



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 5—August 2011

COST OF BOATING SURVEY

BRISTOL COURT CASE

STAFFORD RIVERWAY LINK

A historic waterway reborne

DIESEL BUG UPDATE

Keep your tanks clean

BW ENFORCEMENT TEAM

An analysis of effectiveness

The NABO Council

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NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

Issue 5 August 2011

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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

Next NABO News Copy Date

Please email or post your contributions by September 10th



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! In the first instance please send a low resolution JPEG by email. The photo should ideally be portrait format with the main action in the centre so that we can print text at the top and bottom, with a width of at least 1800 pixels. This month's cover photo is of Goring Lock on the Thames, of which Simon Robbins writes in Talking Points (Photo from John and Fiona Slee).

NABO Calendar 2011

Council Meetings

Saturday September 3rd

Saturday October 15th

AGM November 12th (Venue to be arranged)

The Council has agreed a break until September as most members are cruising. 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.

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The boating lobby

Peter Fellows has some thoughts on loss of canalside heritage features and takes a look at this month's content.

While out and about on the northern Shroppie last month, we came across a circular lockside 'lobby' at Beeston Stone Lock north of Bunbury, which was apparently used for shelter and to store tools. There used to be one at all the locks along this canal, but now only three survive. At the next lock (Tilstone Lock), a second lobby is in a parlous state with a tree growing through the roof.

Unless repairs are done urgently, it won't be long before this one goes the same way as most of the others. In this issue there is a report on a new waterway adoption scheme, in which local businesses and groups are being encouraged to adopt a local stretch of canal to care for it. The first scheme in Yorkshire focuses on the honeypot sites at Saltaire and Bingley 5-rise, which is all to the good, but what about the thousands of small canalside features like the lockside lobbies?

These are often in the middle of the countryside away from businesses or urban organisations that might want to adopt them. In these financially straightened times, they are not a priority for BW as their repair does not contribute to maintaining navigation. However, they do contribute immensely to the distinctive character of a waterway and are just as much part of our heritage as Titus Salt's model village and mill. Unfortunately, few if any are protected by English Heritage listing, but surely it would be possible for a local history group in a neighbouring village to adopt the stretch of canal in its patch and look after these features? Perhaps this is something that Simon Thurley, one of the new NWC Trustees could have a look at (see News section).

In other articles in this issue, David Fletcher gives his views on the judgement in the Bristol court case and also the latest news on the diesel bug problem. Simon Robbins has done an analysis of the activities of BW's enforcement teams and also describes a recent trip on the Thames, reflecting this month's cover photo from John Slee.

John has also analysed the results of this year's cost of boating survey, which will make interesting reading for all boat owners. Amid all the financial gloom at the moment, it is good to report the reopening of the two Droitwich canals and plans for a new Stafford Riverway Link. Finally, I would especially like to thank Canal Drifter, who has offered to write waterways-themed crosswords for NABO News, starting in this issue.

Happy summer's boating.

Lobby at Tilstone Lock (below) and Beeston Stone Lock, Bunbury (opposite), Shropshire Union Canal
Photos Peter Fellows



Time to go boating

In a fast changing world, **David Fletcher** considers the many issues confronting our members and other users of the waterways.

A lot has happened since I last put pen to paper. Crick was a good event for NABO. The stand was placed in one of the marquees, which gave us a well-placed base and we were protected from the elements. The attendance appeared to us to be better than last year, and our team talked to boaters and aspiring boaters non-stop for the three days. We gave out back copies of the magazines and application forms, answered the questions, made the case for boating organisations and clinched a membership deal whenever we could. Time will tell on our success, but there is no shortage of our paper out there. What is clear is that there are many boaters who do not know about any of the boating organisations, and there is a continuing opportunity to keep up the membership levels. Please do your bit by engaging with boaters whenever you can. Last year we met many people who were planning to buy boats and were asking a lot of questions about what sort etc. This year was a bit different: more new boaters asking questions about all sorts of aspects of ownership, and filling in the gaps in their knowledge. The results of the cost of boating survey are always interesting to boaters, and the value of what John Slee has done for us year on year is paying off. Do look at the results of the 2011 survey.

The new NWC Trustees

In May the Waterways Minister appointed the Interim Trustees for the NWC, a little later than planned but still good. Any boaters picked? Oh yes: John Dodwell has been selected. John is well known in boating circles and to me through BWA meetings where he has represented CBOA for several years. John is a

very good selection and I have every confidence that he will ensure that the boater's perspective will be made at the top level. I understand that Clive Henderson, IWA Chair, will continue to be an observer on the BW Board until next year. The Interim Trustees now have the task of assessing the future of the NWC, deciding on many of the gaps in the way it works, finalising the deal with Government and ultimately deciding whether this is fit to go ahead. They will need all our support as work progresses.

DEFRA consultation on the NWC

The DEFRA consultation has just closed and NABO has made a lengthy submission. Of course we talked extensively about the maintenance issues and funding. But for me there are other softer issues that I want to mention now. The consultation document talks about heritage and assets, but there is very little about people and the community of the waterway. We know how important that is and how the family of waterway and waterside people are an important contributor to the package. There are places in the consultation when wildlife is mentioned before people. Of course we want healthy wildlife on the canals, but we do not want wildlife organisations taking over from navigation or preventing it.

Living heritage

Canals are about heritage and people, and not the last refuge of tree huggers and towpath botanists. They should take their extremes elsewhere. The other soft issue is around BW and their willingness and ability to change into a new entity with a different ethos. I for one am tired

The Chairman's Column

Pseudonym was away for the last Council meeting, but will hopefully be back for the one in September



of the consultations that don't consult, and the lack of consideration for mere boating customers. If the NWC really gets going with a strong representative element, there will be a different need for organisations like NABO because many things will happen as a matter of course. At the moment I still see a strong future for organisations like NABO but it will be no lesser a challenge for boaters to adjust to this new world. The full submission is on the web site. Do have a look.

Houseboat certificates

Houseboat certificates are a rare beast on the canals and apply to very few, there being only about 80. Discussions to more fully document the terms and conditions that apply to the houseboat scheme continue. The complainant pursuing this issue, our very own Simon Robbins, has offered BW a list of queries on their latest draft agreement, including a number of places where the BW draft appears to be at odds with the Waterways Acts. BW has agreed to postpone a meeting to review the draft while they look at the points Simon has raised.

Help wanted on Council

At the start of this brave new charitable world, we need the next generation of boaters to come forward to help with both representation work and the support work we need to keep our organisation up and running. Is that you? I hope so because we need help. All organisations need new faces, ideas and energy and NABO is no exception. Please do get in touch if you can spare some time. Our AGM is in November and we have to plan for succession now. Please contact one of the Council members so that we can see what interests you and how you can contribute.

Waford Observer

You may not have seen the revised licence terms and conditions that quietly slipped onto BW's website in

June. This follows the consultation earlier in the year. It is a little job for next month to see what has changed. One of the issues in the consultation was charges for visiting boats and another was about costs for Section 8(5) moving of boats. Anyway you will have to sign for these from August on renewal.

Our Ombudsman remains

Good news on the Ombudsman scheme that covers complaints about BW. I understand that the current incumbent, Hillary Bainbridge, will stay on until 2012. I welcome this. Hilary has been really good and I am very happy that she will cover the transition period to the NWC. If you don't know what she does, look at BW's website under 'Listening to you'. Her annual reports are all there.

