



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 2 – March 2011



BREATHING SPACES
The latest idea from BW

MOORING STRATEGIES
Developments on the Kennet and Avon
Community Mooring Strategy in Staffordshire

THE EU FUEL DIRECTIVE
Making sense of the new law

WORKING SHORT BOATS
Memories of a Leeds and Liverpool boatman

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Contributions

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images and photos in JPEG format please. Contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk

NABO News Copy Dates 2011

Please email or post your contributions by:
19th March, 23rd April, 18th June, August 13th, December 3rd

Front Cover Photo Competition

Win yourself a year's free membership by sending us an image for the front cover of the new NABO News! We like the picture to reflect the Inland Waterways, of course, and not just narrow boats! In the first instance please send a low resolution jpeg by email.

This month's cover photo is a view of the Caen Hill flight on the K&A, reflecting a number of articles about developments on this canal—photo by Peter Fellows

NABO Calendar 2011

Council Meetings in 2011

Saturday March 12th

Saturday April 16th

Saturday June 11th

The Council has agreed a break in the middle of the summer as most members are cruising.

Saturday September 3rd

Saturday October 15th

AGM November 12th (Venue to be arranged)

New Council meet Saturday November 26th

The venue as usual is the Waggon and Horses at Oldbury. Remember that members are welcome to attend meetings – just let the Secretary or Chairman know in advance, contact details opposite.



NABO News is published by the **National Association of Boat Owners**
FREEPOST (BM8367), Birmingham B31 2BR Editor: Peter Fellows

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Moorings... and more

This month, moorings feature in a number of articles and letters and there is also a mixture of news and views from members and Council. **Peter Fellows** asks for more.

Moorings, and particularly those on the Kennet and Avon, are in the news this month: Andy Colyer has a report of meetings of the K&A Mooring Strategy Steering Group; Geoffrey Rogerson has raised the issue of 'Breathing Spaces'—a new idea BW put forward at a K&A moorings meeting; local resident to the K&A, David Hawkins, has ideas for 'self-help marinas' in his letter; and I have added my two-pennyworth with some observations on moorings from a cruise on the K&A last year.

Give us your views

NABO News would be very pleased to get your views on breathing spaces and more generally on the availability of moorings. Geoffrey has also followed up last month's supplement on legal issues with a summary of the issues that have been raised with NABO's legal counsel. If you are affected by any of these, get in touch with a Council member to see whether the Association can help.

At times it seems that there is nothing but bad news about the waterways—and this month it is the Government cuts to BW's grant as reported by Chairman David Fletcher in his column. Mike

Mackay has also highlighted some potential problems with bio-diesel following a new law that came into force in January. However, there is also some good news: DEFRA have started the process for getting volunteer Trustees for the New Waterways Charity, and lock keeper Geoff Horsnall is no doubt pleased to have won an award for the best-kept lock on the Thames.

My aim is for NABO News to have a mixture of up to date news, members' and Council's views, and informative articles that are of interest to most readers. Ian Reid has an interesting take on problems with vee-belts, and Alan Holden has sent us a fascinating account of working L&L short boats crossing the Mersey between Liverpool and Birkenhead, loaded with grain.

Member Simon Greer has been in touch on how he feels NABO should be representing boaters and what the Association should focus on. This edition has the extended correspondence between Simon and the Council and I would very much like to have your views on the issues he raises, as well as the Council's response.

A bit of fun

I would also like to include some more light-hearted pieces to balance the sometimes 'heavy stuff', and there is the first of an occasional Caption Competition depicting the aquatic version of ostriches—your best caption suggestions will appear in the March issue. However, despite a fairly lengthy web search for 'waterway humour' to find some light-hearted snippets, I have failed to find anything. I don't think this is because waterways folk are a miserable bunch, so if you have any amusing (short) waterway-related tales, jokes or limericks that you think will amuse readers, please let me have them and I will include those that are suitable for a family readership. *Happy boating.*

Good visitor moorings at Bradford on Avon: the K&A features in a number of articles this month.



End of the winter?

So the ice has gone and I hope we can now look forward to the end of the prolonged cold days and heavy frosts, writes **David Fletcher**, many boaters have been iced in for more than a month and I have no doubt the weather will have delayed the winter stoppage programme too.

I am looking forward to the spring and temperatures getting a bit higher. At least the evenings are getting lighter.

Ice from the Treasury

But the cold wind still blows from the Treasury. Just before Christmas, DEFRA announced that the Grant in Aid for 2011-12 would be cut by around £10m to £40m. Whilst this is not a surprise, it is still a severe blow. BW are considering what this means for their activities and consulting on the inevitable impact on maintenance and the way they do business. The squeeze continues.

It is some comfort that other parts of Government spending cuts are even more severe but it seems that BW's cuts are immediate rather than over a longer three year period. So the immediate cut is deep. I don't doubt the canals will survive in the short term, and we should focus on the money pot being part full rather than part empty. But what really worries me is the indication that the Grant in Aid going forward will be at this same low level.

It was always going to be a tough negotiation for a long-term contract, and that appears to be agreed, but it is very unfortunate that this deal is now to be done at the exact time of maximum Government cutbacks. Whether this level of grant is enough to sustain the New Waterway Charity in its infancy is a key question. It is closely linked to the speed with which BW's other JV incomes improve and the charity benefits kick in. But who will take this risk without some buffer of cash?

Maintenance

I think that BW does have a reasonable handle on the basic maintenance costs of the waterways. The condition analysis of the key assets is as good as it gets in the industries I have worked in over

the years, and there is the expertise and knowledge to plan the work given steady funding. There will always be the means to save money each year though efficiency improvements, use of volunteers and prioritising the major work. But the core cost will remain and the income, including the Grant in Aid, must be enough so that the maintenance backlog can be addressed in the long term and that buffer is provided. Otherwise the canals are unsustainable. BW has told us that they will be working hard on the overhead cost of running the waterways in the coming year. Office moves and the like will cut costs, but I am keen that the core expertise of running the waterways is not lost. Too often organisations facing cutbacks lose the essential expertise to do their core work and regret it later when things go wrong.

The price of a little tar?

The fact remains that year on year cuts have meant that every penny saved by BW has been neatly removed by the avaricious Treasury. Getting out of this earthly orbit is why the concept of the charity was proposed in the first place. We collectively have to quickly achieve 'escape velocity' and fly free. Is £39m each year enough buffer to do this? Of course not! Common sense tells us that the maintenance backlog has been growing for years, and this level of funding is just not enough. An old boating saying comes to mind: Don't spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar.

New Waterway Charity? Yes please, but not at any price. Help needed here. The cry for volunteers is all around us. Lock keepers to lawyers, painters to patrol officers; it seems all are needed and can be used. It is going to be the way of the future. If you have time, skills and the inclination, do please contribute.



And there is need at the top end of the scale too. This month there are the calls for applications for Trustees for the set up of the New Waterways Charity. These are the top jobs in the NWC for volunteers, and equivalent to the current BW Board members but without the salary package. Advertising for Trustees is a welcome move because it shows real progress by DEFRA. Who will step forward from the boating community to represent us? We have long called for a real boater to be on the Board but we have to be 'in it to win it'! Details are on the NABO website. And don't forget that NABO needs help too. The promise of NWC does not mean that boater representation has been done away with yet (if ever).

Forestry Commission

The announcements about the Forestry Commission have been in the news this week and hotly debated. There are many parallels with BW and some differences. It is hard to see whether this issue benefits the waterways by widening the debate, or detracts because it dilutes the potential market for cash and volunteers. But it has put the Big Society back into the news and highlights the need for the Government to get some success in this area when there is nothing but flack. What is interesting to see is that public opinion was mobilised

and the Government listened. Can we learn from this and do the same in these critical months?

Watford Observer?

There is a new term on the waterway: 'Breathing space'. In some areas we have such long lines of boats either on approved moorings or just moored up, that it is all joining together like urban sprawl. None of us like this and the associated running for long periods at tickover and juggling the tiller in cross winds (no bow thruster to get me out of trouble!). But what is to be done when mooring supply exceeds demand and marinas are not cutting it? Should we agree to no mooring areas or 'breathing spaces', and will this help? Or will it just restrict our reasonable movement? Is the root cause the lack of enforcement, and getting that right will help the problem?

