



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 6—Winter 2013

NABO'S AGM — THE INSIDE STORY
CRT'S CEO WRITES
TROUBLE ON t'THAMES
BE SECURE ON BOARD
HS2 — FULL STEAM AHEAD



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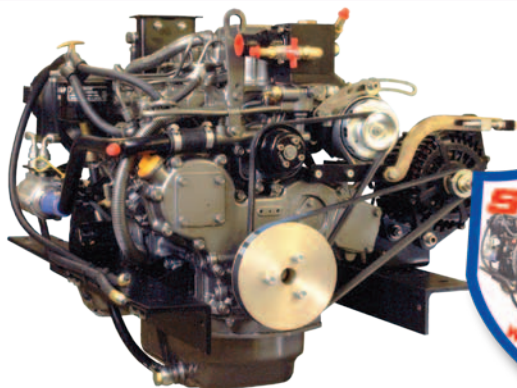
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NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

Issue 6 Winter 2013

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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 24th January 2014

Front Cover Photo

Early morning narrowboat passing under Guinness Bridge on the River Trent from member Ian Fletcher



NABO Calendar 2013

Dates for Council Meetings in 2014:

Saturday January 18th,

Saturday March 8th

Council meetings are normally 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 overleaf).

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A Breath of Fresh Air

Peter Fellows reflects on the success of NABO's influence past and future

Those members who were unable to attend the AGM in November missed a real treat. Not only an interesting and enjoyable presentation from Adam Comerford, CRT's Group Hydrology Manager, but also an opportunity to feed our opinions into proposals for new water management strategy. Richard Parry, CRT's new Chief Executive, spent the day with us and received some fairly critical 'home truths' from members—especially about CRT consultations—during the open session. I for one was impressed with his openness and willingness to listen to boaters' opinions; something of a new turn of events for BW/CRT and a breath of fresh air that I hope he can translate into a new ethos throughout the whole organisation. Mark Tizard reports a similar view after he and other Council members met Richard in November. NABO has been saying for years that it would like to be a 'critical friend' to CRT but until recently much of NABO's criticism and questioning, especially on the legality of some recent changes, have been largely ignored. The planned meeting between our legal representative and CRT's legal team early next year is a good step in the right direction. NABO News has carried comment and articles that are critical of CRT and will continue to do this if it is necessary—see our responses to the SE visitor moorings and K&A consultations and the note on K&A bollards. The EA is not immune—Louis Jankel reports on problems on the Thames. The last issue also carried articles and an editorial complaining about the proposed treatment

of community boating organisations and I am pleased that CRT has decided to not alter the licensing structure for this group of boaters, although there is no mention yet of fundraising restrictions or mooring rents. Rebecca Bruce, who contributed one of the articles said: "How fantastic and very well done for all the part that NABO has had to play in this and for having more faith than I did that CRT would eventually listen to people—there is hope!" I also give CRT credit where it is due—following the recent report of repair work to the Wolverhampton locks, in this issue, George Ballinger, CRT's Head of Engineering, gives an update of the work going on behind the scenes to minimise the negative effects of HS2 on the canals. Finally, farewell to Richard and Simon, who have left the Council but will remain as Secretary and reps and welcome back to Trevor Rogers.



Enjoy the Christmas break and wishing you happy boating in 2014 from all at NABO News

Sunday afternoon at the Angel Canal
Photo: Ros Conti



There is no Plan B

Incoming Chairman **Mike Rodd** looks to NABO's future..



NABO's new chairman
Mike Rodd

Photo: Alan Whitewick

I am starting to realise that the apparently kind and flattering invitation a year ago to talk at the NABO AGM about our experiences in setting up the first trial Waterways Partnership was really a recruitment exercise! NABO has just taken over my life!

My starting point is my belief that CRT simply has to succeed: There is no 'Plan B'. Whether or not it does succeed actually lies in our hands. It's not all down to some remote body. We, all those thousands of people devoted to the waterways, must 'own' CRT and make it work.

During the run-up to the establishment of CRT much of my work for the K&A Canal Trust was con-

cerned with lobbying for a better financial deal for CRT. We were totally supportive of Tony Hales when he said that the transformation of BW into CRT would require a total cultural shift—and that has to start at the top. Having met him and seen him at work, I also believe that the arrival of Richard Parry is the key to enabling this to happen.

BW was always an enigma. As a boater on the Mon & Brec, I was continually amazed at the efforts and expertise involved in keeping the canals open and I have always been happy with the relationship between us boaters and the BW staff. When I moved into managing the Canal Trust while I was impressed by much of what I saw in the day-to-day management but I soon saw another side of BW—an almost endemic inability to listen to those who actually understood the problems. I continually saw great strides being made locally and then hopes being dashed through edicts issued from Watford. The often vicious debates about the alleged abuse of the continuous cruising conditions and the overcrowding and serious shortages of visitor moorings in Bath and at the amazing Claverton Pumping station are but two examples.

