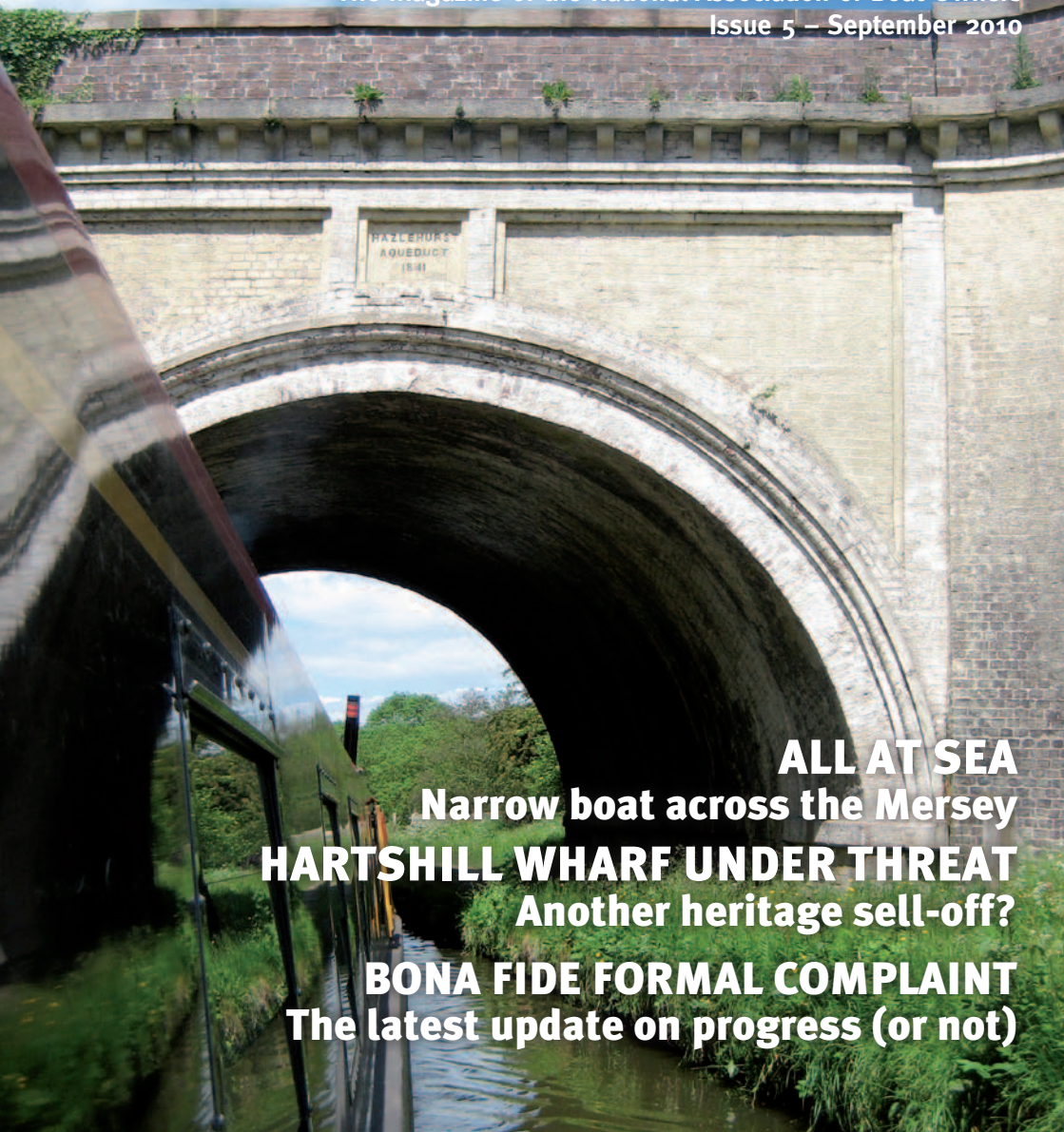




NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 5 – September 2010



ALL AT SEA
Narrow boat across the Mersey

HARTSHILL WHARF UNDER THREAT
Another heritage sell-off?

BONA FIDE FORMAL COMPLAINT
The latest update on progress (or not)

NABO News

Issue 5 – September 2010

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NABO News is published by the
National Association of Boat Owners
FREEPOST (BM8367), Birmingham B31 2BR
Editors: Howard Anguish, Richard Carpenter.

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Another piece of heritage under threat? Hartshill Wharf at Atherstone, see page 16

NABO Calendar 2010

AGM: 20th November[†] at Wolverhampton Boat Club (as last year), the confirmed guest speaker will be Simon Salem, Marketing and Customer Service Director of British Waterways.

[†]Please note the corrected date and apologies for any confusion caused!

Council meetings*: Sep 4th, Nov 27th
Further dates will be set at the AGM.

NABO News Copy dates: 9th Oct, 4th Dec

*Members are entitled to go to these meetings. Please arrange this with the Chairman or General Secretary, contact details on page 20.

Contributions

Articles, letters cartoons and photos are most welcome, copy dates in the calendar right
Images and photos in JPEG format please

Contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk

Front Cover Photo Competition

Win yourself a year's free membership by sending us your idea for the front cover of the new NABO News! We like the picture to reflect the Inland Waterways, of course, and perhaps link to boat ownership – not just Narrowboats!