One person's breathing space is another's perfect mooring spot

When Val and I are cruising we invariably moor in the middle of nowhere because we like the quiet. We are late risers and consequently enjoy the slow chug in the evening sun with a little refreshment while looking for place to stop. There is no point in us looking for mooring in a village or a honey pot at this time. All the space is gone when we get there. And the last thing we want

is to see a no mooring sign in the country because somebody in the office thinks it should be a breathing space.

And we don't want to cruise a canal where the only place to stop is a compound like a motorway service station. I say hands off our breathing spaces! There are plenty of parts of the canal already where it's impossible to moor due to the bank conditions, overhanging trees and bends. I don't want any more lost. I quote a recent headline from the Watford Observer. They ".... described the proposed move as nonsense". I could not agree moor or is it more?



Notes from Council

Our mouse under the chairman's chair Pseudonym, reports on the goings-on at last month's NABO Council meeting

Again the Council was treated to the hospitality of the Waggon & Horses in January and we also had a visitor, which was good—the more the merrier.

Agenda items included the NABO responses to the Licensing Consultation, which were agreed by all, especially opposition to the proposed abolition of the 3- and 6-month visitor licences, which so many of our members find useful when coming from non BW waters and would stop them visiting.

Altering the prompt payment dates seem to be a way to try and catch out

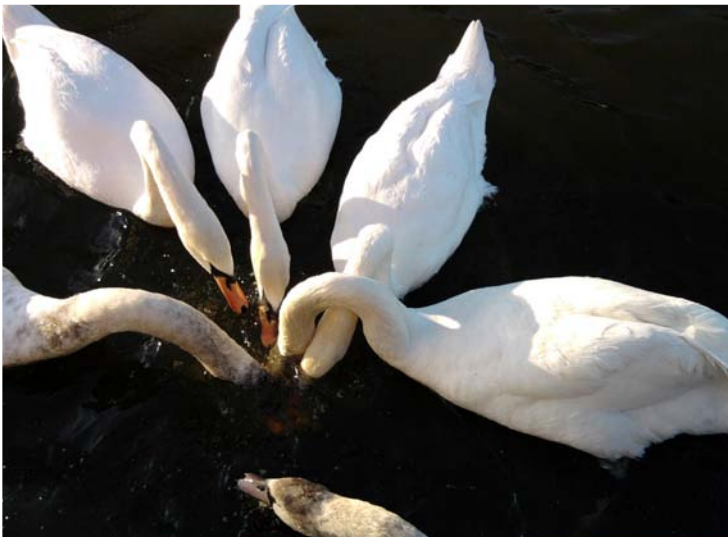
BW customers. NABO strongly believes that the principle of making a charge to move a boat is not in accordance with the 1983 BW act and is therefore *ultra vires*.

The K&A meetings to sort out a mooring policy continue. The comments that come back to us are that they are badly run and have been compared to the Middle East process but are less successful. The proposal that boaters who want to overstay on a mooring will phone in and pay £10 for the privilege will need 100 boaters a week to break even.

Caption competition

Can you suggest a caption for this photo from Geoffrey Rogerson?

All printable entries please to NABO News at nabonews@nabo.org.uk by March 12th and the best entries will be included in the next issue.



Mooring Strategy on the K&A

A report from the Mooring Strategy Steering Group

As you may be aware, the latest move by BW to resolve moorings issues has been developing. **Andy Colyer** examines the progress.

A mooring strategy was supposed to have come out of last year's consultation on mooring, but it was already being discussed beforehand. I always felt it inevitable and I was not completely convinced the consultation fully endorsed the idea. However, it is good in my view that moorings are considered by a group of relevant people, and not just BW. Sally Ash from BW chairs it. To date, there have been 5 meetings—over 15 hours and more meetings planned every month until May—it has been slow going! We are looking at the western end of the Kennet and Avon canal, from Bath to Devizes. The intention is for interested parties to meet and attempt to agree a pragmatic way forward for moorings on the local waterway. This pilot scheme is likely to help establish national policy and framework for the rest of the country.

The steering group

So far, the group consists of representatives from NABO, RBOA, AWCC, APCO, the Bargee Travellers Association, local parish councils, BW, IWA, K&A Trust, Bath and North East Somerset Council (BANES), Wiltshire Council, an Equalities Officer and local boaters. It is fair to say there are some very different opinions and it gets pretty heated at times! There is a huge amount of knowledge and a range of agendas too! Some are very focused on 'their' stretch, which may really be only a few miles; others, like NABO, have their eye on the national implications and the legality of any proposals. Many of the previous meetings were dominated with general discussions around the terms of reference and creating a vision for the group. Essentially this is about protecting the canal and it's environs, and enabling use of the canal by all. There is still not full agreement on the detail, but we have moved on.

There is some common ground;

such as the need for consistent, fair enforcement, in particular, the 14-day rule; and a respect for the environment. As ever, the devil is in the detail and the next few meetings will concentrate on three topics for detailed smaller group discussion: enforcement, zoning and the canal environment and services. Some of us will also walk the length of the canal to assist with the work. It is hoped we will have the chance to discuss the Moorings Guidance for Continuous Cruisers, as APCO and others see that it is problematic.

On a personal note, there are a few things that are concerning me. These include the casual use of terms such as 'zone', 'area' and 'place'. Some have deep legal roots and their casual use has serious implications. These are not so important to some, but a blasé attitude would have major implications for boaters nationally. Fears for poorly thought through ideas without clear legal grounding will be detrimental to the groups and individuals involved. I am concerned by a new term: 'Breathing Spaces': NABO has discussed this at Council, and are opposed to the idea. The Council believes that breathing spaces do occur naturally with movement of boats, especially with good enforcement. I especially don't like the idea that boater's navigational rights would be limited by anyone. I would be interested to know what others in the group imagine by 'breathing spaces', and what distance they would want. I see places for gaps for navigational needs, such as on blind bends, but the idea that quiet stretches will be out of bounds, or a stretch is not for mooring because someone didn't want certain looking boats outside their house is fundamentally wrong. But I have an open mind, and will listen.

These meetings have national importance. The next few months will be crucial and we will keep you up to date.

Glimpse the future?

Community Mooring Strategies in Staffordshire

Councillors on the Lichfield District Council's Parish Forum were given an insight into the way BW will become a charitable civic society in April 2012.

The presentation by Sally Ash highlighted the key elements of how the new waterways charity (NWC) will be governed and the way that local authorities will be able to have a direct influence on the future of the waterways.

Sally explained: "An influential Members Council will guide the charity from the top. The Council will be made up of the wide variety of stakeholders of the waterways; local authorities will join others representing the interests of users such as boaters, anglers, walkers, cyclists, wildlife enthusiasts, environmentalists, etc. and businesses and employees who depend on the waterways for their livelihood".

The 11 BW Regions will each have a Local Board, which will have the responsibility to ensure that the views of local authorities and users are properly represented. They will interface directly with NWC Regional management and participate in the allocation and planning of local budgets. Each Local Board will have a seat on the National Members Council.

Boundary Issues

A point raised at a British Waterways Advisory Forum was that one of the early issues to be addressed is how BW's Regional structure will interface with parliamentary and county boundaries. Staffordshire falls into no less than four BW regions, and in the event that Staffordshire adopted a specific strategy for the waterways, it would have to negotiate with four different NWC Regions. A positive side to this for the County would be that any views held by Staffordshire could be advocated by four Local Board representatives sitting on the National Members Council.

A more equitable solution would be to consider moving some of the regional boundaries so they follow partial county boundaries where such anomalies exist.

Sally Ash described how some trial

areas in the country had been set up to test the Local Board concept: one on the Kennet & Avon and another is to start on the Lee & Stort. With the help of Cllr. Will Chapman of Alrewas Parish, she was looking forward to seeing several more taking shape in Staffordshire. Cllr. Chapman said he had made a start on forming local groups in Alrewas, Fazeley, Stone and on the Caldon Canal and would welcome an opportunity to discussing these plans with colleagues in any Parish Council. He can be contacted by email at nbquidditch@gmail.com.