Bristol court case

At last the Judgement is public and it can be discussed. The decisions are summarised elsewhere in this issue. BW has already started meetings about this and NABO will be fully engaged. We will also take legal advice over some of the points and then use this in order to make progress. Some of our thoughts were included in the NABO submission made in May for the Lee and Stort mooring consultation, but I hope we can go somewhat further in July. All this engagement is much further on than where I expected to be a year ago. My other feeling, having witnessed part of the court proceedings, is how uncomfortable it left me. Seeing a court engaged in boating affairs was not very satisfactory. The issues are complex and we take it for granted that everybody understands them and can put them into context. Not so. There were some 'interesting' moments. We shouldn't have to go court more often than is absolutely necessary. The chances of them getting it wrong are too high, particularly if the cases are uncontested. Then we might have a real problem.

Have a good summer.

NWC Trustees announced

The trustees have been appointed for the New Waterways Charity (NWC) that will take over the running of BW's English and Welsh canals, rivers and docks from April 2012.

Working closely with the existing BW Board, the eight trustees have senior level experience of managing heritage, volunteering, leisure, boating and commercial interests. This experience will be needed to ensure that the NWC starts with a realistic financial and governance package.

Trustees from BW

Tony Hales, the existing BW Chairman, will chair the charity's trustees and two trustees from the BW Board will be John Bridgeman, Vice Chairman and an expert in competition and fair trading and Nigel Hugill, BW's property expert and chairman of its audit and property committees.

New trustees

The new trustees are:

- 1 **Lynne Berry**, Chief Executive of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, with experience of managing volunteering and having leisure activities that include boating, industrial heritage and restoring a 1950s wooden boat;
- 2 **Jane Cotton**, Deputy Chief Executive and Human Resources director of Oxfam, with expertise in organisational development and change management as well as volunteering, fundraising and charity governance;
- 3 **John Dodwell**, Chair of the Commercial Boat Operators Association and an influential member of the British Waterways Forum, who has a unique and realistic insight into opportunities for waterborne transport and is a chartered accountant with experience in corporate finance and

law, as well as owning an historic narrowboat;

- 4 **Tom Franklin**, Chief Executive of the Ramblers and a member of the Independent Panel on the future direction of forestry and woodland policy in England, who believes that local waterway partnerships should be based on parliamentary not BW waterway boundaries;
- 5 **Simon Thurley**, Chief Executive of English Heritage and an historian.

The unpaid trustees will now work alongside the existing BW Board until taking over responsibility after April 2012. More immediately they will have full control over negotiating a contract with Government that will determine public funding for at least the next decade. They will also be involved in the detailed design of the charity's governance, decisions around the charity's name, logo and brand identity, and fundraising strategy. During the transition, the trustees are expected to give 3-4 days per month, reducing to two days thereafter. After the transitional period, the appointment of trustees is subject to ratification by the charity's Council of Representatives at its first meeting.

Head of fundraising

Ruth Ruderham from Christian Aid has been appointed as the first Head of Fundraising for the NWC. She helped the organisation increase income beyond £100m and in 2005 was named Professional Fundraiser of the Year. She will further develop the voluntary fundraising strategy for the NWC which has been put together by BW and specialist Think Consulting.



Lynne Berry
Photo by Graham Turner

Bring On Another Thousand

John Slee analyses the data from the NABO 2011 Cost of Boating Survey

The number of respondents in our on-line survey this year was significantly higher than in past years, because from the outset we opened it up to all boaters, not just members. We are grateful to everyone who completed the survey.

Table 1 shows a summary of costs and cruising statistics from completed questionnaires from the whole sample of respondents (some entries were incomplete or inconsistent and are not included), plus data for three sample boats: a 40' x 12' foot wide-beam and 57' and 70' narrowboats. The figures are a guide to what boat-

costs in 2011, when compared with 2010. However, this apparent good news can be mainly attributed to a 2010 extraordinary maintenance expense figure of £11,000 for boater 5. Removing that figure shows an average increase of 6% for these 8 boaters' total expenses, and an average increase in extraordinary expenses of just over 50%. However, that is unlikely to be significant.

It is probably better to examine the Final Total Cost to paint a more accurate picture of trends. Let us just note that an average boater can find themselves spending anything up to about £1200 in unusual expenditure—Bring On Another Thousand!

Each heading in turn.

Licence: The average BW increase was just 3%. Boater 2's increase of 117% is due to his/her purchase of a Gold Licence to enable cruising on EA as well as BW waters in 2011. The 57' narrowboater paid £674 for a 12 months BW licence.

Insurance: Overall, the average increase was 5%. However, that included both increases and decreases – a reminder that challenging your annual quote

and shopping around can be well worth it. Interestingly, the 70' boat's insurance (5) is the second lowest. Insurance works out at between £3.15 and £5.58/week. One respondent suggested his RCR cost of £94 (£1.81 per week) should be included in insurance.

Mooring: It's difficult to talk percentages here. There are 2 continu-

Table 1: Summary of cruising statistics and costs

	Max	Min	Avg	40' WB	57' NB	70' NB
Average cruising (hrs/day)	250	0	7	6	5	4
Total days cruising per year	250	0	61	80	66	50
Total hours cruising per year	1,260	0	299	250	330	200
Total days aboard per year	365	0	108	90	365	60
Licence (£)	1,417	50	555	360	687	774
Boat insurance* (£)	700	50	213	510	289	174
Mooring (£)	5,269	11	1,675	2,040	2,200	2,756
Mooring per ft	127	0.19	36	51	39	39
BSS certificate** (£)	436	175	64	-	135	-
Diesel and petrol (£)	2,500	10	452	400	432	200
Gas (£)	300	4	55	35	189	50
Coal and wood (£)	730	1	71	-	359	50
Routine maintenance (£)	2,500	10	292	20	120	550
Hull blacking/anti-fouling (£)	5,000	25	271	-	370	-
TOTAL COST			3,647	3,365	4,781	4,554
Extraordinary maintenance (£)	10,000	1	560	2,000	276	-
FINAL TOTAL COST			4,207	5,365	5,057	4,554

* exc. contents ** excluding repairs

ers can and do pay, but average figures across the whole sample are misleading. Instead, I have selected a subset of data from eight narrowboat owners (Table 2) who submitted their recorded expenses, rather than estimates, in both this year's survey and in 2010 (Table 3).

On first examination, Table 3 shows a 21% overall decrease in

	Living			location		resi? mths	Cruising			hours per yr	days 2010/11	% hrs
	length	draft	bought	waterway	home		l/aboard per day	hrs per yr	days per yr			
1	50'0"	2'4"	2002	South	T&M	Y	>6	3	170	500	190	74
2	56'11"	1'11"	2004	South	GU	N	6	3.3	45	146	49	53
3	57'0"	2'3"	2006	E Mids	(CC)	N	12	3	140	430	340	132
4	53'6"	2'6"	2005	Midlands	Coventry	N	<6	4	53	216	60	81
5	70'0"	2'0"	2000	Midlands	T&M	N	<6	4	50	200	60	125
6	57'0"	1'10"	2005	South	GU	N	<6	4.7	90	426	100	85
7	57'0"	2'1"	2004	South	(CC)	N	12	3	109	330	328	40
8	50'0"	2'2"	1998	NW	Macclesfield	Y	<6	4	57	277	73	66

ous cruisers (3 & 7), who paid £11 and £319 for moorings over the year 2011. The others' home moorings were marinas and the average annual cost was £2199 in 2011, barely increased from 2010.