This month's cover photo is by Steve Barrett, the first winner of our competition, with his picture capturing a perfect reflection on the side of his boat going under Hazelhurst Aqueduct on the Caldon Canal.

Only digital pictures in JPEG format can be considered and should be available at least 1750 pixels wide - though in the first instance send us something a little smaller than this.

Editor's column

Howard Anguish

They said it wouldn't last and yetwe've managed to keep going for two issues so far and now like a bad penny, here's the third! I hope you will find interesting and informative in equal measure.

So far I think the comments about the new look NABO News have been overwhelmingly encouraging, and it is good to see that we are also receiving more contributions from NABO members themselves rather than relying on just the opinions of Council Members. A particularly important contribution has been the series of articles by Chas Moore on the subject of electricity – something of a black art for many boaters. The second part is in this issue and there is at least one more to come.

Please keep up the trend so that we can continue to grow the magazine and provide a good and varied read with each issue. We have tried to include something for most interests and our postbag is starting to attract more contributions after a quiet period in recent months; please keep your letters coming so we know what issues interest and affect you. We would also welcome any contributions for the magazine – articles, photographs, and short snippets of waterway related information. Don't worry too much about the layout – we can sort that out for you. The main thing is to remember that the magazine relies on member's contributions to keep it lively and entertaining.

May I also take this opportunity to remind you about the NABO web site? For those who have not yet visited the new, revamped web pages, I think you will be surprised by the changes which have been brought about by John Slee, the IT guru on Council. He

has worked wonders in making it bright, eye-catching and topical. The site is kept up to date with much of the waterways news and gossip and I am sure you would find it a great site to visit. It can be found at www.nabo.org.uk

There are certainly interesting times ahead in the inland waterways scene with far reaching decisions to make and potentially the most radical changes to be seen since the resurgence of interest in the waterways brought about during the middle of the last century by Rolt, Aikman and their colleagues in the fledgling IWA. (Doesn't it make you feel old when you describe the time you were growing up as "last century").

Thinking back to my own early days of family boating on the canals, with the excitement of planning where to explore next, a key factor in some quarters was to ensure that the waterway we were considering would have sufficient water supplies to guarantee no restrictions or closures. After the middle of summer there were some canals that were virtual no-go areas because of water shortages. Since those heady days lack of water to that scale had become just a bad dream with the advent of better water management, back pumping schemes and so on, but the news of indefinite closures of the Leeds/Liverpool canal from August, and the veiled hint of more to come because of low levels in the reservoirs serving the Rochdale, the Peak Forest canal and so on, the bad old days seem to be returning. Seeing this is the year of volunteering should we all be out in the hills with our shovels, digging more reservoirs to collect the water to help a beleaguered British Waterways?

Talking of British Waterways, in these days of

the Third Sector, Governance, Volunteering and the Civil Society, (whatever that means) should we be having a competition to see if we can find a suitable, catchy name to describe the new, revamped waterways authority? I have seen a suggestion of “Civil Society for Waterways Organisation” to replace BW. Catchy isn't it! In some quarters, the old term Conservancy is favoured but I

am sure that there are those among us who could think of a much more “with it” name suitable for the next phase of the waterways, although remembering the chequered history of waterway management in the recent past a suitable name may not be suitable for universal use! Your suggestions are welcome but just for fun, and please keep it clean!

Anyone got an Amphicar?

NABO News has received an unusual request from Italy and I am sure someone out there may be able to help. It is sometimes amazing what depth of knowledge there is in the Waterways community!

He is looking for a specific model of an amphibious car – the Amphicar 770 – which I think was in production in the 1960's. He is aware that there some on the market in fully restored condition but he is looking for one which needs restoration. He will be grateful for any information and assistance.

His contact details are:-

Matteo Sagona

matteo.sagona@msaconsulting.it



Water, water everywhere...

David Fletcher

...but sadly not enough for the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

As I write it is raining at home, but it is hardly laying the dust. The Leeds and Liverpool is closed and other waterways are also in trouble for lack of water. I don't remember these shortages happening in the last ten years and this must be testament to the computer monitoring systems and back pumping to which we have become accustomed. But the information I hear is that in some areas the water table is so low, that no amount of back pumping, measurement or leak free gates would have got us through this summer. This is such a contrast to 2007 when the major rivers were in severe flood in this period, and boaters were similarly stranded. It seems that even on the canals we are becoming dependant on the computer for good operation. Brindley would have said that it was our own fault for adding all those locks! He never could see the need for them, or computers?

DEFRA Consultations

I'm afraid that I have to return to the politics of the canals, perhaps not top of the issue list during the summer cruising days. NABO Council members have continued to attend DEFRA consultations on proposals to move the inland waterways to the third sector. David Cameron and the coalition Government are talking of a Civil Society, and this is getting coverage in the press in many areas, but not specifically canals. When you hear it on the radio, take note because this could well be us in the future. BW's proposals for 2020 broadly fit into the theme, and I conclude that if the Coalition survives the next year or so, then they will get the go ahead. If it happens for the police and education, then

the inland waterways are a no brainer. The Waterways Minister caused a ripple or two on the Thames when he said he was thinking about adding the EA waters to the proposals. I have covered this in another article, because it deserves some explanation. Some are not happy because they quite like EA.