This article first appeared in Waterway Watcher on January 28 2011
www.waterwaywatcher.org/?p=836

Mooring in Rugeley
 Photo by Ian Britton



News Flash:

Breathing Spaces

The latest idea from BW

Further to Andy Colyer's article, **Geoffrey Rogerson** wrote to NABO News reporting that at the last Mooring Strategy Steering Group meeting the question of 'breathing spaces' came up.

These are unspecified lengths of canal that BW would make into no-mooring zones whether or not boats already use them, ostensibly for aesthetic reasons. Sally Ash introduced this idea into the current K&A consultation, and Wiltshire County Council and the Valley Parish Alliance (in the Bath area) are very much in favour. The boaters are all very much against it.

Geoffrey believes that the hidden agenda is to designate as a breathing space a length where boats are moored, put up no mooring signs, and tell the boats they have to move.

He is uncertain whether BW has the legal powers to do this, but it is certainly against the concept of freedom of the waterways. Other Council members also thought that the proposal is unacceptable:

John Slee noted that as a continuous cruiser he is totally against the idea as it would erode the traditional (legal?) right to moor anywhere on the towpath side. Like many others, he wants to be able to moor in isolation, not always squeezed into a regulated mooring, next to

another boat who may disturb him or *vice versa*.

Howard Anguish echoed the comments from John: the concept has been ill thought out and is unworkable. If introduced, there is the question of how and who to police and enforce the rule. Transient boaters would not know where the breathing spaces are unless they are signed and this would lead to a proliferation of signs in the countryside. It would also lead to a reduction in mooring places at a time when boat numbers are increasing.

NABO Council will discuss this development at the next meeting and in the meantime ask BW to spell out in detail exactly what it means by this new concept of 'Breathing Spaces'.

It may mean what NABO is assuming it means, but on the other hand it might just mean a 'non-regulated' section where you can moor—very much as happens now. When NABO knows what BW actually means and how mooring will be controlled, it will seek the views of other organisations such as IWA or RBOA and decide on the way forward.

Breathing space on the Union Canal?

Photo by Chris Heaton



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 £123.50
Was £130, you save £6

10% off Silver £139.50
Was £155, you save £15.50

15% off Gold £174.25
Was £205, you save £30.75

* 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). Replacement Parts Cover.

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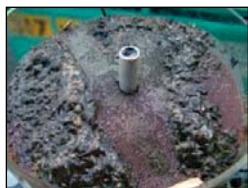
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FAME or misfortune?

Making sense of the EU Fuel directive

As well as taking nearly all the sulphur out of red diesel, the EU plans to add a 'bio' or FAME (Fatty-Acid Methyl Ester or biodiesel) element to the fuel. This has dire consequences for us boaters as **Mike Mackay** explains.



Diesel bug that can be found in tanks and filters



Microbial mat at the fuel/water interface of contaminated diesel

I have been involved in a series of London-based meetings organised with the Cleaner Fuels and Vehicles section of the Department for Transport (DfT). These were important meetings attended by senior managers and representatives of the boating industry. Our aim is to make some sense of EU directives and to formulate an impact assessment to be presented to ministers and Parliament. Many of us will remember being enthralled at the stupid antics of Laurel and Hardy when we were much younger, with particularly the phrase first uttered, prophetically, in 1930 "Well, that's another nice mess you've gotten me into!" coming to mind. Some 80 years later, oh how that phrase sums up the EU and its decision making processes.

For us, some well-meaning legislation has become a total nightmare. Originally Directive 98/70/EC was a single market directive setting harmonised fuel quality standards across the EU. This directive means that you can be assured of the same standard of fuel in any EU country. 98/70/EC was amended by Directive 2003/17/EC, which sets mandatory requirements on the composition and content of petrol, diesel and gas oil for use in Non-Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM). NRMMs were defined as field tractors, train engines, road rollers etc., but excluded fixed diesel generators and inland recreational boats. NRMM Emissions Directive 97/68/EC was amended by 2004/26/EC, which defines air pollutant emissions limits for NRMM. Unfortunately for us, and the Inland Waterways sector, amendment 2004/26BC incorporated inland waterway engines into the scope of low sulphur diesel fuel. This 'little' amendment incorporating all inland boats 2.4–24m in length, crept through the system; prior to this recreational craft were exempt.

European Council and Parliament negotiations proceeded throughout 2007 and 2008. The focus of discussion was on greenhouse gas reduction targets and the introduction of sustainability criteria for biofuels. However European Parliament's Environment Committee also called for alignment of inland waterway fuel requirements with other NRRM gas oil requirements. This was actively supported by some Member States; there was no opposition and it was included in the final package adopted by Qualified Majority. Directive 2009/30 /EC, adopted by the European Council in April 2009, must be incorporated into member states' law by 31 December and came into force on 1st January 2011. One great difficulty we have had in our deliberations is just how many boaters are affected by these directives. The Association of Inland Navigation Authorities proffers some 80,000 inland waterway registered boaters, with possibly 80% using diesel engines. Further estimates added at least 10,000 more boats that operate on rivers and estuaries. There is no estimate possible for the number of small trailable diesel powered boats that escape the registration system.

There is one bright glimmer of hope. Due in no small measure to concerns raised at our meetings, DfT consulted with oil refineries and found that six out of the eight refineries were prepared to supply low sulphur FAME-free diesel or gas oil with red dye to marinas and the like. This is possibly because FAME-free has to be supplied to fixed-point generators and also in response to the very real life-threatening danger of an over-wintered yacht suffering engine failure in a busy shipping lane. Low sulphur simply means that the sulphur element is removed and not replaced by FAME, though because of the manufacture/distribution chain,

there will always be a trace of FAME. As always there is a small catch, this fuel will not meet the 'bio' element of the directive. However, much concern is now being expressed across the EU at the inclusion of organic bio matter at the expense of food production and the destruction of natural forests to grow palm oil.

So, what does it all mean?

- All diesel sold at a garage forecourt or inland marina will have a maximum FAME content of no more than 7%. FAME is the bio-element and is added to reduce sulphur. It is of organic origin (palm oil, rapeseed oil etc.)—the addition of FAME increases the 'bio' credentials of the fuel.
- There will be a reduction in the aromatic content of diesel fuel.
- All diesel sold at a garage forecourt or marina will have no more than 1 ppm sulphur content. This is to allow the future use of catalytic converters that would otherwise be damaged by the current (1000 ppm) sulphur content.
- High sulphur fuel (1000 ppm) will be available in tidal water bunkering facilities for those seagoing vessels that can use it, even though they may be moored on inland water.
- The legal responsibility to supply a user with the correct grade of fuel is on the supplier. In other words, you cannot nip down to the estuary bunkering facility to fill up with 1000 ppm sulphur diesel.
- Our 'red-diesel' could simply be road diesel plus a red dye added during distribution.

What effect will all this have?

- FAME loves the diesel/water interface in a storage tank and will promote furious bacterial growth: the so-called 'diesel bug'.
- The low sulphur and aromatic nature of the fuel will play havoc in older engines (as far as the industry is concerned 'older means built before 2009): seals, designed to be used with high-sulphur fuel will become brittle, contract and fail.
- Flexible fuel hoses to BS EN ISO 7840 are regularly susceptible to degradation from FAME.
- Any boater or marina that contracts a bacterial invasion will be faced with

horrendous clean up bills.

- Sector insurance agencies have yet to take a view on any claims arising from bacterial attack, but are keeping an eye on the situation.

What can you do?

Suppliers are under NO obligation to distinguish between low-sulphur fuel and low-sulphur with FAME fuel. HM Customs insist that red dye is added to distinguish the fuel used by us, farmers and the like, from the highly taxed road diesel.

So please do NOT assume that because it is red it is OK. Ask your marina if they have insisted on being supplied with low-sulphur FAME-free fuel. It exists, so they should be able to purchase it. It is available with red dye to all users and not just to port authorities. Do not be put off, although the supply chain is a tortuous affair they shouldn't really have any problems.