When BW became CRT, I also realised that additional funding for maintenance and water provision would be required, but it struck me as bizarre that the first focus of CRT's 'friends' recruitment campaigns was targeted at non-canal folk. The waterways have always been largely restored, cared for and used by those who are most passionate about

them—so surely CRT needs to get closer to those people and the 200-plus canal trusts and societies? Silly me! I believed that the future lay in developing a very close relationship with CRT—indeed, as some of us dared to suggest, shouldn't we actually merge with them?

A hard act to follow.

As a long-term, non-active member of NABO I was delighted when David Fletcher took over the chair. I had always admired NABO and felt it was one of the very few bodies which really understood the issues relating to the management of the waterways. David, through his own personal professionalism, knowledge, enthusiasm and integrity, led NABO to new heights where its voice is now both heard and respected. Since joining Council I have realised how well informed NABO is and how much access it has to those who are pulling the strings.

NABO in a digital world

However, I also have long felt that NABO has not actively promoted itself. David's work on our website has done much to address this, but we must ensure that we continually get the message out, even if some things still have to be done through quiet negotiation. Our high-profile responses to the recent issues of visitor moorings in the South East and on the K&A illustrate how we must operate.

In a world of blogs, chat-rooms, on-line forums, Facebook, Twitter, etc., we need to be highly visible. Here I am delighted that Mark Tizard, who is now also leading all NABO's work on moorings, has taken us firmly into the forum world, John Slee is handling our Twitter activities, and Richard Carpenter our Facebook page.

Safety first

Finally, having been pleased to put my boating and engineering background to work as NABO representative on the BSS Technical Committee, I have been involved in revising the BSS requirements for hire and day boats. What struck me is that the BSS programme is driven by ongoing risk assessment, however, while CRT, EA, the hire companies and the statutory bodies capture a lot of information about serious accidents, the experience of most private boaters isn't included. How many times have you fallen off your boat, slipped on a wet landing stage, or cut your hand on badly fitting lock gear? Or, like me, nearly killed some canoeist in a tunnel where they shouldn't be allowed because you can't see them from the helm? Working with BSS we will be investigating simple ways of feeding back this sort of information to inform the BSS committees can be more comprehensive.

My worries? NABO's membership is holding up well despite the recent increase in membership fees (which, let's face it, are still not exorbitant!). But there are still far too many boaters out there who aren't aware of what we do and we need to bring them in. That's best done by personal contact with existing and committed members. Who could you tell about NABO? We also still need more activists to run the Council and to act as our regional representatives (our vital local eyes and ears)—there is so much more we could do if we had more help!

So—there is much to be done but I'm convinced that exciting times lie ahead and there's a great deal we can achieve together in cherishing the waterways so that 'going boating' can remain the deep-seated pleasure it has long been!



The irresistible force

David Fletcher's address to the 22nd Annual General Meeting

The 22nd AGM was held on 16th November with guest speakers, Adam Comerford and Emily Crisp from the CRT Hydrology section. They gave an excellent presentation and then ran working sessions on their current thinking on water management. We all thoroughly valued their attendance and found the presentation both informative and enlightening. It was so reassuring to hear how CRT is approaching this issue. Richard Parry, CRT's CEO, also attended and met members and our excellent hosts at the Wolverhampton Boat Club. Council elections took place and the Chairman delivered his annual report:



I will start with the core internal issues that we face in running the Association. Last year we faced a substantial deficit. Your Council had already taken action to reduce costs and seek alternative income, such as advertising in NABO News. We can see that this has had the desired effect. However, our cost of producing NABO News and operational costs exceeded the membership subscription and it was decided to increase this for the first time in many years. This took place in April this year. Your Council was all too aware that we ran the risk of a major loss of membership. This has not proved to be the case and, although our numbers are down slightly, I have to express my appreciation to all those loyal members who have stuck with us in these challenging times.

In 2013 NABO attended a range of consultation meetings with CRT, EA, BSS and other user groups, nationally and locally. This is the core work of the Association, monitoring what is going on, reading papers, listening to presentations and making considered comments in writing and at meetings. There have been times when we have not been able to attend regional events like user group meetings. I appeal to all members to contact their regional reps and ar-

range to go to these meetings so that we can understand local issues and steer the Association with the benefit of this knowledge. Really important when CRT is undertaking local initiatives, which will have national implications.