2020 Vision

So what does 2020 mean for us? IWA are leading the engagement at the moment, with a partnership with the Trust on the K and A, and a seat on the BW board. In the next year or two, decisions will have to be made about representation on the many committees required to run the new trust. Are we also ready for this or will IWA just take over the world as we know it? We have been working hard at our membership this year, to stem the leakage, and increase the flow in. Hopefully this year we can show an increase, but at this critical time, it is not enough. We need to work hard on our membership to maintain our privileged representative position.

Although we would all love to spread our influence to a scene wider than the BW and EA waters, this has to be a longer term wish. We have to concentrate on our traditional waters because that is where any foreseeable Trust will operate. So what can you do to help? Please, please go out and find at least one or two new members for NABO. Give them your NABO News, talk about what we are doing, get them enthusiastic, refer them to the web site and most importantly sign them up. The story is a good one and easy to sell. Many boaters do not know about NABO and what is being done to represent them and our collective knowledge. We need those representative numbers NOW.

Of course the next issue is going to be yet further reductions in the DEFRA grants to both BW and EA. There have been dark rumours around since before the election, and so we have been prepared for the worse. It cannot be good news for levels of service and maintenance budgets. The users, business and commercial group's best efforts on defence of the funding issues were put into the response to the joint department consultation called Waterways for Everyone. We did all this earlier in the year. The whole thing has now been neatly shelved by DEFRA probably never to reappear. They didn't offer to reimburse all our costs in attending the meetings and preparing the submissions; we just get fobbed off with thanks for the efforts and "it was not wasted".

Myself and others concluded before we started that none of the government departments involved wanted to put their names to anything that could conceivably cost money, and this has proved to be the case. Instead we are left with *blah blah* statements about how important the waterways are for this and that, but sorry no money. Third sector and new money from charity status: yes. Better efficiency and lower management costs: yes, Robin Evans tin rattling for spare pennies from local authorities or even Tescos, no thanks. There needs to be a Government grant that enables the basic infrastructure to be operated and maintained for the use and safety of all. This country can afford it if it wants to, after all it's only a flea bite!

IWA involvement in BW

The news of the IWA Chairman joining the BW Board is interesting and it is good that there is an actual boat owner at the top table. I did write to the previous Waterways Minister and suggest that a boater representative should be on the board. He said "no" at that

point and implied that BWAF was enough representation for users. So we are making progress, but not all the boxes are yet ticked. The reason that NABO started was because boaters were not happy with IWA representation and we are still hanging in there. We should not confuse IWA on the board with boater representation.

Local Moorings Strategy Pilot

The Kennet and Avon is leading in another area. There will shortly commence a trial of a Local Moorings Strategy Committee. NABO will be involved, and we hope also that representatives of local boaters can be engaged too. The outcome of this is very important and has the potential of changing the way casual and visitor moorings are managed for all of us.

The continuous cruiser boater density is very high in the area and there are reports of significant overstaying. One of our members, Peter Fellows, was cruising there this summer and he has made a boat count and commentary for us. It makes interesting reading. Subjective, yes. But would you rather an experienced boater made the judgements or a newly recruited boat counter who wouldn't know a hire boat from a butty?

In the past we have urged BW to enforce the 14 day rule and the shorter periods on visitor moorings. BW complains that they make no money from this activity unlike the licence evasion which, on balance does generate income. I think that BW, as a creature of the law, and about which they boast their powers, have a duty to take all aspects of enforcement on the round, and not cherry pick the bits that suits them for cash generation. Don't get me started on the law!

But come the revolution of 2020, when we have a say, what would you do?

Electricity on board, Part 2

continuing the series of articles by Chas Moore on boat electrics

Battery charging

For most boaters, their alternator is the prime source of DC power. Ideally two are required: one to charge the engine starter battery and one to charge the domestic battery bank. The two alternator circuits should be kept separate. If there is only one alternator on the engine, it is wired in such a way as to separately charge both sets of batteries by using a Split Charge Relay or the more reliable Diode Block. The Relay is a mechanical device while the Diode Block is solid state.

Typically, a 100A alternator generates 1400W of power at 14V to charge the domestic battery bank and supply power to electrical equipment while the engine is running. The alternator should be rotating at about 3,000 rpm to generate the rated power. As most engines idle at about 1,000 rpm you need a pulley ratio of 3:1 to achieve the required alternator speed. My Beta engine for example has a 9 inch pulley on the engine that drives a 3 inch pulley on the alternator.

The standard voltage regulator built into an alternator is designed to charge a car starter battery and it will not fully charge the deep-cycle batteries used in the domestic battery bank on boats. Temperature compensation prevents under-charging in the winter and over-charging in the summer. This problem can be overcome using an external alternator regulator. This ensures that batteries are charged to 90% or better by sensing the battery voltage and usually having temperature compensation to ensure the correct charging voltage, winter or summer. The temperature sensor should be on or near the battery terminal.