GOBA has written to all fuel suppliers on the Great Ouse insisting that they provide low-sulphur no-FAME fuel for boaters. We await a response. (Reprinted from Great Ouse Boating Association (GOBA News) with permission). Thanks to NABO member Dick Greening for drawing this article to our attention. For further information on the Directive, see the DfT website: www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/environment/fuel-quality-directive/doc/fuelquality.doc

Technical tips

If you have black slime that blocks the fuel filter it's most likely to be the dreaded Diesel Bug. You can drain the fuel tank and get it steam cleaned, but it is not the only component that needs cleaning: the bug will be present in the fuel lines at least to the first filter and they'll need cleaning out or replacing as well.

Even with all the bugs removed, you'll need to prevent it happening again. The bacteria are present in some, if not all, fuel vendor's tanks, and if you picked it up once the chances are you will again. The bacteria live at the interface between the water and fuel, so it is important to regularly drain off the water.

There are also various fuel biocides on the market, including enzyme-based ones, such as 'Soltron'

Making sense of the EU Fuel directive?

/continued...

Tips to avoid bacterial infestation

Thoroughly clean all your tanks, pipes and fuel hoses.

Ensure that before fuel is added, NO water exists in the system.

FAME is a very aggressive cleaning agent so change all fuel filters at least twice during the three months after the first fill.

Use AT LEAST two full tanks per year.

Do not top up your tank, rather allow it to go low and then fill up.

Do NOT store a full tank of fuel over winter. Some water condensation is bound to occur.

Use a fuel additive to give extra protection. Eberspacher recommends Fuel Set, Fortron or Impala. However, ensure that whatever you use it is compatible with your engine.

More information:

- www.dieselsolutions.co.uk
- www.dieselbugbusters.co.uk
- www.soltroniw.co.uk

A bit about belts...

Ian Reid, a gentleman of leisure has given some thought to an increasingly common boating problem and here shares his conclusions with us

It used to surprise me that so many boaters seemed to have trouble with their batteries and charging systems. Maybe because my boating is a bit minimalist so the household appliances front I have not suffered.

I have come across a shredded fan belt while steering a trip boat: it was only a few months old but equipped with current-gobbling electrical equipment. This set me thinking: in my pre-retirement life I was involved with engine development and, on occasion, alternator and starter motor testing but I rarely came across many problems with electrics or driving belts.

What was going on?

The alternator was a typical 60-Amp automotive unit. It was almost certainly charging at its full capacity and rotating at very modest speed, being driven by a normal vee-belt from the crankshaft pulley of the engine.

A so-called 12 Volt system is actually running at about 14 Volts when charging, so the alternator was pushing

out about 840 Watts. Now alternators are very efficient at charging batteries, but they are not very efficient when it comes to converting the mechanical input from the belt into electrical energy. In fact they are pretty awful, so it might even be charitable to suggest that 1680 Watts would need to be transmitted via the belt from the engine. That's near enough two and a quarter horsepower going through a tiny belt made of rubber, string and canvas.

It gets worse

The power transmitted is derived from the load on the belt and its speed. Thus a slow-moving belt will be more highly loaded than a fast one. Try riding a bicycle in top gear and you'll see what I mean. So we have a boat engine turning over at slow revs pushing a couple of horsepower or more through a belt for hours on end—no wonder the belt gives up.

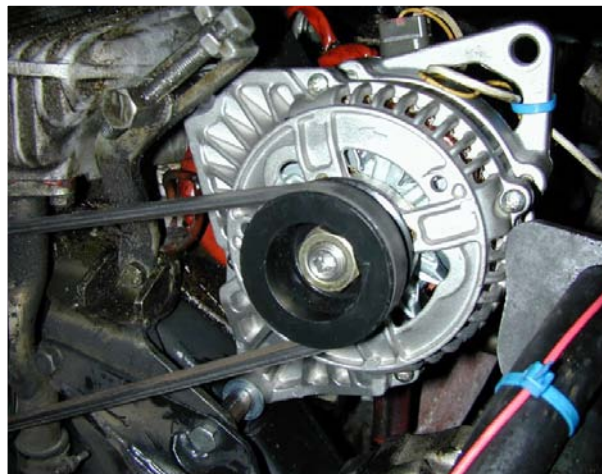
All is not lost

There have been improvements in belt design in recent years. For a start, the old vee-belt has been ousted from cars by the thin multi-grooved belt, which is much more flexible and will cope with being bent backwards round idler pulleys if necessary. Not a lot of help if you are stuck with a vee-belt but there have been improvements here as well.

Older belts were produced individually and can be identified by the canvas wrapping that forms their outside surface. Better are the more modern ones, which have been sliced from wider belts to get the required width.

These have bare sides with rubber and cords visible, which provides much better grip. They can also be notched along their inside edge to give greater flexibility and less distortion on small pulleys.

So next time you need a new belt, try and get hold of an up-to-date version, it might cure your problems.





NABO and Smudgeonline have teamed up to bring you a fabulous range of NABO clothing, all with a stylish woven NABO logo.

Sweat Shirts £15.00 **Zip Fleece** £20.00
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Available in S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL, 4XL, 5XL, 6XL except T-shirt S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL

Simply fill in the form below and send it with a cheque made payable to 'smudgeonline' and send your completed order to; **Smudgeonline, The Studio, Hadley Road, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, NG34 7EG.** Please allow two weeks for delivery.

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All items are available in Light Blue, Black, Navy Blue, Bottle Green, Classic Red or Royal Blue

	Colour(s)	Size(s)	Quantity	Price	Total Price
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NABO Absolute Polo Shirts				£12.50	
NABO Absolute Full Zip Fleece				£20	
NABO Premium T-Shirt				£9.50	

Please add the following name under the NABO logo: Boat or personal name:

Lettering style: *Script* **PLAIN CAPS** **Upper and Lower Case**

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Address _____

Postcode _____ Contact Telephone _____

Smudgeonline will also quote for baseball caps and other clothing from their extensive ranges and all can have the woven NABO logo applied.

Mersey tales

Working the L & L short boats across the Mersey

Alan Holden's school holidays led to him working short boats around Liverpool

As a young lad I spent my school holidays, and sometimes when I should have been at school, riding on the boats of Crook and Thompson and Crosdales that brought coal from Bank Hall colliery at Burnley on the Leeds and Liverpool canal to the power station at Whireberk, east of Blackburn. The boatmen who worked the length—'wooden boats, iron men'—worked single-handed as there were no locks along the length between Burnley and Blackburn, only four swing bridges to contend with.

With them being single handed, a young lad like me, working the swing bridges, seeing to the stove in the cabin and making cups of tea, was much appreciated. The practice was known as 'monkeying'. Sat on the engine house top with a pint pot of tea and a big butt, I would listen to the stories of when they had been young lads. Stories of horse boating Wigan locks three times a week from Garswood tip on the Leigh branch to Blackburn 'lectric (power station) below Leeds, up Wakefield dyke and up to the Barnsley canal, Manchester and the Ship Cut, Liverpool and the river. Fascinated by all these stories, I was determined to go boating myself when I left school.

A proper job

So the last day of school came, and with me and school glad to see the last of each other, I was off boating. I was told to present myself at the office at the top of Liverpool locks to start as mate with British Transport Waterways on the power barge 'Clwyd' with Alf Sykes from Shipley as skipper. I already knew Alf, as I had ridden with him when I was still at school as he passed through with wood from Shipley depot, and when he had landed machinery at Church depot near Accrington bound for Liverpool. At that time Clwyd, along with other Leeds and

Liverpool short boats was known as a 'yo-yo'—they bobbed up and down like yo-yos when out in the Mersey. They were involved in carrying corn from the grain storage warehouse at Birkenhead to a cattle feed works at the top of the Liverpool locks. Once we had loaded 50 tons of grain, we made our way down the locks, through the baulk hole and through the docks to the river lock. There we were expected to wait for a tug to take us across the river to Birkenhead. Unfortunately the tugs were not very reliable so if the river was not too rough we would go across on our own.

