



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 3 – May 2010



EDITOR FLEES THE COUNTRY
New format NABO News

FUNDING THE WATERWAYS
A new vision?

BOATING COST SURVEY
Tell us how it hurts

NABO News

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Howard Anguish and Richard Carpenter.

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Contributions

Articles, letters cartoons and photos are most welcome, copy dates in the calendar right.

Images and photos in JPEG format please

Send your contributions to:-
nabonews@nabo.org.uk

NABO Calendar 2010

AGM: 27th Nov

Council meetings*: 5th June, 10th July, 4th Sep

NABO News Copy dates: 12th June, 17th July, 9th Oct, 4th Dec

Meet NABO at the Crick Show
Sat 29 May 10 – Mon 31 May 10
Crick Marina, Northants, NN6 7SQ

*Members are entitled to go to these meetings. Please arrange this with the Chairman or General Secretary, contact details on page 16



Heritage or junk? The remains of the swingbridge in the Sheepwash channel on the approach to the Oxford Canal from the Thames

The end of an era

Howard Anguish

This is the first edition of NABO News for a number of years which has not been edited by Stuart Sampson. It feels slightly strange not to be sending bits and pieces for publication to Bramhope; Stuart and Carole have now started their great European adventure and you can read about their first steps in an article in this edition.

We cannot move on before giving our grateful thanks to Stuart for keeping up the high standards which have made this magazine an eagerly awaited read for many boaters and also a source of information for those in authority who assure us that they read it avidly to learn how they are doing – good or bad!

Best wishes to Stuart and Carole where ever you go and I am sure we will still be getting regular contributions from the other side of the Channel.

As for the future and for the time being, Richard Carpenter and myself (Howard Anguish) have taken over the role of joint editors and the production of the magazine will be handled by Chris Pink. We hope to maintain the same high standards achieved in the past and as always we would welcome any contributions from members. These will be particularly valuable at this present time because of the great changes which are

underway in the Waterway scene. Although the magazine will stay in the present A5 format and we don't intend to make any drastic changes to the presentation, we hope that we can give it a slightly refreshed feel and to that end Chris has specifically asked for more pictures!

This organisation relies heavily on member input and the Chairman has made a specific plea for members to get involved locally so that when the new changes in BW structure come about we must be involved and enthusiastic participants; the only way to achieve this is for as many of us to get active in local user groups and forums so that NABO is recognised for what it is – the voice of the Boat Owner.



The politics of boating?

David Fletcher

Dear all

Last time I was speculating as to the outcome of the March budget and how it would affect the waterways. Well, there was some news and whether it is good or bad, we shall see. The Government announced that they intended to mutualise BW, and the legacy of the full property portfolio would be included. My immediate reaction was positive, because it is supportive of new thinking for BW, and at least one major political party has made a policy decision. We believe that the other one will agree too but there is nothing written. I had a quick look at all the three major party manifestos, and Labour's is the only one with a reference to the waterways, and this is only one sentence.

So no great beams of light to be found here. For the Tories, this is very disappointing, as the user groups collectively did quite some work to make sure they were briefed. The election puts all this on hold now and nothing will happen until after the great event and the new Minister is in place. One of the first indicators will be the next draft of Waterways for Everyone. This will be on his/her desk on day one.

There is speculation that DEFRA may not survive and just which Government department will look after the waterways is another factor to consider. Some also believe that the Treasury will never give up the property and none of the current political indicators are to be believed. We can only keep up the lobbying and be ready for the next turning point, (or winding hole) as it comes along.

In March we made our submission to the DEFRA paper Waterways for Everyone.

A good part of this is making the case for funding, and this is still the key issue. Whether the existing structure remains as it is, moves to 3rd sector 2020, or to a mutual, or a conservancy matters not one bit if the fundamental funding issue remains unanswered. We should not believe that BW's 2020 will solve the funding shortfall at a stroke, because it will not.