To properly charge a deep-cycle battery, a voltage of between 14.0V and 14.6V is required from the alternator depending on the temperature. The charging voltage when batteries are cold is higher, 14.6V at 0°C, than

when they are warm, 14.0V at 20°C. If the voltage is above 14.6V, it will cause the battery to boil (known as 'gassing'). A battery requires the replacement of 120% of the used power because charging is only about 70% efficient. If you do not fully recharge the battery it will rapidly deteriorate. Plate sulphation is the single greatest cause of battery failure. During discharge the chemical reaction with the sulphuric acid causes the lead plates to be converted to lead sulphate. If recharging is not carried out promptly the lead sulphate starts to harden and crystallise, and this is not reversible resulting in loss of battery capacity. However, as long as some charging is taking place, even from a small solar panel, sulphation will not occur.

Lead-acid batteries should be kept fully charged. Your engine starter battery will usually be 100% full but the deep-cycle domestic batteries will be 80-90% full at best. The lowest point of discharge is in the morning, so it is advisable to recharge batteries as soon as possible each day. It is good practice to charge the batteries for at least 2 hours in one go. The first hour is a bulk charge where the voltage rises to 14V and most of the current is delivered. Then in the next hour or so the batteries soak up the charge like a sponge while the voltage is held at 14V. You can think of this as a bit like cooking a chicken: first light the oven to get it up to temperature then wait for the chicken to absorb the heat and cook.

The size of your alternator determines the minimum battery capacity it can safely charge. The usual rule is that the alternator should be 20% of battery capacity. So if you have a 70 Amp alternator it can safely charge a 350 Amp Hour (AH) battery bank, a 100A alternator can safely charge a 500AH battery bank. If the output from the alternator is too high, it will charge at too high a rate

Figure 1: Battery State of Charge indicators (12V)

Percentage full	Specific gravity	Terminal voltage	Colour indicated
80-100	1.24-1.28	12.5-12.7	Green
30-70	1.14-1.22	12.0-12.4	Orange
0-20	1.08-1.12	11.7-11.9	Red

A battery is suspect if the specific gravity of any cell varies by more than 0.03 after charging (e.g. 1.23 to 1.26). A faulty battery loses its voltage when under high load and one or more of the cells will boil.

and this can generate heat that could distort the internal lead plates in the battery. More batteries reduce the charging rate per battery, but too many may mean that the batteries do not get enough charge. I had this problem with my original 70A alternator connected to a 550AH lead-acid battery bank: the charge rate was $70/550 \times 100 = 12\%$, and over time this proved to be too low and my batteries gradually lost capacity. I now have a 110A alternator connected to a 550AH AGM battery bank and this gives a $110/550 \times 100 = 20\%$ charge rate, which is satisfactory.

Other methods of battery charging

Solar panels convert sunlight directly into electricity. There are two types of cell made from either amorphous silicon (blue) or the more efficient polycrystalline silicon (black). Outputs range between 12 – 130W per panel.

A regulator is required to limit the charge voltage if the output is more than 1% of the battery bank capacity (e.g. 4A output into a 400AH battery bank). Lower output units would not need a regulator. My 'Solara' panels are rated at 40W each and provide a charge to the batteries between dawn and dusk. Solar panels are expensive, similar to the cost of a bank of batteries, and as a continuous cruiser I am not sure that I would get them again. However, if you leave the boat in a marina for months at a time, they provide a trickle charge that keeps the batteries in good condition.

Wind generators can produce up to 100W and

typically 4A in a 20 knot wind. A regulator is required to prevent over-charging. But they can be noisy and require substantial rigging.

Battery management

My Victron charger, fed from the landline, has two isolated outputs, the first for the domestic battery bank and the second is limited to approximately 4A with a slightly lower output voltage, and is intended to top up a starter battery. It has a voltage sensing facility to compensate for voltage loss due to cable resistance so that the battery always receives the correct charge voltage.

There are three stages of charging. In 'BOOST' mode, the voltage rises slowly to 14.2V while charge current is at maximum. In the 'EQUALISE' mode, the voltage is held constant at 14.2V while the charge current falls (to equalise the charge between cells). In the 'FLOAT' mode, the voltage is held constant at 13.2V while charge current is minimal.

The Adverc battery management system is an alternator controller that works by cycling the output voltage between 14.0V and 14.4V. It also measures the battery temperature to ensure correct charging winter or summer.

The best way to determine the charge state of a battery is to measure the specific gravity of the electrolyte using a colour-coded hydrometer (like a turkey baster with a float inside). The voltages in Figure 1 are only a guide.

Boating across the Mersey

Sue Burchett

At the last NABO AGM Ian Fletcher asked if anyone was interested in crossing the Mersey. Thinking this a good idea I volunteered. My geography north of the Watford Gap is a bit hazy, and I thought I had volunteered to do the Ribble Link!

As time progressed we received emails full of instructions and it became clearer. We needed a Manchester Ship Canal survey; life jackets; two 50ft ropes; an anchor; booked passage to Liverpool Docks and Ian and Mike Carter sorted the rest.

For several months emails flew back and forth, things became clearer and the plans progressed. We made our way slowly North from the Blisworth area in our usual happy fashion starting in April for the crossing on the 21st June. The passage through the Link had to be booked early, so we sent the booking form at the beginning of March. We were offered 9th or 20th June so went for the later. When we arrived we were told we should have gone for the former as others found so much to do. We preferred the “get there and go” approach as it gave us less time to think about the crossing.