BSS: 2011 costs were £130, £135 & £145 for the inspection.

Diesel: shows an average increase of 16% to £650 p.a.. However, the continuous cruisers spent just over £1200 on diesel in 2011 (Boater 3 was not a cc-er in 2010). The other boaters spent £435 on average, with a range of £167 to £1130. However, that increase in actual costs is an un-

derestimate. It reflects a reduction in cruising hours: 2011 total cruising hours were 73% of 2010 hours, perhaps reflecting boaters cutting back on cruising because of increased fuel costs?

Gas: Although average gas costs increased by 43%, they are still not a significant component of overall costs: £23-£88 in 2011.

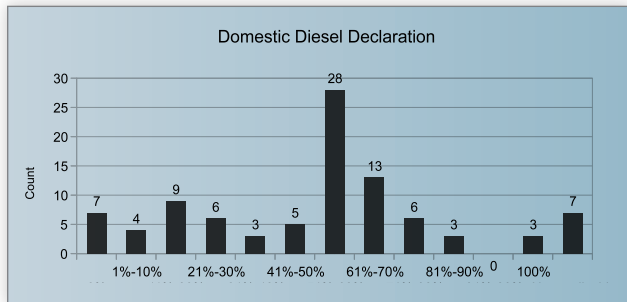
Coal and Wood: (free wood could skew these costs!) An increase of 51%. Fuel costs are double gas costs, averaging £104. Note that one of the cc-ers spent £288 on coal and wood; the other does not use solid fuel, so

Table 2: Sample Boat details: all boats have 6'10" beam, except boat 2, which is 6'11" and all boats except continuous cruisers (CC) are moored at marinas

Table 3: Costs (£) and % increase (decrease in brackets)

		Licence	Insurance	Moorings	BSS	Diesel and Petrol	Gas	Coal and Wood	Routine Maintenance	Blacking	Annual Total	Extraordinary Maintenance	Total TOTAL
1	2010	538	222	1929	-	1065	0	0	402	0	4156	414	4570
	2011	622	233	2017	135	1130	0	0	0	0	4137	588	4725
	% change	16	5	5	-	6	0	0	(100)	0	0.5	42	3
2	2010	653	230	3273	-	363	21	32	317	691	5580	67	5647
	2011	1417	205	2229	-	167	23	0	0	0	4041	1163	5204
	% change	117	(11)	(32)	-	(54)	10	(100)	(100)	(100)	(28)	1636	(8)
3	2010	652	265	388	-	462	33	188	195	275	2458	245	2703
	2011	674	285	11	145	1220	88	288	165	150	3026	270	3296
	% change	3	8	(97)	-	164	167	53	(15)	(45)	23	10	22
4	2010	627	176	1819	155	180	43	30	160	0	3190	320	3510
	2011	647	267	1838	-	232	47	30	180	0	3241	0	3241
	% change	3%	52	1	-	29	9	0	13	0	2	(100)	(8)
5	2010	750	186	1782	-	250	21	50	700	700	4439	11000	15439
	2011	774	174	2756	-	200	50	50	550	0	4554	0	4554
	% change	3	(6)	55	-	(20)	138	0	(21)	(100)	3	(100)	(71)
6	2010	652	286	2612	85	675	25	45	275	425	5080	100	5180
	2011	673	290	2724	-	612	23	48	425	425	5220	1227	6447
	% change	3	1	4	-	(9)	(8)	7	55	0	3	1127	24
7	2010	652	212	200	-	1169	63	-	72	433	2801	1128	3929
	2011	674	212	319	-	1258	70	-	85	617	3235	-	3235
	% change	3	0	60	-	8	11	-	18	42	15	(100)	(18)
8	2010	603	164	1600	-	300	56	-	100	-	2823	120	2943
	2011	622	164	1632	130	380	73	-	75	450	3526	580	4106
	% change	3	0	2	-	27	30	-	(25)	0	25	383	40
Avg	2010	641	218	1700	120	558	37	69	278	505	3816	1674	5490
	2011	763	229	1691	137	650	53	104	247	411	3873	479	4351
	% change	19	5	(1)	14	16	43	51	(11)	(19)	1	(54)	(21)

NABO 2011 Cost of Boating Survey



the latter's diesel costs are higher (£1280 vs £1220) when you take annual cruising hours (330 vs 430) into account. Boater 2 pointed out that we did not ask for marina electricity costs – this amounted to £206.

Routine Maintenance: At first sight, a decrease of 11% in maintenance costs is good news. However, could this reflect the decreased hours cruising requiring fewer services, or an attempt to save money by postponing them?

Blacking: There seem to be three cost bands, probably reflecting labour costs, type of paint and dry dock or crane/pull out: Cost per foot: £2.63, £7.46 and £10.82. In

2010, one boater paid £12.14 per foot. Shop around and Select!

Conclusions

Overall then, these boaters spent, on average, around the same in 2011 as they did in 2010, but cruised only three quarters as much as in 2010.

When we asked for the price paid for diesel for domestic purposes in March or April 2011, the minimum quoted was 70p/l, the maximum £1.24/l. The price of a 13 kg gas cylinder ranged from £21 to £30. We can see from the chart that when it comes to diesel usage, boaters choose from a wide range of declarations.

Don't forget that "where a purchaser knows that the propulsion use may be more or less than the 60%/40% apportionment split, or a craft clearly has no domestic use, then they must declare their actual intended usage." Although a high number of boaters in our survey (28/94) declared 60% propulsion /40% domestic, they are in the minority! So before you fill up next time, have a think about your pattern of use.



Keep 'em going

Record number of historic narrowboats at The Waterways Festival

At least 28 historic boats (see list) are expected to be on show at The Waterways Festival at Burton upon Trent on 29–31 July. President, the last steam powered ex-FMC narrowboat now owned by The Black Country Living Museum, will be making a guest appearance. David Pullen, Waterspace Director for IWA Festivals said: "All of the boats have been beautifully restored having worked in a very tough industrial environment. We hope festival goers not only enjoy looking at the boats but also learn something of their importance to

our social and industrial history. For example, Swallow was built by Yarwoods of Northwich in 1934 for Cowburn & Cowpar in Manchester, one of eight boats named after birds. It was designed to carry acid, acetone, oil drums, lime and salt from Manchester to Coventry and Wolverhampton via the Bridgewater, Trent & Mersey and Shropshire Union canals. During the Second World War it carried market produce around these areas, which was a very important role for the waterways at this time".

Waterways radio broadcast from the festival

The Festival will see the launch of British Inland Waterways on the Air (BiWota), a 50-strong group of canal and amateur radio enthusiasts. The group's first ever event aims to share the pleasures of the inland waterways with amateur radio operators across the world through radio communication from the boats and towpaths at Burton. OfCom

have issued a special event licence to create the Waterways Festival radio station.

BiWota Founder John Rogers said "the festival is a great launch pad to create awareness with waterways enthusiasts and make contact with amateur stations across the world to publicise the opportunities that the waterways offer for leisure activities. Festival visitors who do not have radio licences will have a chance to try out amateur radio for themselves and communicate with people across the globe."

More about the Waterways Festival

To book advance tickets www.thewaterwaysfestival.co.uk call 01474 783 453(ext 602 or 603).