Also, we should not criticise it for this failing. The current nationalised industry structure is not doing to well at the moment and has the distinct disadvantage that users are denied any management influence over the navigation authorities. But I do think that the only way Government will stump up the necessary cash is when they see a thriving and supportive waterways community doing the maximum they can together. Then, when more funding is necessary to close the gap, it will happen through the combined pressure of the waterways community. Yes, it is time for change.

Of course, more involvement means more work and responsibility for NABO and the other user groups. Our few regional representatives will not be enough to cover the many meetings that we undertake. There will be much greater emphasis on support for the local waterways region managers, not just going to user group meetings and listening, but contributing to decisions, and helping with new ways to get work done.

We see examples of these already in some areas with maintenance and mooring consultations. I would like to see a group of members in each area that can share this local work load, and maintain a relationship with the local manager. This is one of the best parts

of the 2020 thinking and we need to grasp the opportunity. Please do come forward to help out. It is for you and your local waterways. Just ring your regional representative.

There is some good news about plans for development at Marsworth. BW are consulting on a revised plan, which includes retention of the boaters facilities with improvements, retention of the largest building on the site and the crane. This is a welcome turn round.

But I do still have a problem with the assumption of heritage at all costs. Just below Isis Lock in Oxford, on Sheepwash Channel there is an old railway swing bridge. It has not been used since the 50's and is now in the wrong place ever to be used. Apparently it is rather unique for bridge huggers and is classified as an ancient monument and cannot easily be touched. Not withstanding this, it could not even take foot traffic now because is nothing more than an overgrown heap of rusty metal and rotting timber, fenced off for safety.



The navigation channel is restricted to one boat width because of the fixed part of this piece of junk. Chiltern Railways are undertaking a major extension to the railway line between Oxford and Banbury, and part of this is widening the adjacent fixed bridges by another two tracks. This will fill the gap between the swing bridge and the current tracks and in my view significantly impede the look ahead view for boaters in the channel. If there are those that value the bridge, then let them take it away and put it where it can be looked after. Our navigation predates the bridge by a long time.

Legal issues continue to occupy a lot of my thoughts. Geoffrey will be writing a progress report in the next issue. In the meantime I am very interested to hear of current cases of BW enforcement for not complying with the Licence Terms and Conditions for bona fide navigation. This means if you are a continuous cruiser, are you being challenged by BW for not moving far enough every 14 days?

At one end of the scale, there are those that are not moving at all or just a token movement. No sympathy from NABO here of course. At the other end there are those that cover over a thousand miles from one end of the country to another. And then there is the middle ground and the simplest question is 'how much is enough?'

Please do let me know what is happening on the tow path. We need to share the information and encourage the debate on this.

This year we will have a stand at the Crick Boat Show. Please do come and chat to some of the Council members and wives. And bring a friend that we can sign up too!

Funding British Waterways

A view from member Simon Greer – Macclesfield Towpathier

We asked our members for articles expressing views and proposing ideas – here is one response. Council would like your views on Simon's idea and perhaps some meat on how it could be delivered! Anyone able to provide some dialogue on the practicalities?

As usual, until Council debate proposals this type of article does not represent NABO policy.

I have five objectives here:

1. To secure long term funding for the canals
2. To eliminate the DEFRA subsidy.
3. To secure for the Treasury a seriously large wedge of cash to help with our current economic difficulties.
4. Assist in the supply of fresh water to the general public.
5. Reduce boater costs.

I observe that when someone wants something they are at their most amenable.

So as more houses are built, greater pressure is placed on the available water supply to provide for all the dishwashers, power showers and sprinklers that necessarily follow. The existing utility companies cannot magic more water up as demand increases. So when we get an arid hot summer we have the usual hose pipe bans and stand pipes. With the building of more housing and more global warming this inconvenience is likely to happen more frequently. So the question remains, who has lots of fresh water haemorrhaging out to sea from 90 reservoirs? British Waterways!

My proposal is to parcel up all BW's reservoirs and sell them to the utility companies. I visualise many £billions changing hands. The income will keep HM Treasury happy and more importantly off our backs. BW might even get a share of the proceeds to help their finances.

