



# NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners  
Issue 1 — January 2012



**VOTING FOR CRT COUNCIL**

**NABO's Stephen Peters stands for election**

**PARLIAMENTARY WATERWAYS GROUP MEETING**

**Government report on the future of the waterways**

**NABO JOINS THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

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# NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

Issue 1 January 2012

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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](mailto:nabonews@nabo.org.uk)

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## Next NABO News Copy Date

Please email or post your contributions by 10 March 2012



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## Front Cover Photo Competition

**Icebreaking on the cut**— This month's cover photo taken at Great Heywood by John Slee.

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.

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## NABO Calendar 2012

The following are the proposed dates for Council Meetings in 2012;  
Saturday March 3rd, Saturday April 14th,  
Wednesday May 30th, Saturday July 7th,  
Wednesday September 5th, Saturday October 20th, Saturday November 17th (AGM), Saturday December 1st.

The Council meetings are at the Waggon and Horses, Church St., Oldbury, West Midlands B69 3AD.

Remember that members are welcome to attend meetings—just let the Secretary or Chairman know in advance, contact details opposite.

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FREEPOST (BM8367), Birmingham B31 2BR Editor: Peter Fellows

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## Peter gets a set of crayons

Editor **Peter Fellows** unveils the new look colour issue and colours in the waterways issues.

**H**opefully, the first thing you will notice about this issue of NABO News is the colour: this is our first full-colour issue, and I would like to thank NABO Council for agreeing to the extra resources needed for the printing. I hope you agree that the colour really brings the articles to life.

The Council believes that NABO News is important to members: not only is it the most tangible benefit that most people get for their subscriptions, but it is also a forum to exchange views and opinions, and of course to get up-to-date reliable information on what's happening on the waterways. I am pleased to get a steady stream of correspondence for each issue and I would encourage you to write in if you have something to say that would interest other readers.

Still on communication, John Slee has been busy updating the NABO website: his article describes how those of you who have made it into the electronic age can now use Facebook and Twitter to follow NABO. There is no shortage of news this month, with the election of boaters to the CRT Council about to take place. NABO's candidate, Stephen Peters, has also been endorsed by The Boating Association and he has written an article on his manifesto in this issue. I would urge ALL members who have a 12-month licence to vote in the election: IWA has cheekily put up four candidates for the four boaters' places on the CRT Council; I think a wider representation is needed and your vote could really count.

As NABO enters its 21st year, Tony Haynes has been looking back at early newsletters and has written the first of a series of articles high-

lighting some of the waterways' issues in 1992. In other articles, David Fletcher warns of possible water shortages this year—timely if you are now planning your cruises, and Andy Colyer mourns a missed opportunity for the K&A Steering Group. There is a report of a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Waterways Group, which Geoffrey Rogerson attended and offers his own 'take' on the event.

Finally, my grateful thanks to the six (yes, six!) members who have volunteered to be proof-readers for the newsletter. This is a great response to my appeal for help in the last issue and they will hopefully be able to correct my haphazard punctuation and also spot the occasional howler that creeps in from time to time.

Thank you also to another member who has volunteered to help with NABO's membership database, to Paul Cussens for his amusing boat name and to other readers who have sent photos—keep them coming. The Association would still like more help, particularly for people to attend local BW user group meetings, to help support and organise the Boaters' Roadshows that NABO is planning, or to help on the stand at rallies and festivals. If you would prefer to help from the comfort of your armchair, we need people to read and comment on information from navigation authorities, and to prepare publicity materials and press releases.

And of course there remain vacancies on NABO Council that we would very much like to see filled, preferably by people who are not 50-something and male!(although if these are your specifications you can still apply!).

*Happy boating.*

# CRT deal done

A very important year ahead for the canal system, **David Fletcher** examines NABO's role in these changing times.

Last month I wrote optimistically that the CRT deal with Defra would be settled by Christmas. But it proved not to be, with a number of delays leading to a slippage. The Public Bodies Bill took longer to pass and was only made into law just before Christmas. The negotiations on the deal have taken longer, probably no bad thing, and now we see a 15-year deal of £39m each year, escalated in part, with some performance related extras and £25m cash up front. Is it enough? Only time will tell, but those whom we trust and are in the know say: yes it is. BW has made an offer for us to look at the background information on costs and asset condition, and we will be taking them up on this as soon as it can be arranged. I understand the

contract between Defra and CRT is tough both ways, and to the extent that this is intended to drive the behaviour of the Trustees and the Executive, I wouldn't expect anything less. I am convinced that this is a workable deal, and I believe that we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to make a radical change and get long-term financial stability for the BW system. I ask you to support it.

So all this, and the Transfer Order, has to be laid before Parliamentary Committees in both Houses, and we should expect that there is scrutiny and support in equal measure. This is another chance for us to lobby MPs with your views to make sure they are energised to make this happen by June, which is the target for launch. Please do use your influence.

## Stop Press

As this issue was about to go to press we heard that there will be a new 15-year funding settlement to help secure the financial future of the CRT

DEFRA has committed to provide a £460m property endowment and £390m of funding for the next ten years.

## Winter Morning on the Grand Union

Photo: Matt Smith



There are many details becoming available, and there is no time to include more than these few words in this issue. Please look at the website, and a full explanation will be in the next issue of NABO News.

Just before Christmas, Defra reported back on the second consultation on the CRT. The issues covered were some of the legal matters, and NABO responded on your behalf. There is a detailed report on the response elsewhere in this issue. Most of it is routine, in that Defra made sensible suggestions, NABO supported them, and they will go ahead in the Transfer Order. One of the contentious issues was the extent to which the Freedom of Information Act would apply to CRT. NABO wants this to be so, and the really good news is that, for the organisation of the waterways (the statutory functions currently carried out by BW), this will be so. We asked for it, and we have it. The downside of FOI is that it costs money. It is beholden on us not to waste our licence money by asking frivolous questions, because in the end, it all takes manpower away from running the waterways. If you are mindful to ask a question, it could be that it is already in the public domain. I suggest that you use the web site [www.whatdotheyknow.com/body/british-waterways](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/body/british-waterways). First, you can have a look to see if the question has been already asked, and secondly, if and when you get the answer, everybody else can see it too. It makes sense.

The most immediate task for BW annual licence holders is the boater election for the CRT Council. This is an important opportunity for boaters to choose representatives to influence the early years of the charity, and make sure that the voice of principal paying customers is heard. It is really important that you vote and I ask you, please, to take the time and trouble to do so. Details of our candidate, Stephen, are elsewhere and obviously I would encourage you to vote for him. The election allows you to make further selections in order of

preference. In making these choices, I ask that you consider how a diverse selection would best represent all boaters, and therefore add credibility to the Council. Four who are just like us may not cut it. Whatever happens, NABO will work with the successful candidates to represent boaters. After all, that is what we do, day in day out.

My thoughts now turn to our membership. NABO, like many other boating organisations, is struggling for members. Council regularly considers our appeal to boaters, looking for that unique selling point. The fact is that many boaters are not prepared to pay to join a representative organisation and prefer to let somebody else do it. Many of the queries we handle are from non-members, and we take the view that providing guidance is the best advertising that we do. But we are not turning the corner, and not apparently appealing to the younger boaters.

### So what is to be done?

I think there are several things to be considered. Looking after our existing **members** is the first point. We get very few angry resignations; boaters just do not renew, and the most common comment is that 'we are going ashore'. But a few are unimpressed, and we must get better at understanding this. Two members came forward at the AGM and volunteered to follow up on these issues, and we plan to make some progress this year. Critical to this is the update of our membership records and transferring them onto a web platform. This is a major project for this year, and thanks go to John and Fi Slee for this work. The representative work we do is by a few, and the scope is limited by the hours that they can give. There is always room to spread the workload. So if you are thinking 'why doesn't NABO do this or that?', look in the mirror first because we are flat out doing what we are doing. We really need the next generation of Council members to

join us now so that they can learn the ropes before the AGM. We currently have no women members on Council. This is wrong, and does us no good at all in our representative role. So ladies, come forward, you are welcome too.