We bumbled on our way till we got to Middlewich where we did our survey. This consisted of a check list of ‘have you got’ us replying ‘yes’ and then we received the appropriate piece of paper and handed over £35.

Next stop was the Weaver. We had been down the Anderton lift (me once by abseil) but had turned left at the bottom. This time we turned right and went to have a look at the Mersey. We didn’t book for the lift, so didn’t pay and we didn’t wait long either and both trips were on a Saturday. Back up the lift on to Macclesfield and Whaley Bridge, then Ashton and the Rochdale 9. These last locks would have been impossible without help. The water was weiring a foot above the top lock gates. Into Castlefield, followed by the Bridgewater and then the Leeds and Liverpool Leigh branch. We were told there was a water shortage but it didn’t affect us.

We now began to see other boats that were going on the same trip but apart from a wave or cheery hello, people kept to themselves, the modern boating phenomena. Due to a complete lack of facilities since Middlewich,



Photo: Sue Burchett

we went down the Rufford Arm and found a very welcome rubbish bin, but the pumpout didn't work. (we are still waiting for reply and refund from BW) Back to the Leeds and Liverpool and on to bridge 9 where we met up with the BW gang, and they escorted us down into the Liverpool Docks. The link was most impressive although parts still looked like a building site.

We only stayed in Salthouse docks overnight, but that was long enough to get our 'briefing'. We were to be the second locking and a 5am start. Richard Fairhurst and Harry Arnold had met up with us by then. Richard accompanied a lady single hander and his report can be read in August's Waterways World.

All was well locking out and we could see the first locking in the distance. We were then told to wait for the next two lockings, so we swanned around for nearly 2hrs. The nearest land was over a mile away, the water was calm,

there was no wind and the sun shone. When all the boats were out there was a race for Eastham lock on the Manchester Ship Canal.

All 29 boats fitted and were soon on their way. Some were going to the end of the Ship Canal but we were headed to Ellesmere Port and that was where the problems began. There wasn't enough water to get the first two boats over the lock cill. The broad lock is literally held together with tarpaulin and string and therefore leaks. It was down to the hard work of the organisers that we all managed to get off the Ship Canal into safety. But what a poor welcome to a British Waterways 'gateway'.

All in all we had a lovely time and at no point did we have to breast up. Apart from the survey cost of £35, we paid £15 for Brunswick lock with a safety boat and crew and £45 for the ship canal. These costs were due to us being part of a group but will be a guide for a single boater.

An opportunity to do something different!

Long term member Sue Day, Chair of the Horseboating Society has asked us to remind members and readers that the Society is always looking for crew to help with their various projects moving horse drawn craft to and from various events (mainly in the Northern half of the country). It's a great way to see how hard it actually was while picking up great anecdotes for fireside chats in the future! The logistics are quite complicated but Sue sorts them out admirably. The Society welcomes help in any way – towpath crew, event staff and support vessels (i.e. tea barges!) so check out if they are where you might be cruising or plan our cruise to coincide with theirs. The best way to see when they need help and the events is on line at www.horseboating.org.uk



EA waters to be moved to BW?

David Fletcher

The new Waterways Minister dropped this bombshell in a recent announcement. He didn't say that it would happen, just that he was considering it! Talk about dropping a wheel key in the lock; the ripples go all over the place. NABO and many other representative bodies attended a workshop in July with DEFRA, ostensibly for consultation over British Waterways and the third sector, but the future of Environment Agency waterways suddenly became a main subject for comment.

The Environment Agency waters comprise the non-tidal Thames, the Medway and the Eastern Rivers, plus a few odds and ends. EA looks after the navigation responsibilities through a dedicated part of the headline organisation, and shares buildings and management structures. The flood prevention part is much larger and operates in parallel.

Some argue that these two functions should not be separated. On river systems like the Severn and Trent, this split arrangement does operate, with EA in control for flood issues, and giving instructions to British Waterways to operate sluices and other controls. It works, but whether it is ideal, we have no information at the moment. In the case of the Thames, there are benefits of the links, and a good example is the arguments of 2 years back over the threat to lock keepers and their riverside cottages.

The Environment Agency navigation budget is about £25m each year, and very little of this is management overhead, so there is little opportunity for cost saving. If it were transferred to British Waterways, the same kind of overhead costs would still exist and simply move to the new structure. In

this context the EA navigation could be considered to be equivalent to about 2 of the BW regions. River navigation maintenance is of course a good deal easier than managing the canal man-made structures with the ownership of the land as well. Also EA do not have all the legal and heritage baggage that comes with the canals. With the transfer British Waterways would grow by 10%. In my view this is not going to provide any overriding benefit from economies of scale in sub contract or purchasing turnover.

Some have argued that EA should take over British Waterways. It is obvious that a hands on organisation with a spend of £25m per year cannot absorb a £200m per year business like BW. So why do we get this significant user support for EA? This is perhaps not the best-loved organisation in the country. Before the election there were many rumours that the whole thing would be broken up.

The Thames User Group is very enthusiastic about the style of interface with users that they see. I have attended a number of meetings on the Thames and reported in these pages about the positive attitudes of EA. My observation is that the teams have got through the main issues over the years, with a track record of success. The general level of discussion is very supportive and there has been enough money to address the key issues.