Two non-negotiable conditions must be agreed before any sale can be even considered. All boating organisations can close rank on

this and here is where my observation about amenability comes into play. Any buyer, I anticipate, will accept my non-negotiable conditions as they will want our freshwater reservoirs more than they want to lose a cheap solution to a big supply problem.

The conditions I have in mind are:

1. BW must take a royalty on every gallon of water sold sufficient to substitute for the current grant in aid. No longer need it be a sword of Damocles hanging over our heads.
2. We boaters must have the free use of the water whilst it's in transit for distribution to new housing e.g. Rudyard to Birmingham where it can be cleaned for re-sale.

Our free use of the water should subsidise our licence costs. Naturally I see the canal network remaining the conduit for the passage of all 'Royalty Water' in perpetuity.

So how about that for a proposal? I can see the newspaper headlines. 'Boaters help Treasury reduce costs and bring fresh water to your taps' This plan will also take the pressure off land that may be used for new reservoirs unless a proposal like this is adopted. Think of all the support this could generate for the humble boating community.

NABO should be proactive and propose the idea to the Treasury and be at the negotiating table from day one. The alternative is to have it all happen behind our backs and wait to be told 'French Water' has just bought Rudyard Reservoir and several others for £2, 3 or 4 billion.

Mutual Waterways

A personal view by Stephen Peters

British Waterways 2020 Vision for the future organisation of inland waterways within the Third Sector has generated a lot of interest and discussion, not least within NABO Council, and we have noted the various proposals and variations on the general theme, including the resurrection of the long-standing IWA policy for an inland waterways conservancy.

The ongoing general election debate has also generated ideas from some of the political parties regarding involvement and ownership of other public sector services, which could be transferred into co-operatives or mutual bodies.

The final shape of the waterways sector is largely at the behest of the next government but there appears to be consensus and a general appetite for public involvement and charitable status, subject to funding being secured for the day-to-day operations. A dowry in the form of a property portfolio could be the mechanism to generate the core income needed to run the inland waterways currently controlled by BW. There is then the question of how to incorporate, and pay for, the other waterways such as the EA rivers, the Broads, and privately controlled navigations.

Whatever form the final structure takes, it would be desirable for users and the general public to have a stake in the new controlling body and this could be along the lines of co-operatives such as the Co-Operative Group, where customers can become members for a notional payment and participate in the democratic processes – electing local and regional boards, and nominating representatives to the higher levels of the organisation's structure and committees.

A slightly different alternative would be to adopt a mutual status similar to building societies, where members can again get involved in the democratic control of the organisation – electing board members, standing for election themselves, etc.

On the question of funding the waterways, perhaps some thought could be given to permitting members to invest their private funds in return for interest payments, or by establishing investment bonds which could be redeemed in the future.

It would be desirable for beneficiaries of waterways such as local authorities, parish councils, ramblers and anglers to have an involvement in the future funding and control of inland waterways to give them a sense of ownership of this vital part of our heritage and leisure sector.

Would NABO members wish to become involved in owning the waterways on which their “floating assets” are based? Let us have your views.



Cost of boating survey 2010

John Slee

NABO Council believes it important that we monitor the rate of increase of boaters' costs so that we can quote from knowledge when speaking on your behalf to government departments, BW, EA etc.

In order to do this, once again we are asking NABO members to complete our annual Cost of Boating Survey. If you completed the survey last year, it would be really helpful if you did so again this year – we can cross-reference your responses, so no need to re-enter previous years' figures. In order to increase the sample size, we have invited non-members to contribute, as well. However, it would good to be able to report a large proportion of NABO boaters responded.

Among the questions we ask are the actual costs of your Licence, Moorings, Boat Insurance (excluding contents insurance) and obtaining your BSS Certificate (if relevant - but excluding any resultant necessary repairs) for the past 12 months. We also invite you to enter amounts, or estimates, of fuel, gas, coal and routine maintenance costs; also, enforced extraordinary expenditure such as bottom blacking and major engine repairs.