The second point is gaining new members from **referrals**. A personal recommendation is the best recruitment tool that we have and it's free, almost! Council is spending money on workshops and boat shows, and these do make a difference in providing a service to boaters and getting our name out there, but they are expensive, a heavy commitment to Council members and not cost-effective on immediate return. New recruitment is not about money; we don't need the money. It is about keeping an organisation fresh and representative. If we do not do this, we will become stale, marginalised and redundant. So please go out and find some new members, even better some younger boaters. You get a discount on your membership for new members recruited. And please do tell us if we are missing a trick.

Thirdly we have to recognise that NABO cannot do it all and we should not try. We have to work alongside other representative groups in **partnership**, to share common themes, take advantage of local or specialist knowledge and avoid duplication of effort. We already do this to some extent with similar sized organisations and you should expect this to continue. A good example is TBA's very welcome joint support of Stephen Peters for the election. Working with bigger organisations is more problematic. With half an eye on our history, we will continue to try.

Fourthly, our **communication** with members and the outside world. NABO News is very important to us as the primary output to members; we will continue to work hard on this with no intention to do away with the paper copy. With the members' support at the AGM, we have decided to print in colour and

have changed the printing arrangements. I am sure that you will tell us what you think. Please do send in your letters and news items. We want always to have a balance of interest in every edition and not just the CRT news

We have had a number of volunteers for proof reading and hopefully you will see an improvement in the standard of English and punctuation! The website is also vital to us: we are not aiming to compete with the major waterways websites and blogs, but aim to keep a steady flow of items of interest and reference. There are other social networking platforms out there which are new to Council and maybe to members too. I am keen to try Twitter as another way to communicate with our membership. How this will go I have no idea, but we must try (and particularly connect with another group of boaters). Marketing is not a strength for us all, and we need help with the presentation of our USP. We are boaters, and not that adept in getting our message across. Can you help?

Lastly is the importance of **networking** both within and outside the membership. The boating family is not that big, and it is amazing what knowledge can be gained though 'our' network. The fact that we are a small national organisation gives us very good coverage, and if we don't know someone, we usually know someone who does. Our regional representatives are front line in this. Do you know who your local representative is? Can you help with providing local knowledge or attending user group meetings or even standing for the Regional Partnership? And we know who to ring when there is a query. Is this you?

So there are five key words: members, referrals, partnership, communication and networking. This is my plan for sustainable membership.

Another most interesting year is in front of us. I look forward to getting back to the standard issues of licence terms, dredging and blocked moorings. *Happy days!*

Stephen Peters stands for the CRT Council

# Our man on the inside

## NABO and TBA support Stephen Peters for CRT Council

NABO treasurer **Stephen Peters** makes his election statement

I am grateful to The Boating Association (TBA) for its support and co-sponsorship with NABO for the upcoming election to the CRT Council.

I gave considerable thought to what I should include in my election statement, which may be just one of dozens that will be sent out to electors in February. It reflects my considerable experience as an active, practical boat owner and volunteer involved in the inland waterways.

### **Eminently qualified by experience**

I have been a boat owner since 1989 with a Seamaster 30 motor cruiser 'Nattajack' based on the River Severn. I have been a NABO Council member since its early days (for the past 18 years)—I could have said longer than anyone else, but that makes me feel old! I am currently the Hon. Treasurer and Rivers Secretary. I am also a member of RYA, Avon Navigation Trust, RNLI (Governor), Railway & Canal Historical Society, Cruising Association and Seamaster Club.

My experience of canal restoration includes being Hon. Secretary of Droitwich Canals Trust in the 1980s; I also have experience of local government as an elected district councillor for 12 years and currently as an independent county councillor and parish councillor representing my home area.

### **Representing all boaters**

I intend to represent the interests of ALL boaters, irrespective of lifestyle, including broad beam and river users. My knowledge of waterway legislation, byelaws, Acts of Parliament, technical issues, Boat Safety Scheme and local planning should be of value to the CRT Council and I will



**Boat owner since 1989** with a Seamaster 30 motor cruiser "Nattajack" based on the River Severn. Council member of **National Association of Boat Owners (NABO)** for the past 18 years—currently Hon Treasurer and Rivers Secretary.

Member of **RYA, Avon Navigation Trust, RNLI (Governor), Railway & Canal Historical Society, Cruising Association and Seamaster Club.**

Experience of **canal restoration**— Hon Secretary of Droitwich Canals Trust in 1980's;

**Local Government**- elected district councillor for 12 years, currently Independent county councillor and parish councillor representing home area.

I intend to represent the interests of **ALL boaters**, irrespective of lifestyle, including broad beam and river users. My knowledge of waterway legislation, byelaws, Acts of Parliament, technical issues, Boat Safety Scheme and local planning should be of value to the CRT Council and I will strive to ensure that the Trust makes sound decisions in the interests of **all who navigate the waterways.**



strive to ensure that the Trust makes sound decisions in the interests of all who navigate the waterways.

I want to give boat owners a real choice in this election. No one organisation should have a monopoly of representation on the new Council. The views of NABO members and independent boat owners who belong to no specific association are all worthy of a seat on Council. However, it is important to vote for a candidate who has links with the broad spectrum of boating, rather than someone pursuing a narrow, personal agenda. I am grateful to my colleagues for endorsing my candidacy to enable me to speak up for all of you.

My chosen boat is a river cruiser and if elected I will always ensure that broad beam boats and river users are not neglected by the CRT. At the same time, I intend to fairly represent the wide range of other boaters who are customers of CRT. This will include narrowboat owners, continuous cruisers, charity and community boats and people whose boats are their homes—including those who are eligible to vote in this election and those who find themselves excluded by the rules. Each has his or her own problems and concerns which must be taken into account by the CRT Council and Trustees.

### **Making the CRT accountable**

Over the years I have witnessed the launch of a host of policy initiatives and public consultations from British Waterways. The same issues have arisen time and again, often without any final resolution and in many cases without addressing the ongoing concerns of boat owners. This cannot be allowed to continue and the new CRT must not be the existing BW in the guise of a charity. I support the Boaters' Manifesto and endorse its key points.

Make no mistake, waterways issues and their solutions ultimately require political (with a small 'p')

decisions. The CRT Council will be a broad church comprising a number of vested and competing interests. A successful Council will need members who can represent their own constituencies with vigour and strong argument, while recognising diversity and the reality that compromise and co-operation will sometimes be necessary if the CRT is to succeed. And it must succeed—this is the 'only show in town' and it demands our full support and involvement. The future of our pastime depends upon its success.

I am standing for election solely to represent the interests of private boat owners and navigation—not businesses or ramblers or anglers or nature conservationists. They will all have their own representatives on Council and they will undoubtedly campaign for their own sectors. But I am not insensitive to the needs and concerns of other users. If the waterways are to survive and flourish, all interest groups need to work together and respect each other's views.

### **Ensuring future funding**

The ultimate success and indeed survival of the CRT depends on its securing adequate new sources of finance to supplement funding from central government and the income from property and boat licences. In the current economic environment this is not going to be easy but it is incumbent on every elected Council member to act responsibly and to promote the wider interests of the CRT whilst safeguarding the investments and lifestyles of those who have elected them. The incorporation of The Waterways Trust into CRT must not result in the diversion of much-needed funds away from maintaining the waterway network.

The CRT is not perfect and it will require much improvement in future years. The existing management will need to adopt a new mind-set in the post-nationalisation era. This election is not perfect and many boat owners have been excluded from

### **Nominations for the CRT Council**

CRT has confirmed that 33 boaters, six boating businesses and nine employees are standing for election to the Council.

- Voting on Wednesday 8 February
- Voting closes on Friday 9 March
- Election results announced on Monday 12 March
- First meeting of the Council to take place in the week commencing 26 March.

### **The CRT election process**

Elections will use a single transferable vote and be run by the independent Electoral Reform Services. You can vote by post, phone or on-line. You will receive a ballot pack shortly at the address that you have registered with BW. If you have also registered an email address with BW, you will receive your ballot pack via email as well. It will contain details on how to vote including:

- A form to complete and return by post
- A phone number which you can call to register your vote
- A web address to visit where you can cast your vote.