We know that steady representative pressure over a long period can have an effect on navigation authorities, and this is our strength and success.

I have to express our appreciation to regional reps and to Council for their continued time and effort.

We are fortunate in three new members this year, Jane, Mark and Mike—all three contribute significantly to our ideas and work. Two of our long-term Council members have decided not to stand this year but we hope that we can retain them as regional representatives and for their expertise. Simon Robbins has been on Council for more than ten years and has been a key person in all matters on moorings and the London scene. His recent contribu-

Simon [Robbin]'s recent contribution to the GLA enquiry into moorings was a master class in boater representation.

tion to the GLA enquiry into moorings was a master-class in boater representation. As a result of his actions this year, CRT is now listing previously undisclosed court judgments on the web so boaters can view and understand what the courts were saying.

Richard has also been on Council for 10 years and General Secretary for five. He and I have worked together in my period as Chairman and I cannot speak highly enough of his efforts and contribution. In the last couple of years he has been responsible for getting the advertising sponsorship that has done much to bridge the financial gap.

Our Council numbers are down again and there are not nearly enough members participating. Last year I said that if we could not replenish Council with a flow of new faces to take on the work, then we faced a bleak future. Please do come to a meeting and see what it is all about and how you can contribute.

Administration and accounts has been carried out by Melanie Darlington for many years. She has said that she wishes to stop next year and we have the task of building a new team to do this work. This will inevitably mean changes to the way we manage membership, with new people and systems to mobilise. I am still looking for volunteers for this work, hoping to build a team around a web-based system so that the full workload does not fall on one person. Can you help with this? I appeal to members to take responsibility for managing their subscription.

Melanie spends a considerable time and effort managing wrong or late payments.

Membership is still dropping a little and my thanks go to all those who have recruited new members. Some churning of membership is a fact of life for all organisations. New members usually join us by the website and PayPal, so we are not printing membership forms as in the past. We have some new flyers to hand out and if you would take a few and recruit a few members, all to the good. We did not attend Crick this year, the second year, partly because Council members were not available for the four days, and anyway we doubted the cost effectiveness of this. It is more than £1000 to attend and we suspect that many of the recruits gained from these exercises do not stay long-term, perhaps only one year. With tight budgets a fact of life, there remains an issue over short-term gratification, which we do not offer, and we cannot compete with the blogs and professional waterways press. But we know that steady representative pressure over a long period can have an effect on navigation authorities, and this is our strength and success. The launch of the ACC (The Association of Continuous Cruisers) is an interesting development and we may lose some recruitment opportunity here, but overall this does not concern me. NABO is a broad church and has always worked well alongside the smaller specialist organisations like RBOA, TBA and DBA. I wish



them well.

NABO News remains our main communication with membership. Peter Fellows is our Editor and he has been in the hot seat for more than two years. I thank him for his magnificent contribution. Can we all please show our appreciation for Peter and his team for their fantastic work?

If we are to attract new boaters to buy or hire there must be confidence that future costs are affordable

We have restarted using email as a means of communication. The website facilities make this possible and there have been six bulletins this year to let you know what the officers are up to. This is the largest distribution we have ever made, but we still have over two hundred members for whom we have no valid address. We still have to consider these members needs, so we are far from a digital-communication system.

The website is functioning, though we are at a time when we need to consider upgrades and changes, particularly surrounding the administration system. The site feeds to Twitter and Facebook and we continue to experiment in these areas. It gets our name out, all advice is to continue with this, particularly Twitter. Are there any Twitter experts out there to help? A little guidance here could make a big difference.

As always it is important that we have a balanced view from members, so please do take the time to let us know what you are thinking. Council is active in seeking views, but we can always use more.

We are currently active in the

London, SE and K&A mooring strategies, the legal implications of these, hire boat code update with BSS and boater safety issues, EA registration increases and service levels. These issues will impact on all boaters, hirers, owners, home moorers or continuous cruisers and we should not sit idly by while changes are made that do not suit us.

Specifically on CRT legal issues, we have been considering the legal implications since the summer. CRT has set aside our responses on legality issues, citing 1962 enabling legislation without evidence-based justification, specifically signposting no return rules and overstay charges despite our written comments and protestations. This will be the subject of campaigning in the coming year. My thanks to Geoffrey and Mark for leading this.

The first year of the CRT has brought new opportunities. NABO was involved with candidates for CRT Council and at least two Partnership places without success. I sit on NAG operations, and that has been a good forum, apolitical, focused very much on navigation and safety issues. I have been concerned about any conflict of interest in this, and will be more relaxed when I am no longer Chairman.