Gathering this information together beforehand will make it easier for you to complete the survey. The on-line survey could then take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

NABO Member Boat stickers

You should have had a new circular boat sticker with this issue of News. Designed to be put on the inside of windows, to be easier read and without any glue! If you didn't get yours please let us know by e mail?

Enter the following link in your browser:
www.surveymonkey.com/s/CoB2010.

To prevent spurious entries, the survey requires a password: **Chirk73** (without a space).

We recognise that some boaters do not use the Internet, so if you would like to submit a paper copy, one can be obtained from Richard Carpenter, our General Secretary; his details are inside the back cover.

The closing date for completion of the Survey is 9th June 2010, but we would appreciate early submissions. A summary of the results will be published in a future edition of NABO News and released to the boating press in due course.

Thank you for your help.

Free Firewood

Running short of fuel? Not any more with BW's version of the winter fuel payments.



Nabo pays its tax bill

Stephen Peters

Members who attend our AGMs or examine our Annual Accounts will be familiar with the question of our tax liability which has featured on our balance sheet since the year dot.

Prompted by our financial adviser and former Chairman, Jon Darlington, your Hon. Treasurer made contact with HM Revenue & Customs to declare our estimated corporation tax liability. The local compliance team based in Norwich asked why we had taken nearly 20 years to contact them and it was touch-and-go that your Treasurer might face a period of confinement at Her Majesty's pleasure!

Thankfully, HMRC accepted the figures we

had proposed and, after examining our past accounts, they decided that we should pay a sum of just over £600 + interest for the years 2006 – 2009. They considered that any tax liability arising in earlier years was minimal and no further action would be taken. The liability to corporation tax arose due to the interest we had been receiving on our deposit account, which has now dwindled to a few pounds with interest rates being at a record low.

We have now sent off our payments to the Exchequer and are pleased to have made our small contribution to the public finances, including the inland waterways.

New arrangements for disposal of flares

Stephen Peters

Coastal and river boaters will be familiar with the sensible recommendation to carry distress flares on board when cruising on tidal waters. In the event of an emergency arising, they can literally save lives by enabling rescuers to locate vessels in need of assistance.

The biggest problem has always been the disposal of outdated flares which by their very nature are technically explosives and require careful handling and storage.

They are not large fireworks and their use as such has at times led to roof fires and the mobilisation of emergency services in response to calls from the public. A vessel in Dartmouth harbour was impounded and had a writ nailed to the mast after one such fateful misuse of pyrotechnics.

The Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) has recently announced a new system for disposing of out-of-date flares and has appointed a new

contractor to deal with their collection and disposal. There are now 18 designated MCA Coastguard locations to which old flares can be safely taken and the MCA website www.mcga.gov.uk will give you details.

Please note that it is illegal to put time expired flares in with general rubbish or to fire them off, unless there is an emergency.



Connecting with friends through the NABO website

John Slee – Website Editor

When you are logged into the NABO website, there is a **Who's Online** list on the right hand side. It may be that you see the name of someone you know, but you don't know how to contact them. You can do two things:

Firstly, if you click on their name you can view the other person's profile.

Secondly, you can ask them if they would like to be in touch, by using the Connections tab on their profile. If you click on the Connections tab and then select **Request Connection**, they will see a message on their **To Do** list on the right hand side. If they click on the **1 Connection Request(s)** message, the **Manage Connections** page will invite them to accept or decline your request and click on **Update**.

New range of NABO branded clothing

Several members have asked why we don't do a small range of branded clothing with the NABO logo embroidered on it. Answer, being honest, is that it has been hard to stock, distribute and account for it and find someone to take on the responsibility! Not any more – we have found a company that will do this for us so watch out for the announcement on the web site – www.nabo.org.uk – in the next few weeks. We probably will have T shirts, a sweatshirt, a polo shirt and a fleece as standard but the good thing is that a whole range of items in a whole range of colours can be ordered individually from a large catalogue. More news soon!


Once you have both agreed to be connected, there will be a **Messages** tab on your respective profile pages. Click on the one on theirs, then on **Send email** and you can compose and send an email to them as from your email address, inviting them to email you back. You won't know their email address unless they choose to respond, but they will know yours.