Stephen Peters stands for the CRT Council

participating due to the strictures regarding possession of 12-month licences. The election process will need to be revised for the future and if EA navigations are eventually incorporated, the representation quota for boaters will have to be increased considerably. The precise role of the CRT Council is unclear but the private boater members must be prepared to speak out in support of boating and navigation.

#### **NABO support the FOI Act**

I am pleased that DEFRA has decided that the CRT will be required to be open and transparent in its dealings with the public and must comply with disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. NABO took that view during the consultation process, unlike another national association and the CRT itself. It is the right decision and I support it having personally successfully persisted in obtaining licensing information from the EA and Broads Authority, despite their reluctance and the intervention of the Information Commissioner. I am all for openness and accountability and I will keep a close eye on such matters if elected to the CRT Council.

During the passage of the BW Act 1995, I personally lobbied Parliament to object to certain clauses which

I felt were contrary to the interests of boat owners, particularly the ill-considered Boat Safety aspects. I subsequently played a major role in persuading the BSS to carry out a major review of the scheme, which benefited all boat owners. I intend to pursue similar campaigns where I consider boaters are not receiving a fair deal.

#### **Open to your views**

If I am successful in this election, I will be available to listen to the views of other boat owners and take up issues where appropriate. You will not find me airing my views on public websites, social networks, blogs or chatrooms—that is not my style. Rather, I prefer to speak to people, listen to what they say and then take stock before acting. I will not pursue a narrow personal agenda, but will try to represent all private boat owners. Years of experience of waterways and local government have convinced me that this is the best way to achieve success. I have a wealth of knowledge and an extensive archive of canal-related documents, Acts of Parliament, byelaws, legal opinions, etc. to help me to represent all boaters. Please give me your vote by placing a number '1' against my name on the ballot paper and I promise to do my best on your behalf.



## News

## BW Licence increase

From April 2012, all boat licence fees will increase by 6.4%. This is part of the three-year increases of 2% above the Consumer Prices Index, announced in 2010.

## New Partnership Chair

The Canal & River Trust has announced that Jack Hegarty will be the chair of the new South Wales & Severn Waterway Partnership. Jack has been managing director of Wychavon District Council since 2004 and was previously its head of planning. He has more than 25 years of experience working in local councils and worked on the restoration of the Droitwich Canals in Worcestershire for 11 years. Jack said: "The canals and rivers in this region have a fascinating history and are a real asset to our communities today. I welcome the opportunity to enable local people and organisations to have a real say in supporting their improvement and development."

## New mail box service



Letters Unlimited is run by boaters for boaters to forward mail to anywhere in the UK. On the 1st and 15th of each month, you receive a text message (e.g. U have 3 letters. Where do we send?) and the mail is forwarded to the

address supplied. To suit your cruising schedule this can be any UK Post Office or Post Restante address and it can be different every fortnight. All mail is held until you advise of your next address. Another text message is sent when the mail is forwarded in a plain Jiffy bag. There are three levels of service: Basic—6 months' service is £60 +VAT, the Premium service for 12 months is £110 +VAT, and the Spot Box service is a one-off use for £10 +VAT. A free OSE (open, scan and email) service is designed for mail you need to see the day it arrives. You advise by phone, text or e-mail to intercept a specific letter and Letters Unlimited will OSE it to you on the same day.

For further information phone 07860 688134, e-mail [lettersunlimited@uko2.co.uk](mailto:lettersunlimited@uko2.co.uk) or see the website at [www.lettersunlimited.co.uk](http://www.lettersunlimited.co.uk)

## Discovering Britain

Every landscape has a story to tell about our past and present. This new website is developing a series of geographically-themed walks across the country that aim to bring these stories alive and to inspire everyone to explore and learn more about our landscapes.

Each walk explores the way in which the forces of nature, people, events and the economy have created what you see today. The walks are mostly 2-3 hour excursions suitable for all ages and abilities, and are illustrated at points of interest along the route. A 'walk profile' on the website contains information about the walk and you can view the route and the stopping points and look at a photo gallery of images.

### Bath Bristol Cycle Path

Currently the only one of direct interest to canal enthusiasts is a walk in the Avon Valley between Bath and Bristol. Half-way along, in Salford village, there are four different routes: a former stagecoach road, the Great Road, the K&A canal and two railway lines—Brunel's Great Western Railway and the now-defunct Midland Line, which was converted into Britain's first Sustrans cycle track in the 1980s.

Further information is available at [www.discoveringbritain.org](http://www.discoveringbritain.org) or from Dr Jenny Lunn, Discovering Britain Project Manager, Royal Geographical Society, [j.lunn@rgs.org](mailto:j.lunn@rgs.org).

## Waterways World Back Issues

NABO News has been contacted by member Barry Mears who has copies of Waterways World dating from 1994 to about two years ago that he no longer needs. He lives in Birmingham and keeps his boat on the Saltsford Arm, Warwick. He is going to sell them on eBay but if any NABO member wants them please get in touch. Tel: 0121 783 6285



## NABO joins the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Do you use Facebook or Twitter to keep in touch? If you do, **John Slee** explains how you can now include NABO in your list of Groups or Twitter users you are following..



### Facebook

Don't be distracted by the National Association of Boat Owners Interest, under Pages. The one to join is the National Association of Boat Owners Group. You will recognise its authenticity by the NABO logo. Press 'Join This Group' and when you have done so, please write on our Wall, so your other friends get to know about us.

### Twitter

In 'Who to Follow', search for NABO\_Official (note the underline( \_ ) between 'NABO' and

'Official') and click 'Follow'. Then please re-tweet anything you think your Followers would be interested in, to increase the number of our Followers.

Finally, a quick reminder that, as part of our on-line membership project, we'll be making your address and other contact details available to you to keep up to date on your website profile—it will be hidden from everyone else. For more details, see Issue 7 December 2011 of NABO News. And thank you if you have posted an email address update through the website. We'll be posting News on Facebook and Twitter as well as the updates to our website.



## Update: Isis Lock



Following NABO's response to the two consultations about the Isis Lock booms and pontoon (last issue) BW invited John Slee to an on-site meeting together with Mark Boardman from 'Dusty', John Temple and Mike Stanley from College Cruisers. It was a useful meeting, giving him the opportunity to clarify things from a boater's point of view. As a result BW, Oxford County Council and EA are going to install the height restriction between the booms and, subject to agreement from the Conservation Officer, BW will:

- Investigate installing a ramp at the lock end of the pontoon (one of our suggestions) and hopefully in the first few months of 2012.
- Install a remotely-triggered red warning light by the lock with a sign before the footbridge to say that when the red light shows there are strong stream conditions on the Thames to replace the board that is currently put up and removed by a BW operative.



- Remove temporary A4 signs from the balance beams.
- Create a permanent sign to be displayed lockside, showing 5 steps for turning a boat using the pontoon. These will be drawn to scale and modified from the original, as agreed after the consultation and meeting. This will replace the visitor information sign, which will be re-sited.
- Replace the cleats on the pontoon with bollards which allow ropes to be pulled tight or loosened as necessary. Small notices will indicate which bollard a 50', 60' or 70' boat should use for the bow rope in order to swing round safely.
- Correct the sign at Duke's Cut which indicates that the winding limit is 52' (it is 50').
- Reinstate renovated EA's strong stream warning signs at Duke's Cut.
- Write to EA to request them to provide instructions for removing a boat which has been swept against the boom.

# Bramble at Stourport

## Help for historic canal boat

**A**n appeal has been launched to restore the historic canal boat 'Bramble' at Stourport Canal Basins.

The boat was donated by BW to local group, Stourport Forward, whose volunteers plan to refurbish it for educational use and possibly boat trips. Some of the volunteers also give their time to the BW Historic Working Fleet, so they are able to bring their heritage expertise to the project.

The appeal aims to raise enough money to give the boat a new propshaft, carry out mechanical and electrical work and provide new covers and fenders. The volunteers

also intend to repaint the boat and furnish the interior with historical replica items.