Sheeting up

Arriving at the Warehouse Grain Storage in Birkenhead, we would un-sheet the hold. All British Transport, Leeds and Liverpool boats had holds covered with canvas sheet sides and these were held into the coamings with battens and wedges. Top sheets then covered the hold from fore to aft. These sheets were supported by stanchions that we inserted into two cross beams that ran 'athwart' (across) the hold (see Figs. 1 & 2). On these stanchions were three wooden rails running fore and aft—the side ones were 3" x 3" and the central one 7" x 3". The side sheets went up from the coaming all over the side rail and they then pulled across the middle rail with a thin lashing, much like a ladies corset (although I don't claim to have ever seen one—I'm just guessing!). The top sheets were then overlapped with similar lashings and tied down to the coaming. (Figs 3 & 4 show examples of sheeting).

When loading was complete, the rails and sheets would be replaced, the sheets tied down with lashings and all wedges made secure. Then a good washing off of the grain dust with the drop bucket. Loaded with 50 tons, we would have a draft of 3' 9" in salt water and 4' back

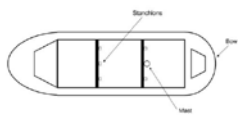


Figure 1

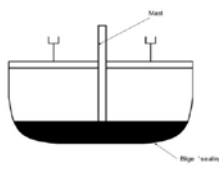


Figure 2

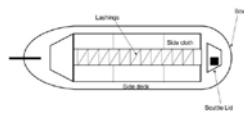


Figure 3

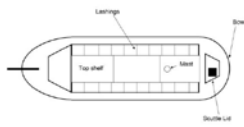


Figure 4

up on the cut in fresh water. Freeboard would be 2'3" for'ard and aft with a foot mid-ships when going across the river.

Out into the Mersey

Washed off and battened down we then made our way to the river lock where again we were expected to wait for the tug. If it was not too rough we would make our own way, but on days when the river was rough, and being low in the water, we would have to extinguish the stove in the forward cabin then block the chimney up with a big rag and put the scuttle lid on (the lid that covered the entrance to the forward cabin) and fix the chain over the lid with a wedge to make it tight and secure.

Unaccompanied by a tug, the best time to take a short boat to Birkenhead across the Mersey would be to arrive at the first lock four hours before high water, or at the last lock four hours after high water. On high water (or slack) the biggest problem was traffic! Jockeying for position with tugs, ferries and ships was like sailing across six lanes of motorway! As you locked out you would also have other craft doing the same: coasters, big barges, flats and sometimes packets with their flats. These were often flats of the Bridgewater Department of the Manchester Ship Canal Company and 'duckers' loaded for the Kellogg factory at Trafford Park, Manchester,

which was still being used until quite recently.

Giving a snatch

Among these varied craft locking in on the Liverpool side would be the wooden 'flats' of Richard Abel's company. These were loaded with grain for the cattle feed works along the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. These flats were 'dumb'—that is they had no engine—and when loaded with 90 tones of grain with a 5 ft draught they were towed across the Mersey by the owner's steam tug 'Richard Abel'.

Once they got to the lock gate the tug would just let them go—leaving the crews to make their own way through the Docks and up to the canal at Stanley Locks by shafting the boat. The shaft, a 20 ft long pole with a strong steel point and hook on the end, would be the only means of propulsion they had—hard work to say the least! As a good turn, or more often in exchange for half a crown, we would give them a 'snatch' (tow) tied to the baulk hole. Having said that, more often than not they couldn't afford to give us that and we'd take pity!

We had few problems with our trips on the Mersey on good days, when the weather was fine and there was little wind; in fact it was quite enjoyable, but coming across when it was a bit rough was to say the least a bit exciting!

Alan can be found at The Skipton Canal Festival on May Day weekend in the historic boat Kennet, which houses displays depicting the history of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, its boats and characters.

The Tug Richard Abel on the Manchester Ship Canal



A question of law

Geoffrey Rogerson compiles a summary of the many legal questions that NABO has put to Legal Counsel.

At the request of Council and for the benefit of our members, I have been asked to provide an appreciation of the questions that we have put to Legal Counsel over the years. These were both in support of our complaint, details of which were in our January edition of NABO News, and also in anticipation of other legal issues that we feel may arise in the future. The members present at the AGM supported making this information available so that NABO members can have an awareness of the nature of the advice we have received

This is a summary of the questions:

- 1 What is the contractual significance of signing the licence application?
- 2 Can BW deny a licence if the licence terms and conditions are breached by a boater—noting that Mooring Guidelines for Continuous Cruisers are now linked to licence terms and conditions?
- 3 Does the content of the Terms and Conditions (and Guidelines) exceed BW's powers?
- 4 What legal action, if any, can be taken to challenge the Guidelines?
- 5 Do the Guidelines discriminate between different categories of moorers and is this lawful?
- 6 Would the introduction of a transitory or roving mooring permit exceed the powers under the BW Acts?
- 7 Can BW impose conditions 'as it sees fit' for the transitory or roving mooring permits and, if they are not complied with, withdraw a licence under other powers?
- 8 Can BW (for payment) amend licence conditions for transitory or roving mooring permit holders that it imposes on other boaters under the 95 Act?
- 9 Are sections s.17 (3) c (i) and (ii) of the 1995 Waterways Act mutually

exclusive (either/or)?

- 10 Can BW require that boats with a permanent mooring have to move every 14 days to a different place?
- 11 Does BW have the discretion to licence boats that don't fall into the 95 Act s.17 (3) c (i) or (ii) (e.g. a boat with an alternative transitory or roving mooring permit)?
- 12 Does BW have the power to enforce terms and conditions that are not specifically supported by the Acts, using powers under 83/95 Acts?
- 13 Can BW levy charges for overstaying on designated moorings?
- 14 Can a safe, healthy and licenced boat moored in a location where it is not preventing general navigation be regarded as an obstruction, and moved without notice under 83 Act s.8 (5)?
- 15 If BW invokes s.8 (5) of the 83 Act, can they recover costs from the owner under s.8 (3)?
- 16 Do any human rights issues arise as a consequence of the Guidelines?
- 17 Can BW create byelaws in order to amend or add to the powers contained in primary legislation?

Monitoring

It should be appreciated that this is a summary amended for 'easy digestion'. The actual questions put to Counsel amount to 6 pages and cover many supplementary issues. It should also be noted that the issues in the questions overlap to some extent. We remain very interested in all enforcement legal cases so that we can monitor what is going on and better understand the attitude of the Courts. Please let us know what is happening.

Geoff Horsnell wins Best Lock

Shiplake lockkeeper Geoff Horsnell wins the River Thames Best Lock award

Hundreds of people voted in the Environment Agency's 2010 Thames Waterways Awards. The photo shows the winner, lock and lock keeper Geoff Horsnell. Romney Lock came second and Teddington third in the Best Kept Lock award. Howard Miatt, assistant lock keeper at Teddington Lock, topped the list for the 'Say it with a Smile' customer service award.

Say it with a smile

"Chatting with the boaters who come through Teddington Lock is one of the highlights of my job. It's always nice to be recognised for something you enjoy," said Howard. Laurence Richards (relief

lock keeper) and Richard Hawkins (temporary relief) came second and third in the customer service award. Waterways Operations Manager Gail Bradstock, said: "These awards give members of the public a chance to let us know how we are doing on the River Thames. They are a great opportunity to recognise the work the Thames waterways staff do in helping to promote the river". The award winners will be presented with a cup and plaque to mark their successes.



Changes at BW

Customer service changes, fee increases and this year's Towpath Tidy

BW's Customer Services team handles around 43,000 phone calls and 13,000 e-mails a year and acknowledge that it can be difficult to get through at peak times. To improve the quality of the service, more staff will be available at peak times but Customer Services will no longer open on Saturday mornings when call volumes are at their lowest. This change will start in April. On weekdays, the team will continue to be available from 8am – 6pm on 01923 201120 or by e-mailing enquiries.hq@britishwaterways.co.uk.