Historic Boats confirmed at the festival

Laplander (Ice Breaker)
Linda
Whitby
Skylark
Seal
Lynx
Bream
Elizabeth
Swallow
Sagitta
Aldgate
Betelgeuse (Butty)
Renfrew
Phoenix
President
Kildare (Butty)
Kangaroo
Australia (Butty)
Greyhound
Otter
Fazeley (Butty)
Emu
Alder
Clover
Perch
Fulbourne
Nuneaton
Brighton (Butty)



BW not seeking new powers

David Fletcher and Simon Robbins report on the Public Bodies Bill and transfer of BW powers

Defra Consultation

NABO's submission to the Defra consultation on the New Waterway Charity runs to 13 pages and so is too big to include in NABO News. It is available on the NABO website, but if you don't have Internet access, please write to NABO for a printed copy.

www.nabo.org.uk/issues/current-consultations/362-nabo-responds-to-the-defra-consultation-on-nwc

In June, just as we were finalising the response to the NWC consultation, we became aware that the Public Bodies Bill might be used to enhance BW's enforcement powers. This was contrary to all that has been said in the last 18 months by BW and Defra, in that the Government lawyers were very keen that no changes were permitted and only existing powers were to be passed through. The concern arose from the minutes of BW's Board meeting in January 2011, which stated:

The possibility of introducing greater enforcement powers for BW as part of the new legislation was also discussed and Mr Johnson agreed to re-

port back on the subject to the May Board meeting.

As a result NABO sought clarification and received the responses below from BW and Defra. Parts have been deleted here to achieve a reasonable summary. Following this, the Board minutes of the May meeting have been published and they confirm the closure of the issue in that BW will not seek additional enforcement powers as part of the Public Bodies Bill. NABO would welcome, at an appropriate time, the opportunity to support amendments to the legislation for boating matters, as part of a full and focused consultation.

British Waterway's response

- 1 As a statutory undertaker, BW has necessary statutory powers to (amongst other things): (a) take water from (privately owned) natural watercourses; (b) powers of entry (for repair, maintenance etc); (c) powers to make byelaws (a type of 'secondary legislation'); and (d) powers of licensing and byelaw enforcement.
- 2 If NWC is to operate as an effective navigation authority, it needs to succeed to these powers.
- 3 The powers are not unique to public bodies - many ancient private corporations (e.g. original canal companies) and modern private corporations (e.g. the privatised utilities) have analogous powers as statutory undertakers (including powers of entry; powers to make byelaws and powers to enforce them).
- 4 Clause 18 of the Public Bodies Bill (which seeks to protect individual liberties) would have prevented the full transfer of BW's existing statutory undertaker powers to NWC. The Bill however is designed to enable the reorganisation of many types of public bodies, few of which are statutory undertakers, and as introduced failed to take their needs into account. Accordingly, having been alerted by BW to the issue, it was the Government that introduced an amendment to the Bill at the House of Lords Committee stage to permit, notwithstanding the provisions of clause 18, transfer of the statutory undertaker powers of BW (and of EA in due course if desired) to NWC in order that it have the necessary powers to function as a navigation authority.
- 5 The key statutory undertaker powers that were at risk are the rights of BW under numerous enabling acts to take water from natural (and privately owned) watercourses to feed the canals. The transfer of these, without the amendment, would have been prohibited by Clause 18(3)

- 6 There is no intention (nor does the PBB permit it) to create any new powers. The amendment is simply there to enable the effective and necessary transfer of existing powers from BW to NWC. Without it, NWC would not be able to function as a Navigation Authority.
- 7 The comments of the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee were made either in advance of, or in ignorance of, the explanation given by the Minister on the floor of the House of Lords in the debate on the amendment - which was passed without a vote and is available for anyone to read in Hansard.

Defra's Response

¶¶ The text you mention was introduced as a Government amendment to the Public Bodies Bill in order to fulfil the Government's policy objective (subject to consultation) of transferring the waterways from British Waterways to civil society by the setting up of a New Waterways Charity (NWC). (The clause numbering of the present form of the Bill is slightly different to the version you refer to, although the wording of the Note is otherwise the same: the current version of the Bill can be accessed at services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/publicbodieshl/documents.html.)

The amendment was necessary to prevent the provisions of clause 21(2) applying to British Waterways. Clause 21(2) would otherwise prevent the NWC shell company from receiving the British Waterways statutory undertaker powers that are essential for the effective operation and management of the infrastructure.

I'm aware that this matter has been the subject of exchanges between BW and BWAf. I have seen Nigel Johnson's email to BWAf members of 19 June and concur with his account of what we are trying to achieve through the Public Bodies Bill (PBB), and with the reassurances he has given you. BW has not asked the department for any enhanced enforcement powers through the PBB. I have also now seen Nigel's email of today's date in which he explains the reference in the January BW Board minutes".



A New Era for the Waterways

A consultation on the Government's proposals for moving inland waterways into a new charity in England and Wales

nel to be constructed to straighten the navigation. The branch terminated at Green's Bridge near to the centre of Stafford, although there is evidence that it may have been navigable as far as Stafford Mill beyond Green's Bridge. It was also possible to navigate the River Sow for a short distance east of the lock as far as St. Thomas's Mill, which was once part of an Augustinian priory. Because the navigation crossed land that was all owned by Lord Stafford it required no Act of Parliament, unlike most canals.

The main purpose of the branch canal was to carry coal, lime and merchandise for the town, and after it opened in 1816 there was an immediate reduction in the price of coal in Stafford. Initially, the navigation was leased by Lord Stafford to colliery companies, but in 1838 the lease was taken over by the S&W Canal Company, which carried out improvements and reduced tolls.

Later in 1864, Lord Hatherton and his associates took over the lease for the next four decades. A succession of Lord Hathertons were also board members of the S&W Canal Co. often having the role of Chairman.

In the late 19thC salt was discovered on Stafford Common and the Stafford Salt & Alkali Company was formed to extract brine. The company opened a second works at Baswich on land opposite the entrance to the Branch Canal. Brine was pumped along a two-mile pipeline that followed the towpath and was used in Stafford town centre in the brine baths.

During the 1920s, traffic declined along the navigation and Stafford Wharf eventually fell silent. With no working boats, the waterway became neglected and the channel became choked with foliage. The canal company did not renew the lease when it expired in 1927 and the branch became derelict.

In the 1970s the roving bridge at the junction was demolished and an overflow weir now occupies the



site, although some remnants of the bridge abutments survive. Beyond the junction, the channel can just about be made out and copings of the canal wall can be seen on the approach to the aqueduct.

The aqueduct itself was demolished as part of the 1970s flood prevention scheme and the lock has vanished altogether, although different shades in the grass suggest that there may be buried remains below the surface. In the canalised river section, there are three bridges that all have adequate headroom and there are no serious obstructions to navigation.

The future

There have been a number of initiatives over the years to kickstart restoration of the Branch Canal, the most recent being spearheaded by the Stafford Boat Club and Wolverhampton Boat Club with help and advice from the IWA. The Stafford Riverway Link (SRL) was formed with the following aims:

- To promote the restoration of the waterway, linking Stafford to the national waterways network for the benefit of the community and

Green Bridge in the centre of Stafford

Byline



The site of the entrance to the Stafford Branch Canal from the Staffs & Worcs Canal showing the left hand remains of the roving bridge over the junction.



