can say with absolute honesty that I get much better service from Waitrose who constantly thinks about its customers and their needs. BW views its customers as income streams. BW does not seem to equate income streams with any concept of service.

During 2006/7/8 the Environment Agency (EA) spent much time attempting to reconcile its boat registration charges – it does not have licences hence its charges do

not command a VAT content. EA customers, (they have them, both more diverse and more numerous than BW) who moor on Anglian water pay more for their boat's right to cruise than they would if they were based on the Thames. The Medway is yet another regime. Each waterways registration offers identical status. The EA gazes with envy at the single licence that BW currently possesses. In the 1950s, the IWA arose from the dream of a single unified licence. The IWA should be congratulated for single-handedly achieving this state.

We now have Ms Sally Ash determined to reverse all this. Not, she assures us, because BW are strapped for cash but because the current system is not fair!! BW has more than 30,000 customers. I would not claim there are 30,000 reasons why these boats are owned but certainly there are more reasons than I should like to try to iterate.

The BW licence is a part of the cost that each and every boater acknowledges and is prepared to pay to enjoy their chosen pastime. I am certain that the vast majority object to the level of this charge but with grumbles the boater pays the licence fee each year. That I can and do cruise my boat for at least seven months of the year is my choice. Others choose to use their boat as a weekend cottage. Others take the odd month or two visiting other parts of England. Supposedly 10% of all boaters continuously cruise. Ms Ash has had problems with statistics she supplied to me in the past. I should like a more reliable source to confirm the figure of 10%. There is an increasing demand by customers to use their boats as low

cost housing. Over the coming months such demand is bound to increase. The point is that we all have our own reasons for owning a boat; BW and Ms Ash should respect this. Whether we use the entire canal system or our favourite spot should not attract a penalty because that is what a variable licence type will become. Ms Ash's fairness test is an irrelevance.

I should like to know just how much extra income would be generated by the imposition of a width/beam criterion to the licence charge. I am certain someone in BW could tell us how much extra income each centimetre or 2.5cm width would generate for boats wider than 2.05m.

Let me deal with the "colonies" of unwanted boaters. BW should attempt to find out why this phenomenon is developing and deal with the problem instead of visiting them with pecuniary discouragement. I suspect that most of these boaters fall within two groups. Low cost housing allowing an alternative life style is the most common grouping but there are a number of individuals who for one reason or another wish to become anonymous. The low cost housing content should be considered and Ms Ash should ask Mr Robin Evans, her boss, to ask the Secretary of State, The Right Hon. Hilary Benn, if he wishes BW to exclude the low cost housing group from their Social Inclusion duty. If the Secretary of State agrees then so be it; but he is voted in to make these decisions and not a simple employee of a government agency without anything less than a KCMG.

With the cooperation of Social Services the needy members of a "colony" can be helped and BW could

find a source of funding from direct housing benefit payments that would/can ensue. Such benefits and circumstances have no relevance to local planning requirements and do not require residential status. Local Councils would not attempt to enforce such regulations in the current financial climate. This income could be utilised to the benefit of these colonies. BW could create colonies in places that would be convenient for all concerned. It requires some imagination and this might be the single flaw in the plan.

There is a final suggestion. The Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) has lost its funding. BW and EA contributed £150,000 each to subsidise the BSS up to 2006. The BSS regulations state that a boat is to be maintained to the standard required by the scheme between inspection. If a boat is found to be below the standard required, the BSS certification can be revoked until the faults are rectified. The BSS has a number of mobile engineers whose task it is to make such impromptu checks. A modest investment by BW in a couple of engineers to investigate

the most decrepit of boats, which are usually part of Ms Ash's target antisocial boaters, would quickly offer the courts rapid and cheap resolution to the elimination of that specific problem.

I strongly suggest a single unified licence for all BW users is retained – without exception. I challenge Ms Ash to a consultation on this specific item without adulteration from any other criteria; just consider her item "fairness".

In conclusion, since I, and most others were consulted on these matters we have had a world wide economic melt down. I would venture that most expressed views to BW by customers have been drastically modified by a change or potential change in personal circumstances. The economic climate is almost certainly going to deteriorate further. BW's status as a government agency will protect it from the worst of the free market pain however the BW customer is not so fortunate. Leave sleeping dogs to lie for a couple of years.

Louis Jankel

HERE'S ONE I
PREPARED EARLIER.

Richard Carpenter
showing Council his
proposals for recruitment
- placards, leaflet boxes
and things for you to do.

Hopefully he will explain
more in the next
magazine - wait for it, it
could be good.



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