BW has also announced price increases of 3.1% for the majority of 12-month long-term mooring permits from 1st April (the price increase does not affect boaters with three-year fixed price agreements arranged through BW's moorings auction system). At some sites, the price will rise above inflation because BW considers the current prices to be below the comparable market rate for moorings in the same area. Moorers at these sites will receive a letter notifying them of

the increase and explaining the reason for it during February. A full site-by-site price list, reflecting the increase in VAT to 20%, will be published on www.waterscape.com before the end of February.

Changes to boat licence fees were outlined in December and feedback received from about 50 boaters and user group representatives is still being reviewed, but the main decisions have been confirmed relating to three- and six-month licence fees and changes to prompt and late payment arrangements. This Spring's Towpath Tidy to help clean up a local stretch of canal runs throughout March. In a change to previous years, this year will see the launch of regular volunteering parties across the country, meeting once a month to undertake tasks from environment management and conservation work, to painting locks and tackling problem patches. Edward Moss, BW's National Volunteering Manager, would like to see at least one regular volunteering party on each waterway each month.

More Information:
www.waterscape.com

Member's small advert:
Mooring swap wanted from Spring 2012 for 6, 12 or 18 months.

We would like a 60' mooring somewhere in the London area and can offer a 70' mooring in Gnosall on the Shropshire Union.

Please contact:
Barry Wits, nb Hartwell
barry.wits@gmail.com

News from the Western Front

Personal Observations on the K&A

Peter Fellows gives his view of this popular and much discussed waterway following a trip from Hungerford to Bath in June last year,

I thought the following observations might be of interest to NABO Council and members, given the interest, or some would say controversy, over moored boats on the western K&A. As we cruised along I attempted to do a head count of boats that were used as homes, those without licences and those apparently moored 'permanently' on visitor moorings. In the table, I have described a boat as a permanently

the wheelbarrow; use of a wheelbarrow; bicycles padlocked to trees/fences; and a stock of wood fuel on the roof or bank. 'Possible liveaboards' had little or no weed growing on the boat, no wheelbarrow or belongings on the towpath, but some had wood on the roof and/or bicycles—so could be people who live on board but cruise continuously. 'Overstaying' was mostly on 48-hour and 72-hour moorings, but two boats appeared to be moored on permit holder moorings as they did not correspond with the boat names written on towpath signboards. This analysis does not claim any scientific merit, but is a subjective snapshot of the situation over a two-week period and obviously the numbers may vary, as boating is for many a mobile activity.

NB: the figure for licence 'evasion' in the table should be treated with caution: a BW Enforcement Officer said that many boats actually had licences but didn't bother to display them.

There are relatively few liveaboards along the canal from Hungerford to Devizes, with groups at Great Bedwyn, Wootton Rivers, Pewsey, Honey Street and All Cannings. However, at each of these places some boats appeared to be permanently moored on 48-hour visitor moorings (we went east first and then returned fr Signs that a boat is being lived on om Hungerford 3 days later and they were still there). There are a few widely separated moored liveaboards along the canal from the bottom of Caen Hill to Bradford on Avon. According to one local boater, many of the liveaboards above Bradford lock had been moved on by BW and were moored near Bath—certainly the main concentration of liveaboards is from Bradford Lock to Bath.

A diverse range of views

Other observations/comments from people I met: The BW Enforcement

From	Miles	Liveaboards	Possible liveaboards	Licence not displayed or out of date	Appearing to overstay on visitor moorings
Bradford lock to Avoncliffe	2.0	24	3	4	2
Avoncliffe to Dundas	2.5	40	2	9	4
Dundas to Bathampton	2.5	64	3	15	6
Bathampton to Bath top lock	2.0	51	6	20	5
Total	9	179	14	48	17

moored 'liveboard' if it met some or all of the following criteria: seeing people living on board; the amount of belongings on the boat roof or towpath; amount of weed growing at

Signs that a boat is being lived on



Officer said that there are two enforcement officers to cover the whole canal from Reading to Bath, and it is difficult to do the job effectively. He was aware of complaints of licence evasion but said that it is difficult to actually deliver an enforcement notice, especially when the owners do not have a PO Box. They are also aware that they might be confiscating someone's home. He thought the 3rd sector proposal with the pilot trial on the K&A might

be a good idea, provided local District/Parish Councils had the funding to pay for a local boat warden or lengthsmen. Basically though, he thought BW needs more funding to do the job properly. A boatyard owner thought that the pilot with BW and the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust (KAACT) was a good idea because: "The Trust is now a wing of BW anyway. It has lost its campaigning spirit, drive and sparkle and it has changed from an active gingerbread group that was successful in raising funds and awareness, and attracting volunteer support, to what is now effectively a management arm of BW".

There is some local resentment to liveboard boaters, with one local boater who moored on the Somerset Coal Canal, saying that they "disgraced our lovely canal". He said many had moved off the Oxford Canal some years ago and had come to the K&A.

The natives were friendly

Having chatted to a few of those living on board as we passed or moored nearby, they seemed to be a nice bunch of people, but they are not, as many seem to think, an homogenous group. Some are clearly wealthy enough to afford and maintain licensed widebeam boats in good condition with all mod-cons: some appeared to be doing business with mobile phones glued to their ears, presumably working from home. They seem to have made a lifestyle choice to live on the waterways in a less-materialistic, less-consumerist,



environmentally low-impact way. One had a sign on board saying 'Slow Down—let the rats do the racing'. Others living on board have boats that are often in a poor condition and they are clearly not wealthy, having few facilities and equipment. These are the ones that tend to have piles of belongings on and around the boat. They have presumably found living on the waterways a cheaper option, as well as sharing the alternative lifestyle. However, it cannot be seen as an 'easy' lifestyle: fetching water, gas cylinders and food, often over several miles with a wheelbarrow, is not easy. Living without much domestic equipment and in poorly insulated boats (some under tarpaulins) must be hard, especially in the winter.

The community

Although there is the 'K&A Boating Community' and its website; kanda.boatingcommunity.org.uk, my impression is that people living aboard boats along the whole length of the canal are not organised as a group and it is those between Bradford and Bath that have more contact with each other. Most visiting boaters I spoke to did not see liveboards as a problem, except that they cause boaters to cruise at tickover for much of the last 4-5 miles into Bath, along what is effectively a linear boat park. Some complained about the lack of licences and a few were disparaging about their lifestyle, but many said 'good luck to them'.

On our journey we also made some observations of the canal infrastructure

A unique home on the western K&A

Talking Points

Personal Observations on the K&A /continued...

Pictured right:
Leaking gates near Gt. Bedwyn, with an extra hazard for the unwary

and condition, which included:

- The stretch from Hungerford to Devizes has many locks that leak through holes in the gates and some have weak gates and/or are badly overgrown with weeds. Most gates leak badly around the edges and some had broken paddles. Hungerford Marsh Lock had a large area of brickwork that had no mortar, with bricks falling into the lock.
- Most of the stretch from Hungerford to Devizes had shallow edges, and towpaths so overgrown that mooring away from visitor moorings was not possible—this section needs dredging throughout.
- The canal between Honey Street and Horton was badly overgrown with rushes and was a single boat width in a number of places.
- The Caen Hill flight is in good condition.
- Below Caen Hill the canal, locks, swing bridges and towpaths are in much better condition and the above problems are not as severe.
- •The BW pumpout at Bradford on Avon did not accept cards but read them so that they could not be used elsewhere (effectively wasting £10). It had apparently been faulty for weeks by mid-June, but BW had not been out to repair it despite several requests.

Superb woodwork craftsmanship on a moored boat



Visitor Moorings

Visitor moorings at Devizes and below Caen Hill are good—especially at



Bradford and Bathampton. From Hungerford to Devizes they were less good: Hungerford could do much better than the existing number, position and dredged depth of moorings; Pewsey Wharf is worse—the time limit on the wharf is one hour (water point/pumpout) but the moorings next to and opposite the wharf are for permit holders, and the 48-hour moorings beyond them that are occupied by liveaboards. There is not enough depth to moor elsewhere and most boaters we saw simply carried on, having failed to find a mooring. Similarly at Horton, the pub moorings were nearly all occupied by permanently moored boats (including a Kennet & Avon Canal Trust boat!) and the visitor moorings opposite had high vegetation, steep eroded banks and not enough water depth. There are not enough visitor moorings at Honey Street and the bank is similarly eroded.