Her length has changed a number of times during her lifetime; starting at 72 feet, then down to 40 feet, and then to her current length of 68 feet. She was originally used to transport clay, coal, timber and grain.

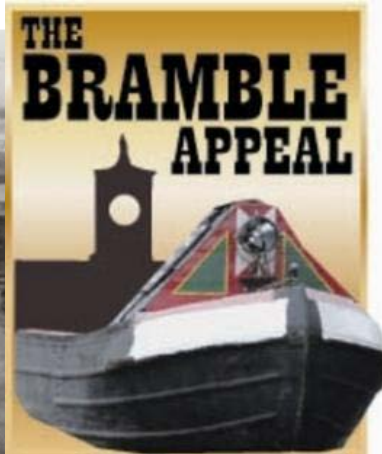
Jim Amos, the Stourport Forward volunteer in charge of the appeal said: "Visitors will be able to see the way that the boat would have been furnished, learn about what it was like to live in tiny living quarters, and experience the physical labour involved in working a canal boat in times past."

If you can help with materials for Bramble's refurbishment, contact Jennifer on 01562 633346.

If you would like to donate to the appeal, please make cheques payable to 'Stourport Forward Ltd' and send them to Jennifer Meierhans, The Shuttle, 6 Towers Buildings, Blackwell Street, Kidderminster DY10 2DY.

Please include your contact details as Stourport Forward would like to respond with letters of thanks to all those supporting the appeal.

Waterway Watcher  
January 10th



Bramble in working days and as it lies now.



# Parliamentary Waterways Group

## A communiqué on the future of the inland waterways

A future hearing of the All Party Group is likely to take place early in 2012.



Richard Benyon,  
Waterways Minister

The All Party Parliamentary Waterways Group held a hearing on 8 December to provide the Waterways Minister, Richard Benyon, with the opportunity to respond to the Group's Memorandum The Future of the Waterways, which was submitted to the Government in July, focussing on governance and financing for the CRT. The Memorandum was prepared to provide a Parliamentary response to Defra's consultation A New Era for the Waterways. The hearing also gave the Minister and the charity's Transition Trustees the opportunity to provide a broader report on progress to deliver a fully operational charity in 2012.

### Governance and funding

The Minister reported that progress had been made on governance for the Trust. There was now a target for 50% of the Council to be elected over time. The Trustees had decided that other means of raising funds and stimulating voluntary giving were more effective for fundraising than a formal membership.

Richard Benyon said that negotiations on Government funding for the Trust had not yet concluded. Negotiations were complex, including issues of adequate maintenance of the canal network, mitigation of possible future liabilities arising from environmental or other legislative requirements, and the staff's pension arrangements. He stressed that the Government was committed to a sustainable and prosperous future for the waterways, and that it wanted to give the Trust the best possible start that it could.

### Waterways classification

The IWA had raised concerns about proposed amendments to the system for classifying waterways in

the Transport Act 1968: it was concerned that the Trust would seek to reclassify 'cruising' waterways to 'remainder' waterways. The Minister gave an assurance that any application from the Trust to reclassify a waterway would be subject to a full cost-benefit analysis and wide consultation with those likely to be affected. These mechanisms would help to ensure a robust and transparent process on a re-classification of any of the charity's waterways. In answer to specific questions from members of the All Party Group, he added that he did not want or expect to see closures of any waterways. The Government wanted the existing network to be both maintained and enhanced, and in the medium-term there was scope for a reduction in the percentage of assets that were in poor and very poor condition.

### CRT Transition Trustees

Tony Hales said that commercial activity would be the most significant income contributor and that the Trustees were comfortable about the future prospects for this. Trustees were also confident about forecasts for the contribution for voluntary income and donations, which were expected to reach £6-8m after ten years. There were also potential contributions by other Government departments, local government and bodies such as Transport for London and the Olympic Delivery Authority. He reiterated the view of the Trustees that the £39 million per annum offered initially by Government was not enough. The overall finance package needed to secure the network's assets in the long term; ensure that day-to-day maintenance and dredging were carried out; and that pensions were safeguarded. The Trustees had a duty to satisfy the Charity Commission that the Trust

was sustainable. Lynne Berry reported that public benefit had been evaluated at around £500 million but that didn't fully reflect issues such as the social return and wellbeing benefit. Trustees were currently developing the public benefit model to embrace these wider issues.

## Other issues

### Heritage

There is a museums representative on the Council, who would report on developments for museums and visitor attractions. The storage and accessibility of paper and electronic archives are a significant cost. The Trust would aim to make the archives available and it was an issue that needed to be settled for the future.

### Income

The Trust's long-term commercial plans are subject to an element of confidentiality but there is potential for water cooling for buildings sited near the network and opportunities from micro power generation at weirs and locks.

### Property valuation

BW property values were assessed annually according to the 'Red Book' and this is reviewed by Grant Thornton (the BW auditors). It was regarded as a robust valuation.

### After the meeting, Geoffrey Rogerson has the following observations:

1. The meeting was well attended.
2. Most importantly, Robin Evans came over and shook hands with me and I wished him a Merry Christmas!
3. The Minister attended the meeting for about 15 minutes, during which time his contribution was that the funding had not been agreed and would be decided in the New Year. In addition the FOI would be either all, part or nothing. I now believe it is part. Should there be a dry winter following the previous dry summer and winter there may well be closures. As a result it is not possible to guarantee cruiseway status. The pension situation has still not been agreed.
4. A typical question to the minister: 'I am very concerned regarding the heritage aspect of the canals.' Response: 'We are very aware of the need to care for the canal heritage!'
5. Lynne Berry repeated her comments from the NABO AGM that money (i.e. £6 million) may well be forthcoming over the next six years (by which time she will no doubt be gone to pastures new... or the House of Lords).
6. Everybody is co-operating furiously and being very positive ... and it is all very exciting!
7. I came away feeling quite depressed!!

### Trust Governance

It was thought that the volunteer-led Trust would be open to future evolution as necessary.

Alun Michael closed the proceedings commenting that it was not unheard of for charities to go wrong, volunteer-led or otherwise. It would not be an easy transition. It was going to be very challenging and there was profound interest from MPs on all sides of the House, and general support for the proposed model.



Support your floating retailers—Monarch and Grimsby spotted on the Trent and Mersey canal south of Stone

## News

I name  
this boat...

Have you spotted a boat name that made you smile? If so please let me have a photo to use in future issues.

Thanks to Paul Cussens for this one.

He comments, "Here is a picture of our boat 'Moor and Peace'. We very often get comments on the name from passing boaters and walkers."



<b>FOR SALE</b>	<b>NAVY DANCER</b>
	<b>READY TO CRUISE</b>
<p>BOTTOM BLACKED EVERY TWO YEARS. LAST BLACKED ON 1st JUNE 2011 LICENSED TO END APRIL 2012 MOORINGS PAID UNTIL END FEB. 2012 BOAT SAFETY CERTIFICATE VALID UNTIL 2ND AUGUST 2015</p> <p><b>£ 39,950 o.n.o</b> <b>01925 831795</b> tommy.gough@talktalk.net</p>	<p>50 FOOT 10-6-4 1995 NARROWBOAT ISUZU 25 ENGINE NEW IN MID 2009 230 HOURS SINCE NEW RE PAINTED END OF 2009. NEW SERVICE BATTERIES MID 2010</p> <p></p> <p>PHOTOS TAKEN APRIL 2011</p>

## Boat for sale

NABO members, Betty and Tommy Gough are selling their boat because as they say "at our ages, 79 and 76, we are finding that lift and swing bridges and even paddle gear are taxing our strength, leaving us knackered when we moor up. We advertised it in the middle of last year and on a new website; [www.iwcnb.co.uk/1932tg.php](http://www.iwcnb.co.uk/1932tg.php) that will charge 4% with no VAT on the sale. Though we are still fit enough to carry on for a year or two on easy canals, we feel that we ought to sell now while the boat is in such a good condition."

## Ribble Link

BW has now decided that the draught limit on the Ribble Link will be 2 feet 9 inches (84cm) rather than the 2 feet previously.