Our regional representative from the Anglian area says, "I know, from years of experience, that EA manage their navigation far better than BW. Over the past 20 or so years the navigation on EA controlled parts of the system has improved while on BW waters it is deteriorating." Our own waterways condition survey showed that many boaters agree with

Sadie. So there is something good going on here, and it would be an excellent thing if this could be bottled and used elsewhere.

There is a strong suspicion that the EA navigation is rather better funded than British Waterways and this would make a big difference of course. It is easier to fund a few critical extra million in the many hundreds of millions that the large part of the EA spends. It could also be significant as to how overhead charges are made, and what is left for real work on the waterways. By contrast, BW has been turned upside down and shaken for cash year on year.

On the Thames of course, it could be argued that it should be better funded than other areas. The non-tidal length is 147 miles, and there are 10,000 real boats and another 4000 visiting each year. This density on the canals is just not feasible. If they feel that for example lock keepers are an important part of Thames life, then TUG can easily argue that they are significantly contributing for

this through licence charges. Prima donnas they may be, but collectively they are paying the money. On the BW Trent, a navigation with locks comparable with the Thames with a much lesser boat population, there are issues around lock keepers. It is no wonder that TUG don't want to see their waterway service diluted, and who can blame them with their collective spending power?

But the political thrust about the 3rd sector for British Waterways is strong, and the argument will go that if it is "right" for BW, then it will also be "right" for EA Rivers. I fear that BW is just not ready for anything new at this time. Let them get up and running in a new way, the quicker the better, and when it is a success, it will be the right time for some more harmonisation.

Environment Agency navigation is a relative success, and moving it to British Waterways would not save money, and the cash benefits are marginal. So for me it is the right step, but too soon. Think again in 5 years.



NABO's formal complaint: a legal update

Geoffrey Rogerson, council member for legal affairs

Following our initial letter of complaint and BW's offer of a meeting, we duly advised them that this would be put before our AGM in November. Having received approval at the AGM we asked BW for a meeting and eventually they were able to get everyone together in January. As a result of this meeting BW agreed to look at the wording of the Terms and Conditions with a view to modifying what was considered to be outdated and unenforceable. We were promised this by the end of February. However having followed this up many times we eventually received a reply in early April.

Unfortunately this was merely an augmented version of the original response from BW and contained a listing of BW Acts of Parliament, but no reference to any changes to the Terms and Conditions. At the meeting they agreed to look at the wording of '*obstruction*' as the present sentence *a boat is causing an obstruction at a mooring by preventing other boaters from tying up* is absolute nonsense. Every time I quote it people just laugh. BW agreed that they really meant it to deal with people mooring at water points etc. and we accepted this. BW hoped that a consensus of user groups etc. could come up with 'requirements' which a court could look at sympathetically. BW suggested a sort of Highway Code for the waterways.

'Guidelines' which have become 'must' is not acceptable and is a contradiction in terms. Boats overstaying 24/48-hour visitor mooring or 14 day limits are already covered by existing legislation and merely require adequate enforcement. I do not see how BW can keep 24-hour visitor moorings free when these are only monitored once a week. '*Progressive journey*' or '*sufficient movement*'

does not seem to show any basis upon what a sufficient movement would be and it is a generality which is hopelessly vague. Similarly a requirement to demonstrate '*bona fide navigation*' is without a clear statement as to what is *bona fide navigation*.

Following further discussions with our legal advisors we have now given BW detailed legal argument supporting each of our points of complaint. This information is now available to those members who are subject to BW court action where it is relevant. We have asked BW to respond to our point-by-point letters and hope that this would lead to a future meeting, probably with our legal advisor present with a view to moving things forward and hopefully obviating the need to go ahead with the second stage complaint and if necessary in due course the ombudsman.

Terms and Conditions have been introduced that are unacceptable and we are insistent that the situation be clarified. The existing wording '*progressive journey*', '*significant part of the system*' and '*bona fide navigation*' are vague and confusing.

NABO fully support BW in enforcing illegal overstaying. As there have only been four court cases since 2007 one must ask is there a problem or are BW just not pursuing illegal boaters? We will update you with any further developments in future editions of NABO News.

NABO NEWS CLASSIFIEDS

Experienced Canal Skipper seeks female partner with boat. Must be able to cook, clean, iron, operate locks and polish brass. Please send photo of boat.

Replies to:
editor@nabonews.org.uk



Black oil everywhere? Engine on the blink?

Help is at hand, and cheaper, with this exclusive deal for NABO members.

River Canal Rescue are offering NABO members **20% off** joining fee* and then on renewal;

5% off Bronze £76
Was £80, you save £4

10% off Silver £94.50
Was £105, you save £10.50

15% off Gold £136
Was £160, you save £24
(More than your membership subscription!)

* on all levels except the £55 Retainer level.

When applying, write 'NABO offer' and your membership number in the white box on the back of the application form or online application.

Benefits include

Bronze – Breakdown assistance & recovery for vessel and member only. (Maximum 4 call-outs per year). Outboard motor loan.

Silver – As Bronze *plus* Homestart for registered vessel for member and one other user. (Maximum 7 call-outs per year). Conveyance of crew to home address or marina. (Maximum of two relays per year)

Gold – As Silver *plus* your vessel covered for any user and you are covered on any other vessel. (Unlimited call-outs for member or vessel). Annual inspection of registered vessel, engine and electrical system.