In summary, it seems that little money has been spent on the canal since it reopened 20 years ago and the central section in particular is showing the effects of lack of investment. A local boater acknowledged that there was a lot of work needed to improve the canal but “the Canal Trust are not doing it and neither is British Waterways”.

NABO looks forward

Correspondence between a Member and NABO Council

A series of exchanges in January between our long standing member

Simon Greer, who spent a couple of years on the Council and

Richard Carpenter, NABO General Secretary.

We feel it's not only fair to publish all viewpoints but also show our general response. So here are Simon's letters to NABO News, responses from myself, from Chairman David Fletcher and Vice Chairman Howard Anghuish. Who is to say which one of us is right and more important who among our readers and members agree or disagree with the points raised?

I personally believe that the impending move to the Trust Status for our waterways provides a great opportunity for all stakeholders to sort out the anomalies; the mistrust and the seemingly incessant looking backwards. I see a chance, and possibly the only

chance we will have, to create a working and well run system. This will be hard work and many people entrenched on all sides will be sidelined – and this includes some boat owners and certainly some senior people at British Waterways at present.

Council at NABO has to understand exactly what its members and boat owners in general really hope for and expect, because whether we like it or not we are involved, with other groups, to consult and try to make things work.

So read on, tut and grumble or say 'hear hear' but at least let us know what you feel we should be doing and saying in the coming months – please?

Simon Greer

11.1.2011

Dear NABO News,

Yet again I am distressed at what I read: BW changing the rules; NABO challenging the changes. BW shouldn't start a ball-of-change rolling and it should definitely not receive encouragement from any organisation to do so. In fact our campaign should be to resist their instinct for change, it just encourages them to make more changes. Boaters have always known about the grey areas and if sensible they didn't dwell on them or ask for answers they knew they wouldn't like. After all, how many angels can you actually get on the head of a pin? Ask difficult questions only amongst friends. BW is not the boaters' friend—I learned that years ago. For example, the 14-day rule doesn't need redefining by anyone, especially BW, nor does it need rigorous enforcement as promoted by NABO. It needs to be treated as a guideline that is flexible. That is how

the Select Committee, which created it after almost a year of deliberation, intended it. Hence the words 'or for longer additional period (unspecified), as is reasonable (unspecified), in the circumstances (unspecified)' that are written into the 1995 Act. That's the end of the matter. Why must we keep picking at the sore? Answer because some people don't like what it says and bu**er those who do like it! That's boaters like me who actually fought for it. Given that you can't please all the people all the time whatever the rule, why not freeze the status quo until there is some sort of consensus on any change, which of course won't happen. That alone confirms there should be no change.

It seems we have to go right back to basics to find any uniform agreement about boating. Something must float before it can be considered to be a boat, but after that it gets difficult: What's a residential boat? What's a continuous cruiser? What indeed is a mooring? Or a place? Or the limit of BW's power?

These are all questions we can agonise over for ever and still not get it right. So let's endorse the status quo, warts and all. See it as time tested and not to be picked and altered every metaphorical 5 minutes. We'll just land up with bigger warts, emptier wallets and more aggravation between boaters if we carry on promoting more change.

Let's campaign on simple matters and mean it. Like no price increase on any

front. Boating already costs too much. No bonuses for senior management. They already cost enough and seemingly continue to make our lives difficult. Let's not set boater against boater under any circumstances. Do this and watch membership flourish. Fail to do it and watch membership flounder.

Simon Greer
Canalboat Arabia. Macclesfield Canal

Richard Carpenter

11.1.2011

Simon,
Thanks for your letter, and as always food for thought.

I think our general consensus is now to do all we can to get anomalies, differences and working practises sorted out to ensure the future has a chance to run smoothly on boating issues. Let's face it is already fraught with difficulty.

If the new Waterways Charity goes ahead then there won't be a BW as we know it—in fact the organisation will be overseen by and responsible to the users. It will be vital that much more involvement on policy and expenditure by its users take place, with a much bigger emphasis on volunteers.

I do agree with you that there will always be boat owners who push things to the absolute limit and delight in doing so—however there has to be clarity for all. If, as seems likely, there will be a range of local moorings strategies agreed on a more local basis to reflect the local needs these again need to be clear and consistent.

As a successful businessman of many years, I look at our Inland Waterways

system with all its history, its strange funding system and its sheer scale of logistics (not to mention some very odd working practises) and I see a massive and quite daunting challenge quite like no other. If we are to continue to use it for boating purposes there will need to be a real waking up by all users as they won't have BW to knock—it will be their own organisation.

So, sort out the odds and ends now—get a properly run business model with decent management who actually care about the system first and seek to make it successful. Simple!

I am sure the debate will rage on, and we do need comments and feelings from all boaters—I think you will probably remember how hard it is to actually get people to stand up and actually do anything though?

We are keen to ensure that we (NABO) are seen and heard at every forum during the coming year to ensure the voice of boat owners is heard and boat owners are represented in the running of the New Waterways Charity.

Richard Carpenter,
General Secretary

Simon

12.1.2011

Richard,
Thanks for your reply. If I didn't know you better I'd be tempted to say you just don't get it.

I too am a businessman and it takes me in completely the opposite direction. Smoothing out idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies is exactly what I was talking about. Doing so just creates more, but of a different type. Your

way forward sounds convincing and appealing but is ultimately management speak. It's like promoting growth when we all know in our hearts it's not sustainable. In reality you argue directly against my point. The canal is inconsistent and even when we've stopped fiddling with it, it will remain so. Ultimately that's part of its appeal. Long may it be so.

All the best, Simon

NABO Road Shows

The debates and consultations on the future of the waterways are taking up a lot of everybody's time and thoughts. NABO is one of the organizations involved, and it will quite possibly provide inputs into the future running of the system, together with other groups. So we are arranging a number of Road Show Forums at boat clubs and

marinas during the year, at which anybody who has an interest in boating is welcome to join in the debates. We hope to understand more from some of the figures who will be shaping the future and learn more from boaters on how they see things and what they would like as an outcome.

Simon Greer wrote again

12.1.2011

Dear Nabo News,

There is another reason I am distressed. It concerns my membership and those of us who are of a similar mind. I am not a lone voice.

The NABO bus needs to have a destination plate on the front that tells me it's heading in the right direction. If it says 'Less Boating Costs' I'll jump aboard believing that's a desirable destination and one that is entirely supportable.

If it says 'More consistency, less idiosyncrasy and more rules and costs', I would rather catch the other bus.

Richard's reply to my original contribution I'm sure reflects the sentiments of his colleagues. It simply confirms to the impecunious boater, of whom there are ever more, that NABO is working hard on fronts that leave us cold. That engenders the question 'Why am I a member?'

Kind Regards, Simon Greer (Still on board)

At this point in the correspondence I forwarded the letters to Council for their views.

Vice Chairman Howard Anguish

I think Simon has expressed a view which is not completely realistic. The idyllic, slightly anachronistic representation of boating is very nice, but I am sorry to say that those days have gone. If something isn't done to sort out the canal network and its management then he will be left with a system which will get progressively more run down and eventually 'cease to be' as Monty Python had it! Whether he likes it or not, the system does need regulation on many levels—operations, management, funding and so on—otherwise how does he envisage it functioning at a sustainable level.

NABO can either join in the 'head in the sand' approach and be left on the sidelines with little or no influence in what happens in the next few years, or it can join in the efforts to set up the new charity so that it works for the benefit of the majority of boaters, including Simon.

Howard

Geoffrey Rogerson,
NABO Council's Legal representative just said: 'I agree with Howard!'

Chairman David Fletcher

The world is not moving the way Simon would want. I don't think it is NABO's job to support those who are not prepared to pay their way and/or follow simple rules. They are being subsidised by those who do, and that group has a right to be represented too.