## Help with NABO News

Many thanks to the six volunteers who have offered to help by proofreading the text for NABO News. A great response and much appreciated

*Peter Fellows*



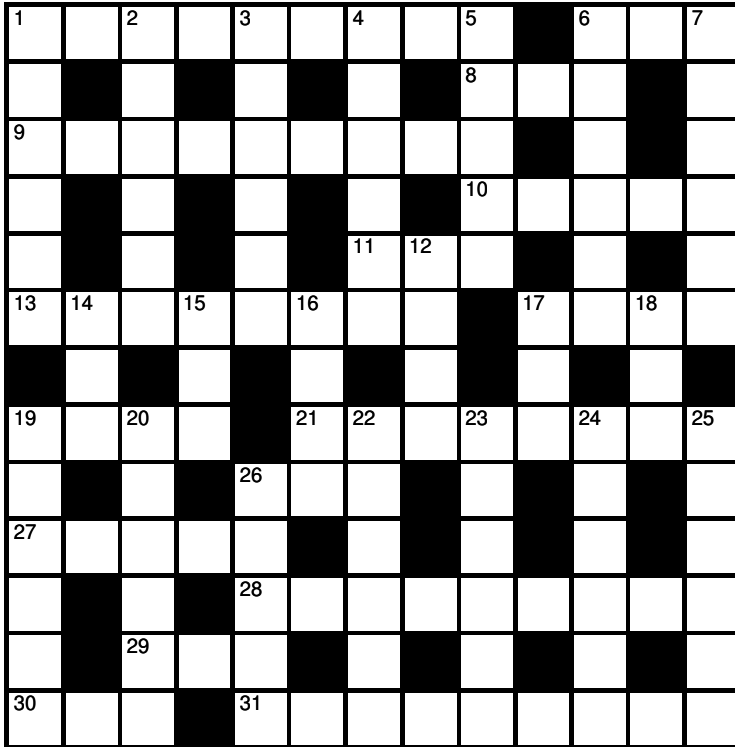
## Someone's just sold BW some surplus yellow paint

From the Alternative British Waterways site at [www.bridge26.demon.co.uk/alternativebw.html](http://www.bridge26.demon.co.uk/alternativebw.html).



# NABO NEWS CROSSWORD N° 4

By Canaldrifter



## Answers to Crossword N° 3

**Across:** 1 Nabo News, 5 Presents, 10 Christmas, 11 Ad-lib, 12 Well, 14 Yuletide, 17 Lugs, 18 Usance, 20 Iver, 23 Submarine, 26 Urethra, 27 Ogres, 29 Bail out, 30 Gateforth, 33 Apes, 35 Eugene, 37 Year, 38 Gangways, 41 Sons, 42 Eat up, 44 Crossword, 45 Skerries, 46 Stands by.

**Down:** 1 Nicholas, 2 Boroughbridge, 3 Nosey, 4 Slaving, 6 Rowed, 7 Seal, 8 Nil, 9 Subpoena, 12 Wide, 13 Leu, 15 User, 16 Anchorpersons, 19 Sheaf, 21 Verge, 22 Rust, 24 Aoom, 25 Iota, 28 Eastwards, 29 Breakers, 31 Easy, 32 Heraldry, 34 Pens, 36 Ego, 39 Anode, 40 Susan, 41 Spar, 43 The.

### Across

- 1 Fishy record for Gen. Sec.? (9)
- 6 Current reading from a torn chart (3)
- 8 Wood for a tiller, we hear? (3)
- 9 Whirlpool breaks a man in a bad storm (9)
- 10 Maybe the ex Minutes Sec. is in this edition (5)
- 11 And more die from deceit (3)
- 13 Seaman from an iron yard? Not unusual (8)
- 17 Increases Dad's potential (4)
- 19 Hill, with ill, for the blind (4)
- 21 Nil deals broken at G.U. location (8)
- 26 Barrier with no safety marking in a wet place (3)
- 27 Trouble with a flag on a groyne (5)
- 28 Vessel for groovy underclothes? (5,4)
- 29 Female suffix, point to a ship (3)
- 30 23 cancels his poor internet provider, and gets title? (3)
- 31 Dunces near to staying power (9)

### Down

- 1 Approach wakefulness (4,2)
- 2 Taken in by a feeder (6)
- 3 Young officer up the pole! (6)
- 4 Artist in a winding hole? (6)
- 5 Pay on poor merit? (5)
- 6 The morning consumed and occupied (6)
- 7 Wrongly pester our Rivers Rep. (6)
- 12 Pigment negative up for note (4)
- 14 The AA of the waterways (3)
- 15 Valuable waters? (3)
- 16 Proficient seaman (4)
- 17 Be sick in a bucket, not quietly (3)
- 18 Bishop goes round the bend. What a washout! (8)
- 19 Councils on deck (6)
- 20 Relating it not, confuses 'a mug wi' a maggot' (6)
- 22 Single-handed take out hedges by non-tidal waterways? (6)
- 23 Embark either crewman (6)
- 24 Coat of peace from a war zone? (6)
- 25 Pass out and badly unconscious (6)
- 26 Ditch a merchantman surrounded by the enemy!! (5)

# CRT. What's it all about?

CRT council candidate **Stephen Peters** examines the abbreviation

The transformation of BW into the new waterways charity later this year has introduced yet another acronym into our lives. The Canal & River Trust will be known as CRT (not CART!) and during the run-up to the boaters' elections to the Council, I discovered that information on the Internet was confused by the initial letters being duplicated by many other organisations and topics. A Google or Wiki search led to more confusion: did I really want to be on the council of the Coalfields Regeneration Trust? Or the Countryside Restoration Trust? Maybe the latter but certainly not the former.

It is unclear precisely what the role of the new trust council will be and we may require Corneal Refractive Therapy to see the way ahead, or some Cognitive Retention Therapy to assist us in understanding what

it does. Maybe a Casual Relief Teacher could be brought in to train us and put us through a Criterion Referenced Test. At present it all makes about as much sense as the Chinese Remainder Theorem.

It promises to be a Creative Resources Trust and it may feature on the Cathode Ray Tube in the corner of your living room. Viewers may be surprised at the broad scope of the trust and subject to Capillary Refill Time some may require Cardiac Resynchronisation Therapy to give them the will to live. A Certified Respiratory Therapist could be of great value if the new trust takes your breath away.

If the venture fails it may become a Charitable Remainder Trust and I might take up a new pastime and join a Cycle Racing Team. If you have any views please forward them to the Comment Response Trust.



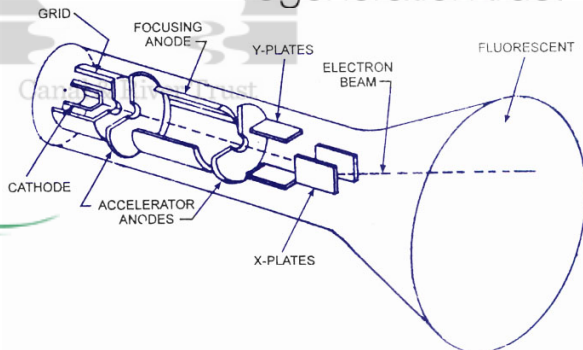
Cancer Research  
Technology

Advancing Discoveries to Beat Cancer



THE COUNTRYSIDE  
RESTORATION TRUST

the coalfields  
regeneration trust



# Kennet and Avon Steering Group Latest!

## Did some one say 'I told you so'?

NABO's rep on the committee **Andy Colyer** mourns (another) missed opportunity

**W**hat can I say? Nothing positive anyway! I held back from updating you before Christmas, as there was little to say. I informed NABO Council at our last meeting that the previous Mooring Strategy Steering Group (MSSG) meeting had been pretty good. Chaired by Mark Stephens, the K & A manager, we swiftly got to business. We covered the work from the meeting prior to the summer (!), and the issues that had arisen since, mostly the silly comment from the IWA (suggesting that the group should be working to remove liveboards from the Bath Valley over the next five years), and BW's poor response that I mentioned last time. Then we moved on to discuss enforcement, with Paul Griffin, the main officer from BW at the meeting. Some unhelpful things were said and no real information was given. His stance was that he was there to listen: OK, but we wanted to know BW's thoughts too. The meeting was wrapped up quickly, with homework for all, and the promise of another meeting.