The canal meandering towards its junction with the Staffs & Worcs Canal, a bit narrow, but fairly deep



View of the River Sow looking towards Baswich from Fairway Bridge

all interested groups.

- To further the preservation, conservation and restoration of the waterway and to promote and stimulate public interest in protecting its wildlife and respecting its history.
- To establish partnerships with local authorities and other bodies that will facilitate this restoration.

In the last 12 months there has been considerable progress on a number of fronts: it is believed that the river section of the navigation is part of the estate of Lord Stafford, who has given his blessing to the scheme and accepted the offer to become SRL's Patron; the land from the junction with the S&W canal is in private ownership and the owners have generously offered to allow SRL to reinstate the canal and are also proactive in providing help to move the scheme forward. Stafford Borough Council is generally in favour of the restoration and has indicated that any proposed developments in the town near to the waterfront must accommodate a restored navigation; and the former MP for Stafford is President of the SRL.

SRL have set up a Community Interest Company with the aim of restoring the waterway for the community to enjoy its benefits, and also wish to involve the Friends of Stafford Riverway and Staffordshire Wildlife in the plans. SRL need to converse with the Environment Agency over its concerns about the ability of the River to take away floodwater, but SRL believe that this problem can be overcome with a dredged river being more efficient in dealing with floodwater.

The next stage is to commission a feasibility study to demonstrate the validity and practicality of the scheme to local authorities and other bodies that may be able to provide funding. The study itself will need financing and SRL need to raise the profile of the scheme and attract more members.

Problems with the bio content of red diesel

David Fletcher reports on an increasingly common problem for boaters

In the March issue Mike McKay talked about the EU laws surrounding the supply of diesel in general and red diesel for the waterways in particular. This subject has not gone away and will become a feature of our boating forever. The Department for Transport (DfT) have recently completed a consultation on the content of bio fuels in diesel and the next wave of rules is expected at the end of this year. The long-term trend is to move to 10% bio average for all transport fuels. There is concern that farmland in UK is not best employed in supporting bio fuel supplies at these volumes so the increase will not be overnight. NABO have asked that the target content is not increased above the current 3.5%. But the problem is that DfT targets and what you buy are completely different things.

At the moment most suppliers include some small bio content in red diesel, but they are free to add more if they want to, up to 7%, without any warning to the customer. Some do not include very much because it is more expensive than mineral oil. Others, generally smaller suppliers, put in none so there are some out-

lets selling bio- or FAME-free fuel available. Others are supplying road diesel with 7% bio content and just adding the dye. Individual marinas or dealers have a variety of policies: some always buy from one supplier and know what they are getting, including FAME-free; whereas others shop around for the best price. So as boaters, what you are actually getting is a complete lottery.

I spoke with RCR and they say they are now seeing a steady number of bio-fuel breakdowns. They are using a particular additive product as a shock dose to clean up cases of bug growth though it can take 72 hours to work. Some marinas are buying machines to clean up fuel tank contents, if you can get to them. I was quoted £100 to do it though GOBA previously have said £200.

I am getting conflicting advice over winter storage full/empty at the moment, but my feeling is to fill up in the autumn as I always have, dosing with chemicals, but turn over the contents early in the season. The effects of chemicals on engines and heating systems appears to be minor, or even an improvement, but that is another subject altogether.

So what should we do?

- You are most vulnerable if you are a low user with low turnover in the tank.
- Check/dip the bottom of your tank to see if there is a layer of water/sludge there already, and if there is, do something about it. Use an additive to disperse the contamination and use up the fuel, or do a full clean up.
- Keep a regular check on the water trap/filter bowl for black material or free water and have spare fuel filters available.
- Check/renew the rubber seals on fuel filler caps, particularly the brass screw-in ones, to make sure that no rain is getting in. Seal life is said to be 2 years.
- Buy diesel from somebody you trust or a supplier with a good turnover and an interest in the quality (a hire fleet operator?). Ask what you are getting: is it FAME-free, and when was the last delivery? Has it been dosed with chemical additives? (poor storage of biofuel or storage for more than 6 months in a marina tank will breed the bugs nicely for you).
- Use an additive if you are buying fuel with bio/FAME; don't mix different additives in the same tank full as it is unknown territory.
- Don't buy more fuel than you can burn within the foreseeable future, and don't chase the cheapest unless you know what you are getting.
- Fit a drain cock to the tank at the lowest point. Remember that this must include a plug or cap removable only with tools, to conform to the BSS.

Droitwich canals open

Droitwich Spa in Worcestershire now back on canal map

Dimensions

2.1m (7ft.) beam, 21.8m (71ft 6in.) length, 1.8m (6ft) headroom and 750mm (2ft 6in) draft.

Canal Guide

A new guide is available from the Droitwich Canals Trust by writing to Margaret Rowley, Old Park, Plough Road, Tibberton, Droitwich WR9 7NN enclosing cheque for £9 (including P & P).

Further boating info

from the Droitwich Canals Trust on 01452 318000 or at www.worcs.com/dct/

Waterway Watch May 25th

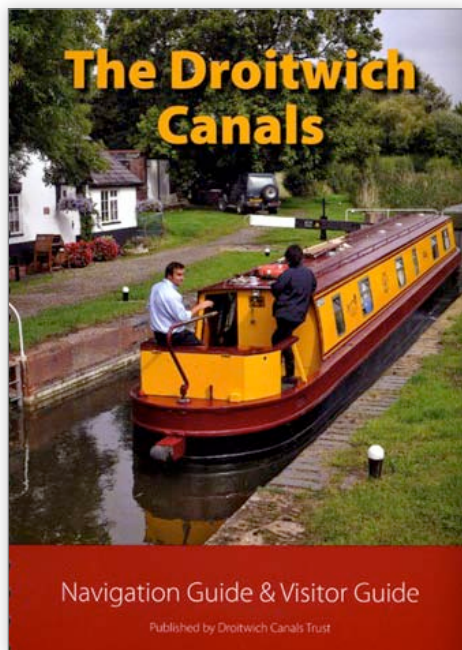
With the completion of a 35-year project to re-open the town's canals and create a 21-mile mid-Worcestershire cruising ring Droitwich Spa is now back on the canal map. Thanks to the determination of the Droitwich Canals Trust and more recent project partners, the canals are expected to bring a long-term boost to the local economy, generating an additional £2.75m a year in the local community. As part of the restoration, a linear park has been created providing picnic sites, fishing pegs, new stop-off points for boaters and 26 new visitor moorings.

The Droitwich Barge Canal built by James Brindley opened in 1771 to serve the local salt industry, linking the town to the River Severn. It is open to navigation from the

River Severn to Netherwich Basin in Droitwich. There is a restricted width of 2.1m (7 feet) for all craft past Bridge 15 on the approach to Droitwich. The Droitwich Junction Canal from Hanbury Wharf on the Worcester and Birmingham Canal to Droitwich Spa was built by R. Boddington and opened in 1854. It was one of the last canals to be completed. Both canals declined due to competition from the railways and were abandoned in 1939. Hanbury Locks (1 to 3) on the Droitwich Junction Canal are being manned by BW staff between 10 am and 3.30pm (last arrival 2.30pm) and passage through these locks is only possible between these times. Mooring at these locks outside this period is very limited. Due to nesting birds, there are currently restrictions on the speed of filling/emptying locks, which will slow passage through the flight.