The waterways as a whole has lost the argument that the nation should pay the full costs of the system. The next crisis will come mid-2011 when the new trustees have to decide whether the proposed GiA funding (~£39m pa) is enough to support the charity. Simple denial of actual costs may get support on the towpath, but is not realistic case to put forward.

You

So dear readers and boat owners, what do you think? Do we work for the future in a realistic way or do we just become the minority? Please get in touch and let us know. We really do need the views of everyone.

NABO Road Show Dates

Sunday 20th March 2pm– 5pm
Thorne Cruising Club in Stainforth, South Yorkshire. Panellists will include representatives of BW, Janet Richardson, Editor of Towpath Talk, Trevor Roberts, Chair of the Community Boating Association, Howard Anguish for NABO with another guest to be confirmed.

Saturday 27th March 7pm–10pm
Byfleet Boat Club in Surrey. Panellists include John Gibson Waterway Manager for the National Trust, David Fletcher Chair of NABO and a representative of EA Waterways to be confirmed.

Sunday 28th March 2pm–5pm
Pewsey Vale Cruising Club in Wiltshire (in Pewsey Village Hall). Panellists will be Mike Rodd Chair of the K&A Trust, Richard Fairhurst Editor of Waterways World, Mark Stevens, BW Waterways Manager for the K&A and David Fletcher.

Other venues in the North West, the West Midlands and the East Midlands are being finalised and will appear on the web site. We have left it to the venues to decide whether they will make any charge for entrance to cover tea and coffee or venue hire. Each event will be by ticket only

Have Your Say

Letters to the Editor

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

The growth of canal use and its implications

A good New Year to you and all NABO members. You ask in the 5th issue of NABO news for a debate on growth of canal users. As an interested party, I can only see huge expansion and long traffic hold-ups without proper organisation. Country living is here and expanding, BW wants more to use canals and of course expand their income. Think outside the small canal box as I have, and investment is required but not as a handout from hard pressed users.

Social housing on the canal provides a young family or retired gentlefolk the means to live in their own home/barge in their hundreds with more to come! Embrace them, help them, but ignore them and dire will be the congestion. Travellers have rights of purchase and planning acceptance over everyone where a need is proved. Barge dwellers are covered by the same law surely, so let them buy their own piece of land and create their own marinas for residential use, thereby reducing some of the long lines of moored barges. Self-help could let these hardy families build their own floating townships under the watchful eyes of local authorities, BW and user groups. Retired liveboards could also provide, build and construct their own style of marinas. I live locally to the K&A canal and many a farmer rues the day that water fills the cut: if his field is lower than the canal it is always wet and on occasions floods, so a good field to purchase and convert into a new marina. These marinas should be of a size that can make a difference—just 50 boats does not dent the surface. BW must have lists of farmers making flood claims against them, so an offer of compensation to purchase their fields for an agricultural value of £4 000 an acre and self-building would not be unaffordable to interested user groups. Yours Aye,

David Hawkins

Re: Mugs for sale

Oh dear, Oh dear! What a bunch of moaners everyone seems to be on the issue of volunteering—not a single letter with anything positive to say! I live near the Wey Navigation, owned and managed by the National Trust (NT) and for a couple of years now have volunteered my services for one day a week (when I am not boating!). I must say that as a volunteer I feel that my contribution helps to keep the NT's,

and hence my own, costs down. As far as the Wey Navigation is concerned, it is wholly funded by users and this is something that BW could never achieve without swingeing and unaffordable licence costs. As a result, the NT Licence costs are just under one third that of BW but for only 1% of the navigation length.

I do not think that I am treated as slave labour in any way or a Community Service scheme as many of the writers seem to, although I suspect they have never volunteered for anything in their life. I feel that my contribution is warmly welcomed and appreciated by the NT, but I suspect that the BW management will have a cultural problem in successfully attracting and retaining volunteers. The field staff are bound to feel that their jobs are at risk and will not see any benefit in becoming 'Managers of Volunteers'. As with any change we need to look for ways to make them into a positive advantage. The one thing for certain is that change will happen! We need to avoid knee jerk reactions and give serious thought to all the options proposed in order to ensure we retain an affordable pastime in which we have invested much in terms of both cash and time. What is wrong with ALL of us acting as 'unpaid lengthsmen' (Alan Holden—Jan 2011) and using our eyes and telephones to report problems to BW, whether they are appreciated or not, to try to get them resolved? Don't we do this already?

Mick Joy, nb Holly

Re: The new waterways charity

Let's hope that at long last we get back to the old ways when canals were managed by canal-minded people. I well remember Bill Burton who ran Airedale Canal Services in the 1950's, and ran coal from the pits to the gasworks and coal sales yards from below Leeds up the Aire Valley. When the trade stopped he was asked what his views were. He said that had the canal continued to be managed by canal-minded people and all their experience not been replaced by ex-services personnel and civil servants, things would have not been so bad. But all the new people knew little and cared less about the waterway and if anything had to be done to keep them in good order it was firstly begrudged, then done at great expense and with ever increasing tolls for the users.

I really hope that the new structure, influenced properly by people who love the canal, and who will really put pressure on those left at BW to insist on that attitude as a prerequisite for working there. Perhaps



we can get back to an efficiently run operation with staff and volunteers really making it work again!

I would like to see the various groups come together to promote the North Pennines ring, with well organised lock keepers and with assisted passage at Wigan Locks and the other smaller flights. It has been done in the past and could be again.

I just hope that the changes bring about a new attitude in the leadership of the new charity to create a system where volunteers make it a great place to be and the maintenance is done by specialist staff – we just might get it back just as it always was!

I live in hope!

Alan Holden, nb Anna. Leeds and Liverpool

Alan is a retired working boatman and on page 16 there is the first part of his memories of working the Mersey Flats and the Northern Canals.

NABO getting bad press in the forums

My attention has been drawn to some correspondence on one of the well known canal web forums during the early part of February in which NABO Council came in for a bit of stick as being non representative, non constitutional, cliquey and other things! Some of the writings were banter and some were from people who when you read other topics they engage with are from that section of our society who are basically just not

happy about anything.

However members of NABO Council were very unhappy at the tone of the accusations. I would point out that all are volunteers, all are subject to an annual election process, all care a great deal about our waterways, all to a large extent have been arm-twisted to sit on Council and all give up a huge amount of free time to try and represent all boat owners fairly.

Throughout this issue, and if you care to go back over NABO News for the past many years, you will find pleas from us for input, views on our direction, assistance with things we do or need help with – frankly we couldn't be more open or more receptive – any member can attend a Council meeting and those that have will report that they have a say on everything on the agenda. The forum I refer to fortunately had a few robust posts of support from members too – however if you are one of the people who are unhappy, or if you know them, please can we have a sensible discussion from them from a position that is informed rather than a distant snipe based on a perception or an old grievance?

All our numbers and address's are in each NABO News – pick up the phone and tell us if you think we are not doing or saying what you think – we really believe that we must get things right during the coming round of consultations and ensure we impact on the future.

Richard, General Secretary, NABO

NABO New Membership Application

Title: Preferred Forename:

Surname:

Address:

Post Code: Telephone: (Home)

Age* (Work)

Optional

(Mobile)

E-Mail Address: @

Profession/Expertise:

Additional (Family) Members at same address

1. M

2. M

BOAT DETAILS

Type: Barge Cruiser Narrowboat Commercial Sail Other

Name of Craft:

Other details eg length, make, style:

Home Navigation:

Mooring:

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (Cheque payable to NABO)

One FULL MEMBER: Annual @ £15, Life @ £150 = £

Additional (Family) Members: Annual @ £5, Life @ £50 = £

Donation to NABO Funds £ .

TOTAL enclosed £ .

Please indicate your preferences:-

I would like to pay Future Annual Subscriptions by Bank Standing Order YES NO

(if Yes, we will send you the necessary form with your welcome letter)

Please supply NABO boat/car window stickers:-

Oblong (8" x 2") Round (3")

Signed: Date of Application:

How/where did you learn about NABO

If from another member please give full name

Send to: NABO, Freepost(BM8367), BIRMINGHAM, B31 2BR