The group was generally happy... then time drifted by again, and the next we heard was from Damian Kemp, the Project Officer, sending out a 'progression document'—for information, not discussion, which has written the group out of any further involvement in the process! So, we have all contributed to the process for over a year, struggled through and pulled together, and just as we were about to get to the point where the serious work was to be on the table, we are told (badly) that we are not needed—BW staff can do it themselves! Who needs a carefully selected group of dedicated representatives from relevant par-

ties, willing to attend meetings—the only sensible and efficient way of discussing issues? Obviously not BW! How stupid is that? I am furious! As the unaffiliated boaters say, any meaningful approach to enforcement needs the support of the whole group.

So, we now have a 'progression document', that even begins by stating tasks that were not clearly given to the MSSG at the meeting, and hands over the rest of the task to Sally Ash's crack team to consolidate and pass on to the Waterways Partnership Board. If there is any way that they think this will come with an ounce of endorsement from the MSSG they must be crazy!

What is ironic, is that when I first met Damian Kemp I was in Devizes at a meeting called by a group of concerned boaters following the mooring consultation, where we expressed serious concern with BW and its processes, and lack of democracy. New to the team, he was unaware of the histories that had made us so nervous, and said he would do his best to make sure we would be listened to. I do believe he has done his best, but, sorry, did someone say 'I told you so'?

Further information at [kanda.boatingcommunity.org.uk/wordpress/bw-to-finish-mooring-strategy-without-any-more-meetings/](http://kanda.boatingcommunity.org.uk/wordpress/bw-to-finish-mooring-strategy-without-any-more-meetings/)

19th Century graffiti in Sydney Gardens on the Kennet and Avon Canal



NABO celebrates 21 years

# Snippets from NABO News

As NABO approaches its 21st anniversary, **Tony Haynes** has gone back through old editions of newsletters and edited and abridged some quotations. Here is the first of a series of articles over coming months, from the first undated issue in 1992 when the newsletter was named 'The Boater'.

**N**ABO's lobbying pack for the BW Bill urges members to write to their MP objecting to the criminalisation of boaters who disobey BW staff, and taking away rights from riparian landowners. Owners, lessees or occupiers of any land adjoining waterways will lose their right under provisions of local Acts passed before 1900 to construct places for boats to turn, pass, moor or lie, to take water from or discharge water into waterways, to fish or use pleasure boats free of charge on the waterways. NABO objects to clause 25 (19) that the Board may dispose of remainder waterways that have been restored to cruiseway standard, but are not

reclassified as such. This restoration work has been carried out largely by voluntary labour and should be protected for the use and benefit of the public.

## August

**The Ridgacre:** The Black Country Development Corporation wants to cut off the most interesting part of the navigation by building a low-level bridge as part of the Black Country Spine Road development. BW conceded the bridge to secure the overall funding of £7m for the Walsall Canal.

**Tunnels:** We asked if the suppliers of the material that supposedly makes luminous arrows (that don't actually glow) would pay compensation to BW, but apparently not, since

BW provided the specification.

**Dredging:** The grot from Dudley Tunnel was so poisonous it had to go to a specialist tip in Bedfordshire.

**The K&A:** Through navigation is impossible due to water shortages. Local management would not agree that, due to the closure of Caen Hill flight, boaters with a limited cruising range at the western end should have a reduction in licence fee. NABO are progressing this at a higher level.

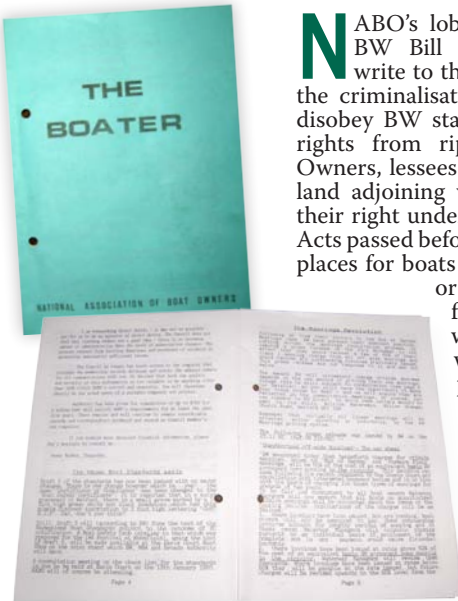
**River Safety:** An enquiry report on the Marchioness/Bowbelle disaster recommends breath tests for skippers and crews, and compulsory tests for boatmanship for those in charge of vessels above specified limits. It was noted that there were 20 incidents on the Thames from 1965-91, 19 collisions (two with bridges) and one grounding. The Bowbelle was involved in 11 of these and its sister ship, the Bow Trader, in three.

**MP Jogger:** South Derbyshire MP, Edwina Currie, frequently goes jogging along the stretch of the Trent and Mersey canal that runs through her constituency near Derby. At a meeting to discuss development of the Burton Canal Corridor, Mrs Curry was very concerned with the imposition by Europe of customs duty on diesel supplied to boats.

**Funding:** NABO believes that the under-funding of the waterways arises from a lack of appreciation by Government of the nature of the waterways asset and of the millions of people who make use of it without directly contributing to its upkeep. We believe the system should be regarded as a national park.

## September

Earliest 'News from the Committee



The first, undated, copy of The Boater, the forerunner to this magazine

Meeting' (A separate publication from The Boater)

Membership approximately 760.

A stand is available for display at waterway functions/rallies etc. thanks to a member who provided the equipment without charge. A protest rally was held at the Ridgacre.

**Fees:** BW has announced an increase of 2% across the board, which is less than inflation, and increases for the next three years will not exceed inflation. This is a victory for common sense and lobbying by NABO.

**Paddle gear:** Where top gates are replaced, they will be fitted in future with two gate paddles on each gate, which is good news.

### October

'News from the Committee Meeting'  
Membership: 849

**Consultation on moorings—a report:** It seems that BW has created many 24/48 hour visitor moorings in places where they are not necessary, because they are afraid of residential boats. BW wants to charge 50% of local mooring fees for class-one end of garden moorings. The overwhelming conclusion of users was that this is too high. BW's Chief Executive agreed that they would look at the matter again. BW wants to leave the 14-day rule open ended, with the time limit and the location being up to the Board. NABO does not believe this to be appropriate: apart from rules needing to be clear, undefined rules could be used as a means of harassment.

**Cycling:** BW's overall objective is to allow safe cycling on suitable tow-paths.

### November

**AGM:** Proposals included changing the title 'Management Committee' to 'National Council' because this is more appropriate to a national organisation and gives a better impression of the Association's standing (carried). NABO should seek to be involved in local as well as national meetings,

but should focus on issues that have national implications. It should not establish a bureaucratic structure of regional committees: such an unwieldy structure would result in a disproportionate amount of time and money being spent on internal administration rather than ensuring that members' views are voiced. Those speaking on behalf of NABO do so with one voice but this would become increasingly difficult if control was to be fragmented.

### December 'The Boater'

The Chairman, Dave Green, was delighted that the AGM confirmed that NABO should remain a campaigning organisation. So far, NABO has done well and its views are actively sought and listened to. The problem is that most boat owners are apathetic: they will complain, but when it comes to standing up and being counted they are conspicuous by their absence. NABO membership is made up of those who are prepared to get involved.

**End of garden moorings:** BW has announced that it will be charging 50% of local mooring fees. NABO deeply regrets this. BW misrepresented NABO's views in the first consultation meeting. During a second meeting, NABO expects justifiable reasons for this charge and will continue pressing for a fair structured system of pricing which is not open ended.

**BW Bill:** NABO had two meetings with BW and their Parliamentary agents, with the result that our suggested draft amendments are being considered.

**Cycling:** NABO believes that cycling on the towing path can lead to conflict with other users and suggested that an offence of 'dangerous cycling' should be introduced.