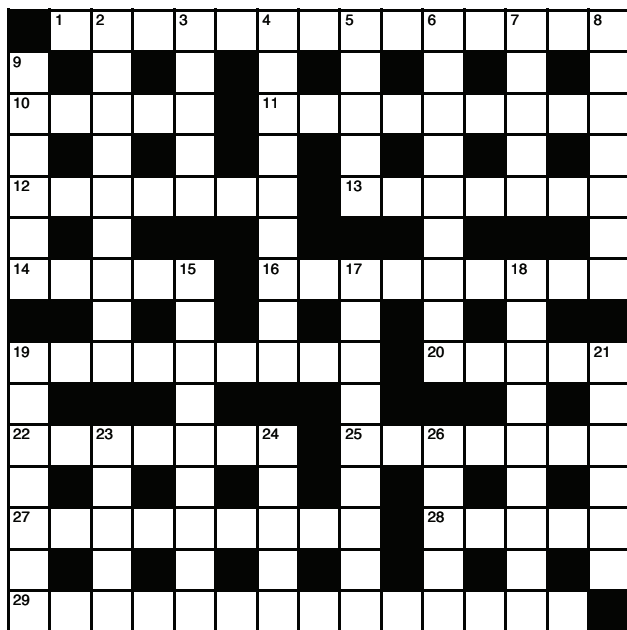
Services and restrictions

There are currently no water points on the Junction and Barge Canals. The nearest are at Diglis Basin, Hanbury Wharf, Bridge 42 Stoke Works and Stourport. There are also no Elsan or pump out facilities on the Junction and Barge Canals, the nearest being at Diglis, Stourport and Tardebigge (Elsan only). The canalised section of the River Salwarpe between Vines Park and Lock 7 on the Junction Canal is subject to rapid rises in level and flow following periods of rain and no overnight mooring on this section is allowed.



NABO News Crossword No: 1

by Canaldrifter



Untold wealth and riches could be yours!

(well maybe next time)

Our (not so) prize crossword with a waterways theme. If any NABO member or waterways business would like to sponsor a small prize for the first correct answer to the crossword, please get in touch. Answers in the next issue

Also, I haven't forgotten the photo captions, so please let me have your photos to use in future issues. *Editor*



Across

- 1 Trading place is smelly to a point, but has value up the Ashby. (6, 8)
- 10 Cartoon planet (5)
- 11 Note begins long tone badly on the Macclesfield (9)
- 12 Box on a lift we hear? (7)
- 13 River carries mushy peas to the ocean! (4-3)
- 14 Trouble in a ship, found aloft (5)
- 16 Quoins set badly create problems (9)
- 19 Travellers make universal time in old lorries (9)
- 20 Modern rope material for stocking? (5)
- 22 Crewing eight described? (7)
- 25 Sail safely through. Are we at her side? (7)
- 27 Trot a renegade horse back inside for boat power? (9)
- 28 Sail from an Italian seaport (5)
- 29 Rings that can't be cruised? (8,6)

Down

- 2 Light material sometimes used for boat hulls (9)
- 3 Bombard backwards at speed? (5)
- 4 Method employed expertly when boating? (9)
- 5 Endow perhaps past possession of the boat (5)
- 6 Revolt now about old railway location on the GU (9)
- 7 Values the payments (5)
- 8 Sheds for flying boats? (7)
- 9 Speed in a merchantman covers expanses (6)
- 15 Drained yet sunk (9)
- 17 090 degrees (9)
- 18 Part of the boat's engine service (3,6)
- 19 Leeds and Liverpool paddles (7)
- 21 Neither route goes to Scandinavia! (6)
- 23 Disease caught from 24 (5)
- 24 Dine aboard (3,2)
- 26 Hire fleet when the Welsh are aboard (5)

The Bristol court case

David Fletcher unpicks the recent judgement

The court case judgement has finally been made public and can now be discussed. The case was held against a boater, Paul Davies, who owned a narrowboat and lived on it on the K&A in the Bath area. This is a very brief outline of the main issues and the full judgement can be read on the BW website.

Davies worked locally and moved the boat within an area of about 10 miles. He overstayed on visitor moorings from time to time. He had some history of periods without a licence because of cash, BSS and insurance problems. BW had refused to renew his licence because of non-payments of mooring overstay charges and the other issues. BW went to court with their usual routine of section 13 of the '71 Act over houseboats and section 8 of the '83 Act for not having a licence, and also added the recovery of the mooring charges. BW's case was that Davies had not moved the boat enough to satisfy the Mooring Guidelines for Continuous Cruisers. Davies' counter argument was that he was entitled to stay within the 10 mile length of the canal because of his need to have access to work and friends in the area, and that BW's action was disproportionate. Because the boat is Davies' home, BW took the case to court to ask for an injunction to seize the boat, or to get him to move.

In court, the case revolved on the meaning of section 17 of the '95 Act and how it applies to Davies' movement of the boat. The legal meaning of words such as 'navigation', 'place' and 'bona fide' were discussed. The Judge concluded that the use 'bona fide for navigation' involves consideration of the purpose of the use, rather than the extent of the movement. He also said that Davies' use of the boat was not bona fide for

navigation, as his movement was incidental to its use as a home, and an attempt to escape the requirement to have a permanent mooring. Davies could not claim he is using a boat bona fide for navigation by moving it every so often up and down a short stretch of canal. The Judge also said that his decision should not be taken as fully endorsing BW's (mooring) guidance!!

BW withdrew the claim for repayment of the overstaying charges.

Interpreting the judgement

In its simplest terms, it could be interpreted as ten miles is not enough - no great surprise there - and BW was certain to get a judgement just on the fact that Davies did not have a licence, let alone how much he moved.

So why all the hype and interest over this? Well this is the first case on the '95 Act and the definition of continuous cruising. BW does need some judgements to confirm its interpretation of the Act as set out in the licence terms and conditions. BW set this up with the intention of getting a ruling that would provide support for its position. Did it succeed in doing this in this case?

The judgements that...

- Davies could not claim that he was using a boat 'bona fide for navigation' by moving it every so often up and down a short stretch of canal, and
 - The movement of the boat was incidental to its use as a home, and an attempt to escape the requirement to have a permanent mooring,
- ...are two statements that many can relate to and support.

The judgement does not say how long is enough for bona fide navigation but the implication is that

the length of ten miles around Bath is not enough. Again many would agree with this.

Bona fide intent

For me, the Judge put a good deal of emphasis on bona fide as the test for continuous cruising, and this is a less clear test for boaters to understand than specific distances and so on. There was no judgement over the terms 'significant part of the waterway' and 'progressive journey'. These have been main planks of the guidelines since 2003, so the omission is surprising.

The Judge said that his ruling should not be taken as fully endorsing BW's guidance. What this means is not available, but it is not a surprise to NABO as our legal opinion didn't agree with it either! BW would not talk to us in 2010 pending this case. Maybe they will now. There are discussions taking place on the guidance wording this summer. The cost claim was pulled by BW. They are using mooring charges as a theme for the Moorings Policy and claim the right to refuse licence renewal if they are not paid. Getting a clear judgement on this would appear to be important. A missed opportunity

perhaps, not that we would wish to see a boater penalised—BW could have pursued it for a single pound and gained a ruling.

The case only covered a very limited part of the issues surrounding licence legislation. Davies was on legal aid and only funded to argue the immediately relevant parts. BW wanted a flag-waving ruling at minimum cost.