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The future of Hartshill Yard

Judy Vero, Atherstone Civic Society

Atherstone is on the Coventry Canal which has a number of historic sites in the vicinity which are at risk. The most prominent is Hartshill Wharf, a small complex of bridges, waterways, workshops, yard and manager's house. It used to be opened occasionally to the public but was leased to a building company about two years ago with, what I believe is an option to buy. This company has already erected unsympathetic fencing to protect its building materials. We are concerned that, once it has acquired the building, it may be difficult for British Waterways to control activity there, although, as I understand it, they do put restrictive covenants on property they sell.

I raised the issue with British Waterways over a year ago and also my concern that the lock cottage at Atherstone and its keeper, who was awarded an MBE for his services to the

canal, would be safe. I was assured that there was no intention to dispense with the lock keeper and that he was safe in his cottage for the foreseeable future. Just recently I learned that he is to be made redundant and evicted. This has shocked the community – not only is Tony Wright an exemplary lock-keeper but also an active member of the community and a great champion of the canal. Atherstone has pockets of deprivation and the canal has suffered a number of incidents concerning nuisance youths, including the killing of swans, and attacks on boats. Tony organised canoe lessons for the local youths and succeeded in weaning them from nuisance behaviour. I cannot imagine what the canal will be like without him. It is essential that there is a lock keeper and some reassurance that there is a watching eye to encourage



Picture: Fiona Slee

passing boats to tie up in Atherstone and bring their trade to the town. Currently some 5000 boats per year pass through.

The last Government diverted some £150 million from DEFRA's grant to British Waterways. Now BW can only make ends meet by selling off the family silver. I strongly support BW moving into the Third Sector but it may be but it may be a case of shutting the

stable door because the features that make the waterways so attractive to tourists and local people will be damaged beyond repair as property is sold off and unsympathetic alterations are made. I have already heard that people are buying up lock cottages and then put in planning applications to extend them into 4-bed houses.

Long-term future of the canals – limits to growth

Geoffrey Rogerson

At a recent council meeting the question of congestion in many parts of the system came up. Boat numbers have risen in the order of 1000 each year for the last 20 years going from 20,000 to a current 36,000. I suggested that there be a limit to the number of licences issued of 100,000. Arms went up in horror; "that's three times what we've already got" etc.

OK, so what is the limit? 40,000, 50,000, 60,000? Is there a limit? Does it matter? By 2020 it is probable that there will be between 40,000 and 50,000 boats. So what?

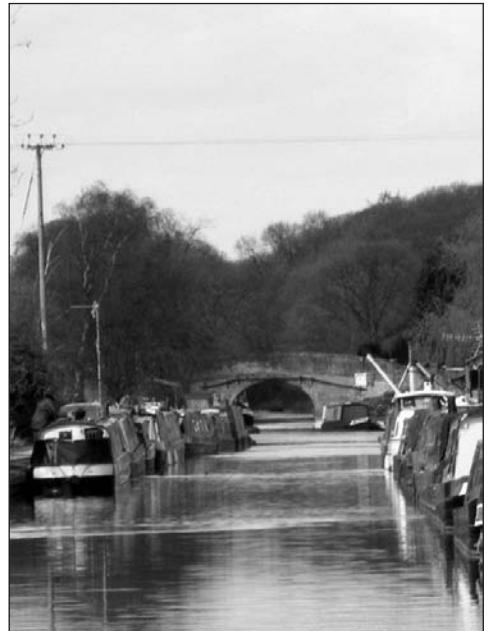
I am not aware that BW has a policy regarding numbers on what is a finite number of canal miles, or have even considered it. They, in their 2020 brochure, boast of the success of the waterways and their growth.

Here we enter the world of politics and vested interests:

- The boat builders would not want any restriction.
- The hire fleets probably would.
- No legislation exists to control numbers.
- Fishermen would find it progressively more difficult.
- Marina owners would presumably be quite happy.
- Boaters will get increasingly frustrated.

BW are faced with the big problem of maintaining the waterways with inadequate funding and increasing use, particularly in some areas. (Sensible boaters don't move on bank holidays).

There needs to be a debate regarding this and I would hope that BWAFF will take it up. Meanwhile I would welcome views from our members as to numbers or any solutions to a growing problem.



Your letters

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

Mooring at Marple

The reply from BW to Graham Lambden's letter in the July issue. May we also take the opportunity to wish Graham all the best in his decision to retire and live "on the bank"

Dear Mr Lambden

I am writing in to update you following your email to our HQ enquiries email address about the moorings and towpath in Marple.

I am sorry about the difficulty that you experienced. There is one section here where there is a rock shelf that prevents craft from mooring – we are putting in warning signs to that effect. More generally, there is some debris in the canal however; it has not been causing a substantial problem – although water levels have been relatively high until the last few weeks.

It is clear though that further work is needed here and our contractor has been mobilized to return to the site to clear this. I expect that this should be complete within the month.

There will be more moorings as a consequence of this work than were there previously. The original project was to improve/ secure the towpath, not create moorings, and has been a success from that perspective.

Regards, David Baldacchino
Waterway Manager, Manchester and
Pennine Waterway

Bona Fide Navigation?