We have tried to maintain relationships with some of the new Trustees and Council boater representatives, many of these receive NABO News. We deliberately write to the outside world as well as our members. The Partnership activity is very mixed and I ask all members to monitor what is going on in your areas and let us know about the good and bad. Plans are now being published and annual meetings held. What is happening to your waterway? Of course these are not just about navigation issues, but the wider picture of gathering support

Membership renewals

Members are the very reason for our existence and your Council is committed to representing your interests throughout the UK. Your membership fee is vital to us as it enables us to attend the many CRT and partnership meetings and produce this magazine for members.

The NABO Council members are all volunteers and recently, in response to many of the recent initiatives introduced by CRT and Waterway Partnerships, we are attending more meetings and engaging in more initiatives to support CRT where we can, or being a critical friend where required.

When you receive a request for membership renewal, please can you take a moment to check that your standing order or cheque is for the correct amount and if needed change your standing order to £25 for full membership, £5 for additional family members, or £20 for associates.

Please also ensure that your personal details on the members' section of the website are correct.

Thank you for your continued support

in local environments.

EA has its issues too—the announcement that navigation would not be transferred to CRT in 2015 a disappointment to many, no surprise to me. There was no business case and the cost to Government of funding the CRT risk was unsupportable. But the EA is still under big cost pressures directly from Central Government and boaters are being asked to subsidise Government though registration increases.

There is a nice contrast between CRT and EA over licence fees—CRT holding increases to the Consumer Price Index and EA in a cycle up to 2015 with 2% over—and little sympathy with the impact on private boaters. We all know that boating is a discretionary activity and if we are to attract new boaters to buy or hire there must be confidence that future costs are affordable.

As I said last year and the year before, we have not always been able to cover all the consultation meetings and there is always a need for more members to support this work and share the load. Please do volunteer. If nobody attends, we do not get the information and get out of touch, and we miss an opportunity of networking and applying pressure over a range of issues.

In conclusion—there is much to be done in the coming year, both in consultation and for internal NABO business. We are needed, for other user groups are focused in a different way and we have that unique selling point. Your Council need help to carry this on and secure the future. I have very much enjoyed being your Chairman for the last five years and I thank you for your support and the opportunities the role has provided.

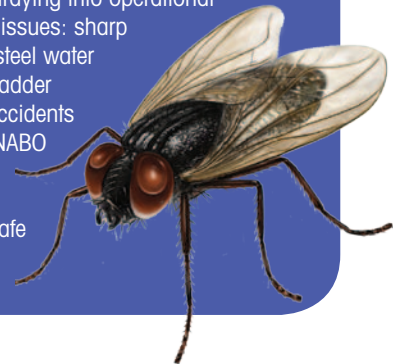
This concludes my report.

Fly on the Wall

observes proceedings at the last Council meeting.

A busy time in November. First to the AGM on the Shroppie, where the Wolverhampton Boat Club provided an excellent buffet before an equally excellent presentation by CRT's Adam Comerford on protecting future water supplies—with discussion groups so that NABO members could contribute to developing a water resources strategy. Richard Parry, CRT's new head honcho, spent the day with NABO and impressed (nearly) everyone with his open approach and willingness to listen to members' often less-than-complimentary experiences of CRT—although to be fair, as one wag pointed out, getting a group of boaters to agree a way forward is akin to herding cats.

Then I buzzed along the BCN Old Main Line to Oldbury, where the 'new' Council met for a round of musical chairs in which Mike Rodd was unanimously elected as the new Chairman with heart-felt thanks to David Fletcher for steering the Association in a very professional way over the last five years. The dear old listed Victorian 'Waggon & Horses' is falling apart: a flood from leaking radiators and roofs forced the Council to meet downstairs for the first time in 20 years. Mike donned the Chairman's cap and ran briskly through the agenda: the legality of CRT's overstaying penalty (sorry 'service') charges and no-return rules—NABO will meet CRT's legal bods in the New Year. Then the limited uptake of roving mooring permits by continuous cruisers and (again) discussion of continuous moorers (why doesn't someone just hire out a few fields and lift out continuous moorers, charging them each for a caravan pitch? problem solved!) Are the waterways partnerships in the SE, NE and K&A exceeding their strategic advisory role and straying into operational matters? Finally, onto safety issues: sharp edges on the new stainless steel water points and a review of lock ladder safety. How many boating accidents happen and why? Perhaps NABO has a role for boaters to report accidents and 'near misses'. Happy Xmas and safe boating. Byebye until 2014.



Canal & River Trust:

A positive future by working together

Chief Executive, **Richard Parry**, set out his vision for the Trust



Photo: CRT

I grew up in a village on the Trent, had many canal holidays as a boy and, since I moved to the West Midlands six years ago, the canals have been a special local place for me. So I leapt at the chance to be the Trust's Chief Executive, especially given the many opportunities we have as a new charity, and I am just as excited by what we can achieve after almost five months in post.