**Cutting Remarks by Troubled-water:** There are rumours that the Government wishes to privatise our canal system. If it cannot afford to fund the canals properly because of the recession, it is highly unlikely that private business will.

# Defra speaks

## Government response to consultation on CRT

**D**efra launched a second consultation in September on the detail of the Order to transfer the functions of BW in England and Wales to the CRT. The consultation closed in October and the response was published in December. This is a summary of the questions, the NABO view, and the Government response. The full Government response is available at [www.defra.gov.uk/consult/closed](http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/closed). The responses fully satisfy NABO, and we look forward to seeing the draft of the Transfer Order.

**Q:** Do you agree that the power for the Secretary of State and the Welsh Ministers to give directions on the sale of land assets will no longer be needed?

**NABO:** We agree that the powers are no longer needed.

**Response:** We will remove the Ministerial power to direct disposal of property under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980.

**Q:** Do you agree that the provisions in ss.73 to 75 of the 1962 Act and s.137 of the 1968 Transport Act are not needed?

**NABO:** We agree that the powers are no longer needed.

**Response:** We will not extend the provisions in the Transport Acts 1962 and 1968 on Employment to the CRT.

**Q:** Do you agree that the CRT should have an enhanced statutory proposer role in relation to ministerial orders on classification and maintenance of its waterways?

**NABO:** We agree that the NWC should have these powers.

**Response:** We will amend sections 104 and 105 of the Transport Act 1968 to give the CRT an enhanced 'statutory proposer' role in relation to ministerial orders on classification and maintenance of its waterways.

**Q:** Do you agree that the power of Ministers to direct the NWC under the Transport Act 1962 should be restricted to circumstances in the interests of national security?

**NABO:** We agree on the restriction of the Minister to direct.

**Response:** We will amend section 27 of the Transport Act 1962 to restrict the power of direction to circumstances in the interests of national defence.

**Q:** You are invited to indicate and explain your preferred option in relation to the proposed FOI, EIR and transparency regime.

**NABO:** We recommend that NWC should remain in the FOI scheme in accordance with option 3.

**Response:** In addition, the Government intends, also subject to Parliamentary approval, to apply the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to the CRT, in respect of all those statutory functions that the CRT will inherit from BW through the proposed Transfer Order. This limited application of the FOIA will have the effect of excluding from the provisions of the Act those broader charitable functions carried out by the CRT. It will also exclude bodies that merge with the CRT, unless the FOIA already applies or is made to apply to them at the point of merger.

**Q:** Do you agree that the disqualifications applying to members of the BW Board through the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975, Scottish Parliament (Disqualification) Order 2010, and National Assembly for Wales (Disqualification) Order 2010 should not be applied to the trustees of the NWC?

**NABO:** We agree that these disqualifications should not apply.

**Response:** We will not apply the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975; Scottish Parliament (Disqualification) Order 2010; National Assembly for Wales (Disqualification) Order 2010 or the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975 to the Trustees of the CRT.

**Q:** Do you agree with the Scottish Government's proposal that the British Waterways Board, operational solely in Scotland, should consist of a chairman, a vice chairman and between one and four other members?

**NABO:** We do not object.

**Response:** The Scottish Government confirms its intention for the British Waterways Board ..... to consist of a chair, vice chair and between one and four other members, and that it will not revise the existing quorum of three ....

**Q:** Do you agree with the Scottish Government's proposal that the British Waterways Board operating solely in Scotland should, in future, come within the scope of the following relevant Scottish legislation:

- (a) the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002;
- (b) the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004;
- (c) the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002
- (d) the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000?

**NABO:** We do not object.

**Response:** The Scottish Government confirms its intention that the British Waterways Board ..... should come under the scope of relevant Scottish legislation. In addition to the ones listed, this will include the Public Services Reform (Act) 2010 and the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011.

**Q:** Do you agree that the water abstraction legislation now in place in Scotland is sufficient such that the requirement for Ministerial consent in the Transport Act 1962 can now be repealed?

**NABO:** We offer no opinion on this matter.

**Response:** The Scottish Government confirms its intention to repeal the requirement for Ministerial consent.

“Save time and see it my way”  
from a discussion with BW on consultations.



# Water shortages in 2012?

David Fletcher looks into his crystal ball.

Top: Lock repairs on the Northampton Arm  
Bottom: The tunnel under the M1 for the Northampton arm, drained during the stoppage in January

**B**W is preparing us for a shortage of water on the system in southern and central Britain. We have experienced the driest twelve months since records began. Across parts of the South and Midlands, groundwater tables and reservoir holdings are considerably lower than normal for this time of year. BW tells us it is investing £700,000 in additional works that will make use of alternative supplies

to help replenish reservoir levels and make the available water last as long as possible. I have seen stoppage notices advising of delayed completions on the basis that further work is need to put locks into a leak-free condition. Works on the Grand Union Leicester Line, one of the worst affected canals in 2011, will include installing new gate liners on seven key locks.

Vince Moran from BW has said: "It's unlikely that these measures will solve the problem in its entirety, and we'll be working closely with boating groups, waterway businesses and volunteers throughout the winter and beyond, but by taking measures now we'll put the waterways in the best possible position for the year ahead. The key message is that we don't want anyone to panic and, at this stage, we're not advising any private or holiday hire boaters to change their cruising plans. This year is likely to be a challenge but if we all pull together and everyone plays their part I'm hopeful that we can keep things running as smoothly as possible."

NABO is very pleased that effort is put into sealing lock gates, which common sense shows has always been a need for safe operation as well as water economy. It is clear that we are going to have water problems in some areas this year. Boater behaviour plays a big part in the water consumption and we can expect to be back to the '20 minute wait' to turn a lock that I remember from the 80's. If behaviour doesn't cut it, then we can expect the padlocks to be deployed. We are going to hear a lot more about this.

*Editor: Perhaps the CRT should start recruiting some (pad)lock volunteers?*





# Letters to the Editor

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

## A reply from BW Chairman, Tony Hales.

I was disappointed to read the article in NABO News, December 2011 issue, by the boater who obviously spent some time cruising over the summer, so it is such a shame that he could only find negative points to write about. I was out most weekends during the summer at various canalside events and while I did receive many comments, which I take seriously, the vast majority were positive about peoples' experiences and their views of our staff. Whilst the network isn't in the condition that we all aspire to, the objective evidence points to a steadily improving infrastructure, which is the foundation for a sustainable future. The numbers of aqueducts, embankments, bridges and lock flights in the worst condition has fallen from over 30% to 18% in the last decade. Also, in one of the driest summers on record and with the Chasewater reservoir out of action, I believe our waterway teams did a tremendous job, aided by good technology, to ensure there was very little disruption due to water shortages. I recognise that we need to spend more on dredging, vegetation management and general maintenance but we don't have the money and, in the current economic squeeze affecting all government funding. I have investigated points raised in the letter and some of the statements are factually incorrect and others could be presented in a much more balanced way. Let me address some of them in turn:

### The lowered pound at Stourton

The waterway at this location benefits from sensors that monitor water levels 24 hours a day, seven days a week. An automated alert system notifies the duty supervisor when levels get too low or too high, including where levels are falling fast and a breach is the likely cause. Our SCADA water monitoring system triggers a 'low' alarm, indicating lowering but tolerable water levels and a 'low-low' alarm indicating where water levels are dropping at a rate requiring immediate attention. When appropriate, we always send out hit squads to respond.

I've asked for the logs to be checked for what is believed to be the night in question last June.

They show that the comments made are unfounded and unfair to the employee who was on standby and did respond at about 2am to both the call from the member of the public and the subsequent automated alerts throughout the night, which correctly indicated that water levels had dropped by 151 mm but that a breach hadn't occurred. In explaining how we respond to the different alarm signals it would have been reasonable for the duty supervisor to tell the customer that we need to be sure before sending hit squads out in the dark, as this can be risky.