That's it really – you can both know each other's email address and go from there. This is an experimental feature, which we thought might be useful in linking up boaters. However, if we find it is being abused, we have the option of withdrawing it.

NABO Website Updates



The new NABO website is being updated several times a week. To save you having to check every day, there is a special feature which can let you know every time something has been added. It's called an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) Feed.

When you have our Home Page loaded in your Internet Browser you should see the RSS icon . Click on it and then follow the instructions to subscribe to the NABO Home feed. You have a choice of RSS 2.0 or Atom 1.0 – which are just different ways of receiving the same thing.

If you use RSS feeds already, perhaps for blogs, please make use of this facility for our website too.

Notes from the Council Meeting

Pseudonym

The Council are getting more proficient. This meeting progressed swiftly and efficiently, ending rather earlier than we all expected, probably because most subjects had been discussed at previous Council meetings. We really would like to see members accepting the invitation to attend meetings but even a free lunch isn't tempting anyone yet.

Moorings Consultation

So what was discussed? The fact that the position of moorings are being set by local residents without discussion with the people that use them, us the boaters, is a cause for concern. Having a National consultation on moorings and a regional consultation running at the same time is adding to the confusion. Not having clearly defined start and finish dates for consultations isn't helping with Council planning.

BW introduce fishing charges

BW has come up with a Waterways Wanderers fishing scheme which seems to charge fishing people for fishing in areas where they used to fish for free. A good idea, but the fishing people can fish from boaters moorings out of the 'boating season'. When is 'out of the boating season'? Boaters have licences for a year; surely that is the season or do others only buy a licence for a lesser season? Moorings are often more difficult to find in the winter, as they are let long term and it was noted that some boaters don't move off after the winter moorings expire.

NABO's legal challenge

NABO's legal challenge is still ongoing and more meetings are scheduled to take place both with lawyers and BW. The number of boats on the system was discussed and what number it will take to reach saturation point.

A short political discussion was held with differing view points scattered around the table.

IWA conservancy plan

The IWA Conservancy plan and its relevance to the 2020 vision occupied a few minutes of bemused discussion. The most interesting part being could we be represented on all the committees? Are there enough willing people to do this?

Boating Cost Survey

The boating cost survey is now on the website. It is hoped members and friends will fill this in as it is open to non members. The information is helpful as it gives ammunition to keep costs down. NABO is to discuss with BW the possibility of doing another Waterway Condition Survey as the last one exceeded our expectations and is still being used by BW.

NABO finances

Stephen gave an update on our finances and our tax position. The latter has now been sorted and Stephen and John Darlington were congratulated on their work in achieving a favourable outcome.

This is just as well, as money is being spent on marketing and membership. After a gap of some years, Crick will see a NABO stand with a suitably attired member of Council.

New editor for NABO News

As a new editor has been appointed, this will be his first edition, so we eagerly await the result whilst Stuart sails away enjoying himself.

Pas De Problème!

Stuart Sampson

April the first saw Carole and I on our way to Cambrai in northern France for a course to gain our International Certificates of Competence for European inland waterways. We could have taken it in the UK, and even on our own boat, but we also wanted a flavour of the real thing, so we were learning on an 80 foot barge and using the techniques that commercial skippers use to work through the locks.

The waterway in question was the Canal Du St Quentin, which, until the building of the larger gauge Canal Du Nord, was the main route from central France to Belgium, Holland and the northern French coalfields.

The locks are the small French 'Freycinet' size, twice the length and a bit wider than Grand Union locks. It is completely automated. As you enter the canal you visit a dispenser under the watchful eye of the VNF (French version of BW) CCTV. This supplies you with a remote control device for the locks.

As you approach a lock there is a sign saying 'SIGNAL', marking where you are in range of the lock to use the 'zapper'. This sends a signal to the aerial on the lock and prepares the lock for you, assuming nobody else is using it. Sadly the aerial is omnidirectional and so the lock can't tell which way you are going, so you have a button for 'Montant' - up, and one for down. If you press the wrong one, woe betide you, you either have to wait for something going the other way, or fool the mechanism to complete its cycle.