So we should not think that this was a full and comprehensive debate as we are used to, on the towpath. A Judge can only rule over what is presented in court. BW has indicated that it thinks the ruling is binding on future cases. NABO will take guidance on this, but clearly many will relate to the core findings. NABO has encouraged BW to go to Court, so I will not criticise them for doing so now and making the best of any judgement.

I heard the Judge say in court that he thought that BW had behaved impeccably. As a boater watching and hearing at least part of the case, I do not agree. I found BW poorly prepared to justify their enforcement, poorly prepared to present boating issues to the Judge, and bulies in victory. It was not pleasant.

Urchin
Photo by Ann Hollas



Enforcement Matters

Is it being directed to areas of most benefit asks **Simon Robbins**, Council Member for Moorings Matters, who takes a look at some recent figures.

Given the programme of staff redundancies BW management has pursued over the last few years and the diminishing numbers of frontline staff, we believe that efficient and targeted use of the remaining staff resources is critical. NABO's analysis of figures recently provided by BW on levels of enforcement action (April 2011) show some interesting trends.

In March 2011, BW's enforcement teams were dealing with 2204 cases, representing a little less than 5% of the boats on the BW system. Of these:

- Just over 75% of the active cases were over non-payment of boat licences (60%) or non-payment of BW mooring permits (16%).
- Another 169 boats were under investigation for overstaying on visitors' moorings.
- The total number of Continuous Cruising cases under investigation was 11% of all enforcement cases (245 cases). We are advised that what counts as a continuous cruising case is "A continuous cruiser case is started either by a specific boat being observed at a particular site – often following specific complaints or site monitoring, or from analysis of national boat sightings to identify those boats which have not moved very far in a specific timescale (usually 6 months)."
- Cases listed as 'Other' include any that didn't fit into the other four categories, and include "issues such as non-display of discs, neighbour complaints, generator misuse etc., which are usually triggered from complaints or the issuing of patrol notices."

BW was unable to confirm whether any of the cases in the 'other' and

'overstaying' categories included any continuous cruisers.

So what does this mean?

As ever, one has to be cautious with statistics. The numbers we are looking at are the cases that BW is actively pursuing. There will always be other examples that have not been identified at the time you take your 'snap-shot', particularly one suspects when it comes to overstaying: BW do not patrol every mooring, every day. However I would venture the following:

- Non-payment of boat licences and moorings remains numerically the lion's share of the enforcement teams' work. On a conservative estimate these cases represent well in excess of £1 million of much needed revenue owed by boat owners who haven't paid their basic dues on time.
- It is also clear that overstaying and blocking visitors' moorings is still a relatively small issue in the overall numerical caseload. BW's figures show that over 99% of boats were complying.
- BW's figures also suggest that somewhere between 90 - 95% of continuous cruisers never come to their attention for breaching the continuous cruising guidelines or anything else. Even allowing that some of the cases in the 'Overstay' and 'Other' categories may include allegations of misbehaviour by continuous cruisers (BW could not confirm this either way), this seems to confirm that continuous cruisers are not significantly more likely to attract enforcement action than other boaters.

Does the last point mean that the current continuous cruising guide-

lines are in fact not that far off the mark, given that on BW's own figures, more than 95% of continuous cruisers seem not come to BW's active attention for breaching those guidelines?

Hence one also has to ask the question whether the amount of expense and 'political' energy presently spent on this area is proportionate to the relatively small number of cases, when compared to the much larger numbers of boaters not paying their basic dues. Should basic revenue protection be given greater priority within the enforcement team's work than pursuing the difficult and controversial issue of continuous cruising? It is notable that the former increases much needed income and cash flow, while the latter makes no contribution to BW coffers and in fact costs money to pursue (for what benefits?).

Regional breakdowns

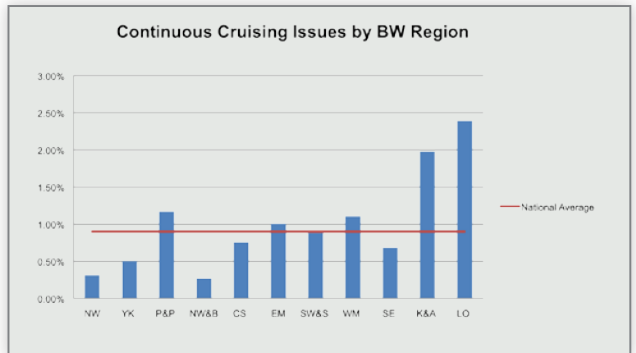
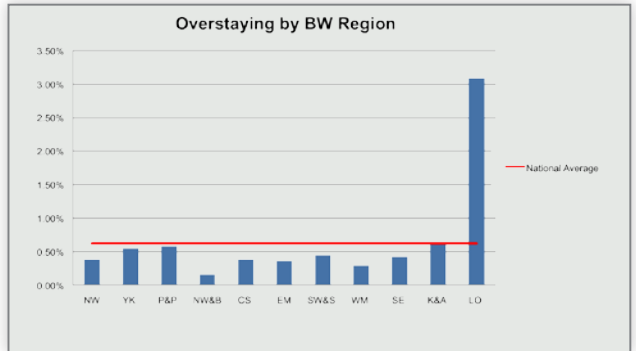
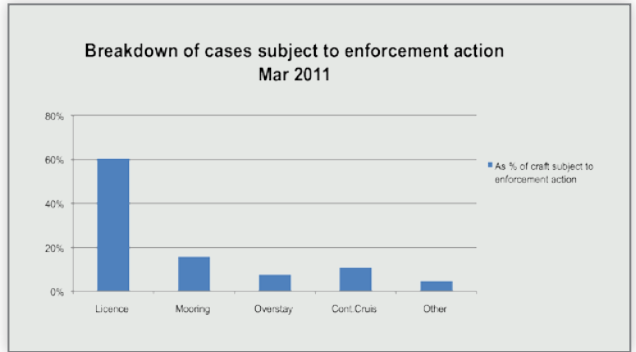
The figures we have also allow some basic analysis by BW regions, based on the overall numbers of boats spotted in a recent boat count versus the regional breakdown of the enforcement cases during the same month. While the numbers are not 100% rigorous (as they have been combined from two separate sources), the basic picture is as follows: with the exception of London, overstaying cases seem to be evenly spread around the system.

Issues over not complying with continuous cruising guidelines also seem to be evenly spread around the system with the notable exceptions of the K&A and London.

While some caution must be applied to the K&A and London figures (as these are target areas for BW and so it may be that more focussed enforcement activity is a factor inflating the figure), even the peak figure for London represents only 51 cases.

What else can we say?

A big gap in the information is the outcomes of the enforcement action. How many of the cases in all categories



ries are dropped, not proven or otherwise resolved? It would certainly be useful if we could find out some more about the effectiveness of the work BW staff are undertaking and that is something NABO may well pursue further.

It also suggests that efficient and

Talking Points: Enforcement

effective management of long-term moorings must be a very high priority. While the figures do not exactly cancel each out, it is notable that the enforcement teams have more cases on the books about non-payment of mooring fees than they have for breaching continuous cruising guidelines. How tolerant should BW be over non-payment of mooring fees when there are undoubtedly other boaters out there who would be pleased to have the opportunity to pay for a long-term mooring if it is reasonably priced?