### Broken top paddle at Atherstone

In the latter part of August, a BW team went to investigate and fix, if possible, a broken paddle at Atherstone following a report from a customer. The chaps did what they could to try and fix the paddle, but after the Bank Holiday it became apparent that the paddle had either broken again or that a repair would this time require an unplanned stoppage. This took place on 13 September between 4pm and 7pm, deliberately timed for after the 4pm flight locking up, to avoid any further delays for boaters.

The local waterway team accepts that in hindsight the stoppage could have taken place closer to the Bank Holiday, but I can assure you the BW employee referred to over-exaggerated the health and safety requirements for a paddle replacement, for which I apologise. BW takes the safety of its staff and volunteers extremely seriously, however, this isn't a case of health and safety gone mad!

### Water saving measures at Hillmorton Locks

Rainfall measured at Braunston shows that last year has been the driest on record, putting the North Oxford canal under particular pressure. That we got to the end of the main boating season without having to close any part of the Oxford Canal is a testament to the BW teams involved. One of the problems at Hillmorton—where incidentally my great grandfather worked—is that with two sets of locks in use, boaters sometimes waste water when a lock is set against them but still use it. This is less likely if only one set is open. It was necessary to optimise water and

## Have Your Say

this action did contribute towards that, but with the unfortunate consequence of queues. Initially BW kept all the towpath-side locks open for the greater convenience of boaters but later closed lock 2 towpath-side and opened the offside one because of the leaks that the writer mentioned. This particular lock leak is being dealt with in the current winter programme. I should also mention that automatic back pumping is in operation here to return water to the top pound but water is continuously lost due to evaporation.

**Personal comments regarding trustees**

The writer then refers to the motives of the Trustees as being financial. I find this particularly insulting and inaccurate. No Trustee receives any remuneration now, or will do in the future. A quick look at our accounts would also show that I have, for some time now, received no remuneration as BW Chair. Our motives are our passion for the waterways and the fantastic role that they already play, and can play to an even greater extent in engaging and involving the British people in an enjoyable, healthy, educational and in-

clusive activity of which boating is one essential part. I am also proud of what the BW team has achieved and resent the unfair and demotivating attacks on them—they are good people, who work hard and care about their jobs.

We are all fighting for resources, not just from government but from business, philanthropists and ordinary people. What does the writer hope to achieve by publishing poorly researched statements and defamatory innuendos? We can achieve so much more by presenting the waterway movement in a positive light rather than fighting the battles of 30 years ago. Don't get me wrong, I welcome positive criticism. We all make mistakes and must seek to learn from them and address them, but let's always seek a proper balance of recognition and criticism—in the interest of our unique and wonderful waterways.

**Tony Hales, Chairman, British Waterways**

*(Editor's note: Tony Hales used the name of a boater in his letter but as the writer requested anonymity I have altered the references to him by name)*

LMX-e01-S2 [LMX] **MERCURY, Thursday, December 22, 2011** 9

## Villager rescues narrow boater from canal

**AN ALREWAS man rescued a narrow boater who had fallen into the canal in the village last Sunday (December 18).**

Brian Hall was walking his golden retriever at around 9.30am when he heard a woman shouting for help.

Brian saw a canal boat in the ice on the village side of Alrewas Lock. The woman was on the gunwale holding on to a rope - her husband was on the end of it in the freezing cold water.

Brian went to the rescue. The engine was switched off and the man was able to get to the back of the boat.

A walker on the bank dragged the boat to the side and Brian managed to pull the man half on to the towpath.

The boater rolled on to his stomach and on to his feet.

Brian learned that the couple were travelling to Fradley and had just come through Alrewas Lock when the ice knocked the rudder, which turned the tiller, sending the boater into the canal.

The man, believed to be in his 60s, had some hot tea, put on dry clothes and resumed the journey with his wife.

Brian's wife Audrey said she was proud of her husband who "keeps calm" in a crisis.

**Tiller Terror**

I attach a salutary clipping from the Lichfield Mercury. It is not the first time someone has been knocked off the back of a narrowboat by their tiller near Alrewas; the last incident I heard of was fatal.

**Stuart Sampson****Continuous Cruisers/Continuous Moorers revisited**

I appreciate Simon Greer's response to my letter published in October's NABO News and I am grateful to him for acknowledging in his reply (Life Isn't Fair—December NN) the unfairness of the current position regarding Continuous Cruisers/Continuous Moorers (CCs/CMs). I am pleased that he apparently agrees with the cen-

tral point of my letter and that he makes no attempt to justify the position of CCs/CMs, except to reiterate that 'life isn't fair'.

Accepting that Mr Greer, myself and countless other boaters consider the current situation to be unfair I look to NABO to actively engage with BW to seek a fairer solution to this contentious issue in the interests of all boaters.

I am in wholehearted agreement with Mr Greer that we don't live in a fair world. He chooses to cite a number of examples he considers to be unfair relating to the waterways. He could so easily have chosen many other examples of unfairness that still exist in our society and indeed throughout the world. We do not however have to simply accept unfairness. Thankfully there are and always have been those who seek to remedy or reduce the unfairness they see. I applaud such people, as I will applaud NABO for changing its stance on this issue, which seems to be to accept the status quo rather than to seriously challenge the unfairness of the present system.

Finally, I also agree with Mr Greer that this is about money (but not entirely so—see my previous letter re: visitor mooring frustrations). Perhaps he needs to be assured that it is not only CCs/CMs feeling the financial squeeze. Boaters with home moorings suffer even more so, many struggling to pay increasingly prohibitive mooring fees they can ill afford. Surely it is increasingly important that we all pay a fairer share. I do not expect CCs/CMs to be ecstatic about a suggestion they start to pay something towards

mooring costs but, as presumably Mr Greer would agree, it would be only fair.

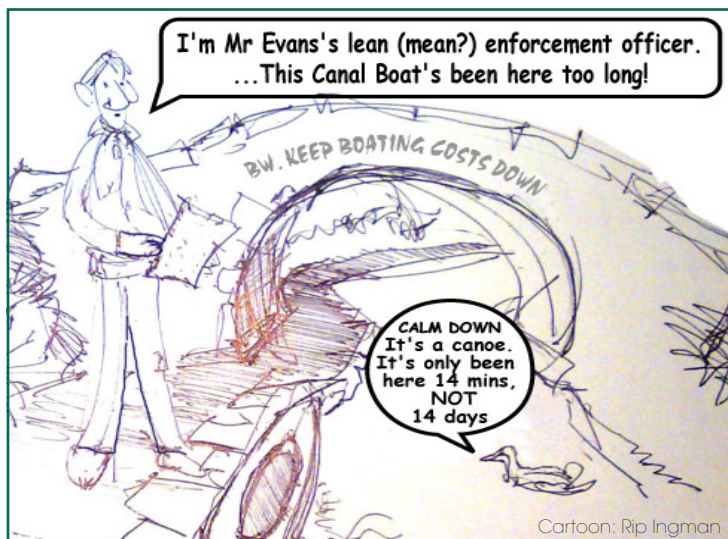
**David Peck**

### Websites and waterway songs

There are so many UK waterway sites online that it is confusing and very time consuming to scan through them all. To remedy this, Jay Clements has added yet another site! (Jay is the manager of English Holiday Cruises, an MCA Boatmaster and has fitted out his own narrowboat). However, this website will help: it is cleverly designed to search for and create links to almost anything current on waterway matters. It will host blogs from established waterway writers and it will have an almost-instant waterway news feed. More to the point, the site is dedicated to giving positive support to the CRT: more factual news and less unhelpful comment. 'We have to work with what we've got', could be its motto. It is early days yet, and it is still in development, but the site can be found at [www.boaters-web.com](http://www.boaters-web.com). Readers may also be interested in four waterway songs that I have now uploaded to YouTube at

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=VspNY66BmUo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VspNY66BmUo)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrSsdNGoO44](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrSsdNGoO44)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=omKB6FeliL8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omKB6FeliL8)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Asdm3YNI2dE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Asdm3YNI2dE)

**Tony Haynes**



Our national enforcement team is kept as lean as possible so that we maximise the amount of licence revenue that can be used for waterway maintenance and repairs."

**BW briefing paper asking for views from local stakeholders on use of Audlem village visitor moorings by trading boats, Jan 2012**



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