Our Mission is now unambiguously to protect, manage and enhance the 2000 miles of canals and river navigations in

our care, making them widely available to use and enjoy—both the remarkable heritage of the industrial canals and the wonderful natural environment. Use for navigation is central of course; beyond that our waterways are also used and appreciated by millions of people for a wide range of activities.

While our mission is about the 'assets'—both the physical and the heritage—it is people who are central to our vision for the waterways. It is through making connections, inspiring people to engage with history, nature, and the opportunities that our waterways provide that their long-term future will be secured.

I think it is clear that our approach is different from the past: outside Government, we can act independently, with a clear focus on

achieving what's best for our canals and rivers, without any need to meet annual Treasury targets or suffer mid-year interventions. We have a new inclusive governance structure that involves a wide range of those who use our canals and rivers in our decision-making. I see this broad and active involvement from those on and around the waterways as essential to our new approach, working with partners, with a strong focus on local engagement.

Our Waterway Partnerships are at the heart of how we function—opening the door for greater local involvement in the Trust, vital because for many people the canals and rivers are entirely local, with only a limited sense of the whole network; with half of the population living within five miles of one of our waterways we have both a strong local and national presence. We have almost fifty 'community adoptions' across England & Wales. There is a new spirit of involvement released as people come together with a common passion and commitment.

I am determined to promote this involvement, to listen to what our users want. I spent much of my first three months in the role travelling around, meeting with and listening to people, including many boaters. While the Trust is fortunate to have numerous talented and committed employees, there is also an abundance of knowledge available beyond the organisation to help us make the right choices and decisions and we will harness that input. Evidence of this approach can be seen in our commitment to spend

CRT: Richard Parry speaks

a lot more money on dredging over the next five years, and in the decision to use any surplus funds this year to attack the worst areas of off-side vegetation. We've recently announced a significant change to our proposals for business and community boat licences as a result of listening to the feedback we received. During the winter I will be hosting a series of open meetings to listen to individual boaters and their concerns, and I'll also be inviting NABO and other boating/waterway organisations to a series of meetings to discuss our longer term plans.

As a new charity it is also vital that we raise awareness and connect with new audiences—that is why, for example, the coverage we get from our recent Open Days, like the one at Hampstead Road Locks which got prominent national media coverage—are so important in engaging with the public. It is why we are so delighted with our partnerships with Google and the coverage that has generated. Consequently we are seeing growth in wider support—we have over 5,500 friends regularly donating and this is rising—we added another 30 as a result of the Open Days, for example. We know there is a lot more we can do in our fundraising and we'll learn from our experience and refine our approach for the future.

We believe the Trust has already demonstrated it can deliver a substantial public benefit, delivering better outcomes with reduced call on the taxpayer, with around half the funding this year that BW was taking from Government ten years ago. Looking to the future we face many challenges. We don't have as much money as we would like of course and still have very difficult choices to make as we prioritise our spending. There is no easy solution to the pressures on towpath mooring,

though we are working much more actively than in the past to address the problems. We also see enormous potential to our impact. We had record numbers of people visiting our canals and rivers this summer and

CRT plans for better communication from a CRT press release:

- Open meetings for Richard to meet boaters and hear their views, starting in early 2014.
- A large-scale survey of boat owners' views this winter with results published in the spring.
- An ongoing boaters' research panel to track what a representative sample of boaters thinks about what we're doing to inform what the Trust does.
- Regular meetings with national boating organisations and local user groups to discuss the Trust's longer term priorities including proposals for repair and maintenance work for 2014/15 and beyond.
- Informal input from national user groups to the planned extra £2m spend on offside vegetation control.
- Regular social media live chat sessions with Richard to reach those who may not be able to come to meetings.
- Identifying boaters who are willing to help achieve better communication on the ground, working with waterway teams to provide up-to-date information to those out cruising via notice boards and the 'towpath telegraph' as well as digital media.
- Bi-monthly updates on the Trust's efforts to support better and fairer use of towpath moorings, with the first report available now.
- A review of our traditional User Group meetings to ensure they meet the needs of boaters and other users and to encourage as many people as possible to attend.
- Every two months, Richard will hold a briefing with the waterway press to set out current performance and take questions about any Trust activities or future plans.

our local connections are growing steadily; volunteer numbers are rising fast. The Trust has built a firm foundation and can look forward with confidence.

Next year is the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the Stratford Canal, a key milestone in the recovery of our canal system and a moment when we can reflect on how much has been achieved in the last five decades by so many individuals. It is also a time to look ahead, to remind ourselves of what can be achieved by working together in a common purpose, as I believe we have started to do.