Nonetheless these figures are helpful. Basic enforcement of licensing and mooring permits seem to be where the 'easy money' is, if

anywhere, and chasing those debts should be made the enforcement teams' first priority. Many NABO members and other boaters are on modest and fixed incomes but pay their dues on time by one of the recognised methods. For those in genuine difficulties I have always found that individual payment agreements can be negotiated and, provided that the boater then sticks to what has been agreed, BW will try to reach a reasonable accommodation. NABO supports all reasonable action to pursue those few who just won't pay, no matter what. Thanks should also be offered to BW's frontline enforcement staff for the difficult job you do - keep at it.

First canal adoption scheme

BW has teamed up with Bradford-based charity, Joint Activities & Motor Education Service (JAMES) in the first waterway adoption scheme of its type in Yorkshire.

BW has produced a Waterway Adoptions Handbook, available at www.waterscape.com/volunteer. Groups or businesses interested in finding out more about waterway towpath adoptions should contact volunteer@britishwaterways.co.uk. Waterway Watch May 25th.

A two-mile stretch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal between Bingley and Shipley, including the Grade I Listed Bingley Five Rise Locks, the Saltaire world heritage site and Dowley Gap aqueduct will be adopted. JAMES will work alongside BW staff for an initial period of one year, with the option to continue if successful.

The new waterway adoption schemes aim to engage people with their waterways. Local businesses and groups are being encouraged to adopt a local stretch of canal or river and take part in a variety of tasks to care for them and bring those all-important 'added extras' to the waterways, including towpath repairs; painting lock gates; repairing or installing benches and fencing; recording and improving wildlife habitats; promoting the waterway to other local people and guided walks. Paul House, Waterway Supervisor for the Leeds & Liverpool said: "There's

a great deal of public support out there for the canals and we now need to embrace that to safeguard them for the future. We're really excited to be working with such an established charity group as JAMES and it's great that they've seized an opportunity like this to encourage young people to care for their local waterside environment. The tasks that the group are working on are fun, active and will bring additional improvements to our yearly maintenance programme." Kevin Metcalfe, Operations Manager for JAMES said: "This canal adoption scheme is a great opportunity for our young people to gain valuable work experience in an interactive way in order to 'up skill' themselves before moving onto employment. Our office is located next to the canal so having an increased sense of ownership will give us a sense of pride that we're making a real difference to our environment for the benefit of others."

Black oil everywhere? Engine on the blink?

Nationwide breakdown and recovery on all UK inland waterways.

Retainer Cover

Registers the boat as the Member and therefore all users of the vessel are covered. Entitles you to same level of service and priority but pay on use. Breakdown and assistance charged at a flat rate of £40 per callout. No Replacement Parts Cover. Recovery is charged at £35 per hour. We will attend location of breakdown, assess and clarify the problem, rectify and repair the cause if possible. If the breakdown is terminal or requires extensive repair, the owners will be offered the opportunity to be towed to the nearest recommended marina or one of their own choice within two hours cruising time.

Cost £55

Bronze Cover

Breakdown assistance and recovery for registered boat and member only — member must be onboard during a breakdown. If the repair of an outboard motor is not possible, RCR provide a pick up and drop off service to take the outboard to a specialist for repairs. Maximum of 4 call-outs in any 1 year. No crew conveyance. Replacement Parts Cover. **Cost £130**

Silver Cover

As Bronze, plus breakdown assistance and recovery including home-start for registered Vessel plus one other user. If your craft is diagnosed as having a terminal breakdown, RCR will convey you and up to five other passengers to your home address or marina. Maximum of two relays in one year. Seven call-outs in any one year. Member can register one other user. The member or the registered user must be onboard the vessel during a breakdown. **Cost £155**

Gold Cover

As Silver plus Annual inspection of registered vessel, engine and electrical system. Boat covered for any user or Member covered on any vessel. Unlimited call-outs for member or vessel. **Cost £210.**

Full details and terms and conditions of this offer visit the RCR website or phone on 0870 2008021 (geographic number 01785 785680).

www.rivercanalrescue.co.uk

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Slow boat on the Thames

Simon Robbins, a self-confessed 'ditch-crawler', enjoys the Thames but is less happy returning to canals

First published in Simon's personal blog: liveaboard-forum.blogspot.com/

The relative silence for a few weeks can in part be excused by what we in NABO Council call 'always a valid excuse for not...': I've been away boating! Onboard a Dutch Barge on the Thames from Goring back to London, it's good to remember that despite all the blustering here, getting out on the waterways in a boat is ultimately what makes sense of it all. I am a confirmed 'ditch-crawler' as some like to label those of us who predominantly cruise the canal network. My experience on the Thames consists of taking my daughter on a boat trip from Westminster to Hampton Court fifteen year ago and a few days crewing a boat from Abingdon up to the South Oxford Canal. A week on the Thames was definitely a new world, and surprise surprise, confirmed a lot of prejudices!

Nowhere on the Thames did I see any significant disrepair to the

navigation. The boating facilities I encountered were without exception immaculate and a tribute to the frontline EA staff and the wider river community. While the Thames shows conspicuous wealth among some boaters and riparian owners we also met much more modest folk enjoying the river in an amazing range of craft types from a £120 dinghy to a top of the range seagoing cruiser, people we met afloat were courteous and welcoming. The natural environment is almost without exception stunning...

Then we returned to the canal:

- Hanwell Flight badly leaking and poorly hung lock gates, two half empty pounds with us and another boat crew having to run water to prevent grounding.
- A long term moorer we approached for info on water levels and where it was safe to stay overnight bemoaned the frequency with which his mooring pound lost water (more running water to make sure).
- A huge amount of floating debris including tree logs waiting for us in the lower pound where the River Brent joins the canal
- The beginning of the Paddington Pound between Norwood and Bulls Bridge with barely enough depth to get a 3 foot draught barge through on tickover.
- Significant stretches of the Paddington Arm with overgrown vegetation and little sign of recent tree management.

No wonder that many Thames boaters are hostile to the thought of being amalgamated with a re-branded BW. They are quite right to stand their ground if our welcome back into the canal network is anything to go by!

Thames photos by John and Fiona Slee



Have Your Say

Letters to the Editor

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

Need for a Waterways Ombudsman

I liked the article on the Lee & Stort local moorings strategy. Your point under "Implications for other boaters", that a mix of mooring periods and areas are needed, reminded me that one of the legal undertakings BW gave during the negotiations over the 1994 BW Bill (later passed as the 1995 Act) was that wherever mooring restrictions are imposed, a mix of temporary moorings of different durations shall be provided. This, and all the other undertakings relating to the 1995 Act, is in NABO's records. I am quite proud of this one as I thought of it and persisted in securing its inclusion! I found it was a very useful point to throw at Waterway Managers, as most of them were not aware of it.

Assuming NABO will reply to DEFRA's consultation paper on the NWC, there is a further item that should be included. That is to say that the NWC should put in place an Ombudsman

scheme very similar to the present one, with an appointment/oversight committee along the lines of the current one, and that the scheme should be a member of the BIOA (British & Irish Ombudsman Association). The latter is important because any member scheme has to comply with certain standards, including ones on independence. The present WOC is making a submission to DEFRA along these lines, but the more responses that include it, the better. The relevant consultation questions are 7 and 22. At present, although the DEFRA paper mentions the Ombudsman scheme in passing, there is no obligation on the NWC to have one, as BW introduced its scheme voluntarily, not because of any statutory requirement.

Finally, I loved Terry Loma's letter on the correspondence with Simon Greer. He expressed my views better than I could!

Best wishes
Peter Lea





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