When the lights go green you enter the lock, rope up and operate the Tirette, a device set into the lock wall

with two vertical bars, a blue one to start the lock sequence and a red one for emergency stop.

The entrance gates close, sluices open, the chamber fills or empties, the exit gates open and a beam counts the boats out before closing the gates and setting the lock for the next boat. All very easy once you know how and you don't have to even step off your barge – assuming you can lasso a bollard with your rope from on deck. Throwing an eye in heavy rope is a skill that took a disproportionate amount of course time to master, then you have to thread it onto the two bits, or bollards on the barge and use turns to act as a brake and keep the barge from moving forward while still in forward gear. Once mastered this single rope and engine technique is precise enough to control a full length barge in a lock even for a single hander.

Ropes' ends are not fixed to a barge, the eye goes on the shore bollard even for mooring and the tying is done on the barge.

All this took an intensive two days to learn, along with learning the CEVNI navigation rules and signs, but we both passed!



Your letters

The opinions expressed here are independent of NABO policy and statements made have not been verified as true.

BW and the 3rd Sector

Dear NABO News

Here's something to cut your teeth on. You requested our thoughts on BW matters. Here's mine:

I am against this idea and I believe NABO and all boaters should be against it too. Here's why. Currently I may not like BW and much that they do, but at least my disapproval and criticisms can be channelled through my MP, DEFRA or directly to the Treasury. I like that; three levels of accountability.

If BW were to become a National Trust for the canals I believe the BW Management will quickly insulate themselves via a metaphorical firewall to keep me and those like me at a distance. I therefore think BW will become less accessible, more elitist and more a law unto itself. That, in my book, will be a move in the wrong direction and will not serve boaters' interests well.

Yours sincerely, Simon Greer
Macclesfield Canal

Editor:

An interesting view and food for thought! NABO Council, as you will read elsewhere, are most keen to ensure whatever structure comes out of the debates during the coming months the users of our canals are properly represented within that structure to ensure the future management remains fully accountable! What do other members think?



Travels in the Y-Not

Tony Lenton

This is my first contribution to NABO news but hopefully will not be my last. I am now in my seventh season with my narrowboat Y~NOT and as I live in Hertfordshire I have cruised most of the Southern waterways south of Wolverhampton. Now I have retired I have decided to return to my roots and explore the North of England. I am frequently single handing as most of my friends live in the South and don't want to travel so far. Here is a picture of my boat moored at West Stockwith Basin.



I've just finished a trip on the Sheffield & South Yorkshire navigation and currently moor at Thorne. Rather than tell you about the trip I can tell you about the interesting people I met. First there was Mal who had restored a rotting Humber sloop – and I think this is the last remaining one. He moors



at Keadby and does sea trips. It's called the Spider T. Inside is a revelation – restored with an Edwardian theme. With my British Waterways connections we found we had a lot in common and our short meeting two weeks ago lasted three hours after he'd given

me a guided tour over the craft. I have an invite for a sailing trip in April. This will be a useful pre-cursor to my own trip by narrowboat to the rivers Hull & Ancholme.

Details of the project can be found at www.spidert.co.uk



Second was located in Thorne. In my search to find a postcard so I could send my friends 'having a wonderful holiday in Thorne' message I eventually was directed to Steve in the 'Balloons' gift shop. He didn't have a Thorne card but did provide some from Fishlake! We got chatting and he told me who Thorne was famous for. There was Thomas Crapper who invented the WC. Then Roy Clarke, writer of the comedy series *Last of the Summer Wine*, *Open All Hours* and *Keeping up Appearances*. Apparently the characters in these programmes are based on actual people who live in Thorne. Apparently the names were changed to protect the guilty. Lastly Lesley Garrett hails from Thorne. www.lesleygarrett.co.uk and her relatives continue to run the pie shop.

That's it for now. If any readers are in the Thorne area please say hello. I'm often single handed and crew are always welcome.