Association of Continuous Cruisers



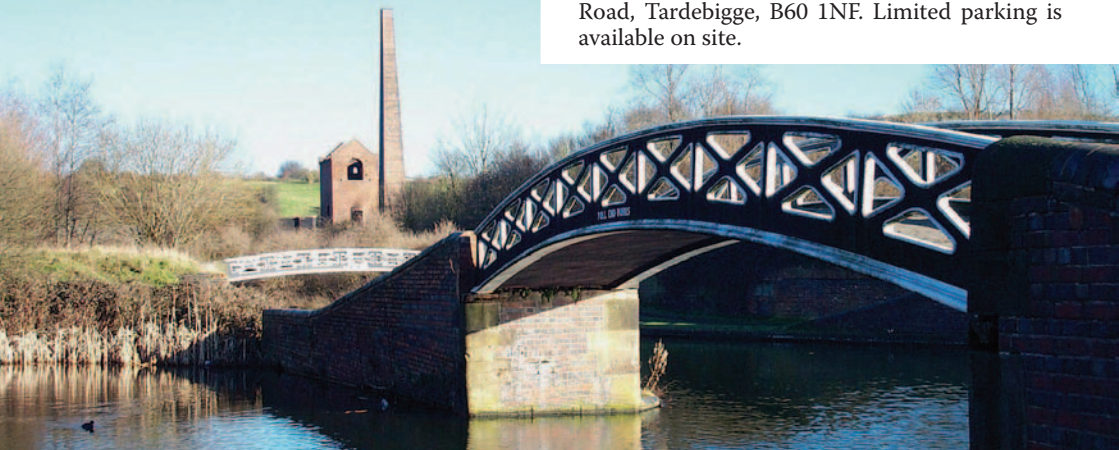
This newly-formed independent organisation was launched in September to provide support and advice to its members. It also seeks to advocate and represent the interests of continuous cruisers and

ensure that CRT hears their voices. One of the main aims of the Association is to raise awareness of the positive role that continuous cruisers play within the wider waterways community and challenge negative perceptions. Regular meetings will be held across the waterways system, with members encouraged to keep in touch online. Roving traders such as coal boats and other cruising businesses that cover large parts of the network will also be used to spread the word and keep the Association's members up to date.

For further information, contact: John Sloan on 07759 207 846 or john.sloan@associationofcontinuouscruisers.org.uk or visit www.associationofcontinuouscruisers.org.uk/

Boshboil Arm Bridge near Dudley—one of the bridges to be refurbished.

Photo: CRT



CRT Splashes the Cash extra millions for winter works

CRT claims that careful management of costs and success in earning income have allowed it to spend an extra £2 million on the waterways this winter, bringing the total spend on major works, maintenance and repairs to over £80 million in total. The major projects to be carried out are:

- Painting six bridges in the South East (£650k).
- Dredging priority spots (£250k).
- Spot dredging between Rushall and Daw End in the West Midlands (£300k).
- Repairing a culvert outlet at Arley Weir on the L & L Canal (£250k).
- Stabilising a bridge wing wall and replacing a canal wash wall at Dicconson's Bridge on the L & L (£250k)
- Repairs to Woodseaves Cutting on the Shropshire Union (£250k).
- Re-lining Culvert 88 on the Llangollen Canal (£100k).
- Up to £2 million on a blitz of off-side vegetation.
- Essential maintenance works to repair canal walls, locks and gates on the Droitwich Canals and Worcester & Birmingham Canal (£300k).
- Repairs to a number of iconic Grade II Listed cast-iron bridges on the Black Country canals (£500k).
- Repairs to the timber jetty at the entrance to West India Ship Lock, London Docklands (£500k)

On 18 January people will have the opportunity to walk inside drained Lock 58 at Tardebigge, from 10 am—4 pm. Go to New Wharf, Alchester Road, Tardebigge, B60 1NF. Limited parking is available on site.

NE Customer Meeting

Howard Anguish reports back

I attended the recent Customer Meeting at CRT Leeds in October and in addition to the local issues there were some items that may have a wider national interest.

The Partnership Chairman gave a strong indication that future meetings may be chaired and run by the partnership. I'm not sure that this is the right way to go because most local issues refer to operational track matters, which are very much under the control of the local waterway manager. I will clarify this point with CRT.

The CRT Contracts Manager confirmed the renewal of Biffa as the waste removal contractor and mentioned that in future there is no need to separate recyclable waste from ordinary rubbish in any bin at CRT service facilities—this will be done at the Biffa centres. This also applies to locations with limited access where Biffa can't use their large wagons and smaller non-Biffa bins are provided.