Dear David Fletcher,

Your comments in May's issue of NABO News re: Bona Fide Navigation and continuous cruisers being challenged by BW for not moving far enough every 14 days.

On the Leeds & Liverpool Canal at Altham Bridge, No 118, west of Burnley there are two wide beam craft that are now land locked. They had originally been making their way over to Yorkshire to the East of Leeds, but because of poor water depth of the canal through East Lancashire due to lack of dredging they have been moored at Altham for some years now. Fortunately for the owners of these boats is that BW are turning a blind eye to a mooring fee and the requirement to move on after 14 days!

Does this not make a mockery of continuous cruisers having to move on after 14 days?

Alan Holden, Boat Anna

Editors note: NABO News accepts letters from members in good faith but the contents of letters are not necessarily the views of NABO

BW Accountability

Dear NABO News,

I agree with the views expressed by Simon Greer in issue 3 regarding the non accountability of BW if they become Third Sector.

Many years ago I was moored on the River Wey, which is owned and managed by the National Trust. During the time I was on a mooring there, to my knowledge, there was no consultation with the boaters. It may be that they did consult clubs and boating businesses but I was never made aware of it if they did.

They decided when we could navigate the river and on what days. They decided when they were going to drain pounds or flood them without, it seemed to me, any regard

to the users. We were on our boat one night when they decided to drain the pound and the first we knew of it was when we woke in the middle of the night rolling out of bed.

They seemed to have a “jobs worth” attitude to boaters that certainly did not endear me to the management team. If this is the sort of attitude that BW decide to adopt should they get to be third sector then god help the waterways and its users.

Steve Buss

Boaters and Fisherman

Dear Editor

I have a foot in two camps, as I boat and also like to do some fishing. Our boat is ‘Shannen’, which we moor at Yardley Gobion, on the Grand Union. We took the boat out at the beginning of March this year for the weekend and ended up mooring overnight on the Saturday on the visitors moorings above Cosgrove lock. These are very nice and quiet village moorings, about 400 metres in length, with a very good towpath, mooring rings and deep water, and sometimes I will spend a couple of hours fishing here next to our boat, but mainly in the warmer weather.

On Sunday morning, at about a quarter to eight, my wife and myself were woken by the sound of people walking along the towpath, some pulling trolleys. On getting up I looked out to find a number of fishermen strung out along the bank, and to make matters worse, one was right at the bows of the boat and another one right at the stern. This turned out to be a fishing match on the visitors moorings involving about twenty five fishermen. This is not the first time that this has happened here. To make matters worse, at about 8.45, I poked my head out the back, being polite, to let the guy know that I would be running the engine for about ten minutes just to cook

breakfast, and all I got in return was moaning and groaning about it.

All I can see from BW’s new arrangements is more conflict with the angling fraternity, with the poor old boater coming off worse yet again.

Geoff Wood

The Chesterfield Canal – Praise for British Waterways, East Midlands

In these days of BW knocking it is refreshing to be able to balance the discussion – Ed

We have a residential mooring on the Chesterfield Canal, and regularly cruise the canal. Sometimes just as a change for scenery from the marina at Shireoaks, other times to West Stockwith in order to go out on the tidal River Trent for our summer holiday which is limited to around two weeks. So usually we go to Newark, Nottingham and Shardlow or to Lincoln and Boston. These areas are all covered by our local BW team.

The Chesterfield Canal is a very pretty narrow canal with lots of locks, making it hard work but very rewarding. It has a diversity of wildlife, vegetation and scenery.

Whenever we see a problem, or a potential problem, we contact the department at Worksop or the office at Newark. Everyone from Sean McGinley the manager at Newark, to Stan the charge hand at Worksop and all the ground crew, (all six and a half of them!) are always friendly, courteous, and more importantly, act on the information received. Our team go the extra mile for everyone. The canal isn’t perfect and I’m sure I will always have a list of jobs for them. However, they do the best they can with the resources they have. We are proud of our BW team.

Julie Drakett, NB Dreamcatcha

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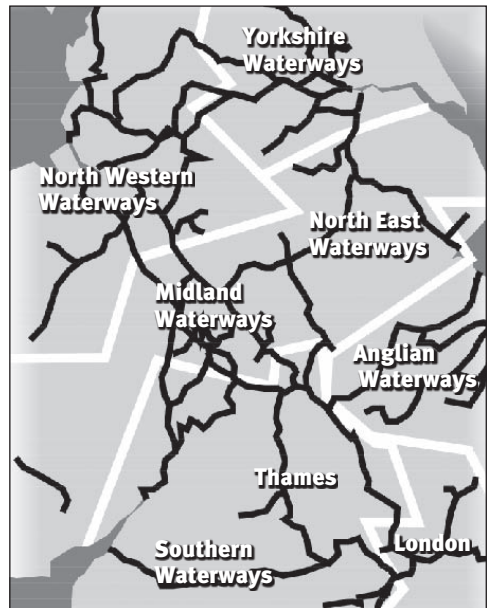
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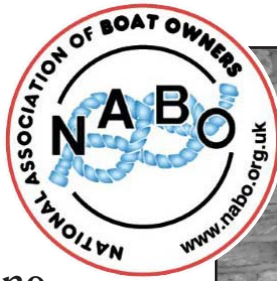


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