Single handed boating—'it does happen'

During written replies to questions raised before the meeting, a query about a lock ladder survey led to the following statement from CRT: 'We do not condone single-handed boating but acknowledge that it does happen, and when it does lock ladders are used.....'

I took up the issue with the waterway Manager and mentioned that CRT actually has a page on their website giving hints and tips to single-handed boaters. He referred me to the Health and Safety Manager for the NE, who immediately acknowledged that whoever had written this had no authority to do so and, at my request, he has arranged for it to be withdrawn and rewritten.

However, during the conversation he did say something that I will be pursuing: that CRT did not approve of boats moving after dark. I was not aware that this is official CRT policy and would appreciate advice before taking it further. But if it isn't policy, I think we should keep an eye on local management taking unilateral steps to impose views and policies that are not national CRT policy.

NABO Meets CRT's New CEO

In November Chairman David Fletcher and Council members Mike Rodd and Mark Tizard met Richard Parry, CRT's Chief Executive, at its Milton Keynes offices. The meeting was a good opportunity for us to give Richard an overview of NABO and its recent history of engagement with BW/CRT. We explained that NABO was fully supportive of most of CRT's strategies and this was reinforced by NABO representation on the Boat Safety Scheme, the Navigation Advisory Group and Users' Forums. However there will be times when we might disagree, or possibly fail to understand CRT actions, but we will always continue to advance reasoned arguments to illustrate our disagreements.

We welcomed Richard's commitment to openness and transparency and pointed out that communications have often been constrained in the past, which we hope would improve. We discussed the two consultations on moorings that had taken place since CRT's formation, in the South East and on the K&A. In the latter, we highlighted an issue that we had met with in the past: a consultation that started by CRT saying that the proposals were going to happen anyway, effectively saying that any comments were seen to be of little value.

We also pointed out that NABO had in the past attempted to raise aspects of the legal advice that we had received, which challenged the legality of some recent CRT initiatives. However, our views had been largely ignored and we were delighted that Richard agreed that a meeting should be set up between the CRT and NABO legal teams—this is a very welcome initiative.

We also mentioned that there is considerable engineering and managerial expertise within NABO's membership that could be harnessed should CRT seek to engage with us. We hope that his arrival could lead to a greater level of openness and communication between our organisations.

Overall we were impressed with the new CEO's willingness to listen and we hope that his drive for communication and engagement can trickle down and inform his management team. We wish him well in his challenging new role!

Stoppage Alerts

Waterway closures and stoppages alerts will be available on CRT's website from the first week of December. They will appear on interactive maps and contain more information on the type of closure, with clearer canal and river listings and all parts of a waterway grouped together. You can search for stoppages or look at the interactive 'In Your Area' maps www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/in-your-area. Waterscape alerts will stop at the same time and visitors will be redirected to the CRT website. If you currently receive emailed stoppage alerts, you should sign up at www.canalrivertrust.org.uk to keep up to date. If you already have a 'MyTrust' account you simply need to sign in.



Leeds & Liverpool Collapse

CRT has spent an estimated £300,000 to repair a collapsed embankment between bridges 108a and 109 at Rishton, Lancashire. Engineers suggest that erosion caused huge sink holes in the canal bed affecting a 16 x 18 metre area. Contractors installed dams either side of the collapse and re-lined a culvert that runs under the canal, stabilised the embankment, re-lined the canal bed and reconstructed the towpath and wash wall. The canal should have re-opened by the end of November.

Business Boat Licensing Update

In November, CRT published the outcome of its consultation on business boat licences, with significant changes to the proposals in light of comments received. The main outcomes, which take effect from 1st April 2014, are:

- Wholesale changes to licence fees for community and charity boats will not be implemented. Instead CRT will work with charitable and community organisations to develop proposals for April 2015 by next autumn.
- The proposals on holiday hire boat fees have been substantially amended. The part of the fee that equates to boat length will be increased by 2.8% (the same increase applied to private licences) and the remainder frozen, resulting in a 1.5% overall increase.
- The length-based licence fee for day hire boats will be retained, rather than the proposed seat-based fees.
- The 75% 'without locks' discount and the 25% 'disconnected waterway' discount will be phased out in steps by 2018.
- The carrying capacity-based proposals for skippered passenger boats will be adopted, with adopted, with increases phased in by 2017 and the pricing structure simplified in price-bands.
- Instead of the proposed two types of roving trader licence there will be a single category priced at the lower of the two price lists published.
- There will be no other fee increases for business boating licence in April 2014.

canalrivertrust.org.uk/completed-consultations





Waterways Photography Competition

The three winners of CRT's photography competition during the summer were judged by waterway photographer Harry Arnold and CRT Chairman, Tony Hales. Each can be viewed online, with a link to the 2,763 entries, at canalrivertrust.org.uk/photo-winners.

Harry Arnold comments: "The sheer number of pictures submitted, covering virtually every facet of the Trust's network, demonstrated the enthusiasm of the entrants for the waterways and a keen photographer's eye for their many individual aspects. As judges, we had a difficult but very pleasant task to reduce this number to three choices which we felt were not only top quality images but illustrated widely differing views of what brings people down to our canals and rivers."

Top: Kingfisher emerging with a minnow' by Daniel Trim

Right: 'Early morning start on the Shropshire Union Canal' by Mark Welton



A listening ear?

Is CRT finally hearing boaters concerns?

Report by **Mark Tizard** on a meeting between boaters and CRT

In November, approximately 40 members of the boating community attended a workshop organised by CRT in Milton Keynes. The meeting was run by Jeff Whyatt, Waterways Manager, and Matthew Symonds, Boating Liaison Manager. Attendees included a good mix of boaters, including some from the trade, boaters' associations and members of the newly-formed SE Boaters Sub-group of the SE Waterways Partnership. There was a formal presentation, including many graphs, of the feedback gathered by CRT from boaters who had stayed at the three pilot visitor moorings at Thrupp, Foxton and Stoke Bruerne. The issue for many of those attending was the statistical relevance of the responses from boaters staying on the visitor moorings—only 123 responses were received and the survey excluded hire boats as well as those boaters who had deliberately decided not to stop.

Even so, the headline statistic was that 50% of the people who had previous experience of the moorings felt that it was easier to moor than before and 50% felt it had made little or no difference. Of the 29 canalside businesses that were asked whether their trade had increased since the changes, nine responded: three said it had increased, three said it had decreased and three said it made no difference. Interestingly two of the three who said trade had decreased were the traditional boater's pubs at Stoke Bruerne and Foxton, which may indicate that fewer boaters are stopping at these locations.

Although the workshop was set

up to discuss other potential sites for regulation, CRT was unable to provide any data to support the need for further changes. Indeed many commented that if the changes made at the three priority hot spots had made little or no difference to the availability of moorings, what was the point in looking at others?

Despite a 10,000 increase in the number of licensed boats in the last ten years, there has been no increase in visitor moorings

The discussions quickly moved onto wider issues and the key point that came out was Jeff Whyatt's confirmation that, despite a 10,000 increase in the number of licensed boats in the last ten years, there has been no increase in visitor moorings; the consensus was that this needed to be CRT's focus. There is perhaps an opportunity for CRT to defer any further action for a period of, say, twelve months while it works with the trade and boaters' groups. This time could be used to identify potential bottlenecks and opportunities for additional facilities by enlisting the support of Partnerships and local businesses—perhaps sponsorship could be found to contribute to the costs.

All the attendees were in favour of CRT continuing to concentrate on enforcement of overstaying by

boaters but it was felt that boaters do a pretty good job of self-policing, specifically at visitor moorings—the problem of overstaying was minimal where active enforcement was taken. Some thought that times had moved on due to the enforcement action in 2012 and early 2013 and perhaps CRT was reacting to a perceived problem rather than the reality on the ground.

Interestingly, Jeff Whyatt stated that the next stage was to have further consultations with the Navigation Advisory Group and the SE Partnership Boating Sub-group. However NABO had understood that the Partnership's remit did not include it being involved in operational issues and that its function

was strategic. Is CRT now planning to ask all Partnerships to create boating sub-groups and consult with them on boating issues? Shouldn't these sub-groups be reporting to CRT rather than the Partnerships? In conclusion if you were to survey boaters and ask the question: "Would you like £1.5m (plus 14 volunteers) spent over three years on policing visitor moorings or would you like this sum spent on creating additional visitor moorings and maintenance of facilities?", I wonder how most would reply. There was a general feeling at the meeting, shared by me, that this time CRT was listening and that, hopefully, some of the comments raised were taken on board.

What a load of bollards!

Mike Rodd trips up on the Kennet and Avon

Rows of tall 'bollards' (posts?) have been installed at various locks on the K&A over the past few months. The posts are very substantial, well dug in as they are required to stop a vehicle. According to the contractors (three guys who took about three days to do this) there is a CRT programme to install these safety barriers wherever there is a road alongside a lock - apparently because of a car going into a lock elsewhere.

At Dunmill Lock, two locks east of Hungerford, the road goes nowhere, there is a locked barrier preventing access to it, and the posts are close together and potentially a danger to boaters getting on and off boats at the landing stage. As this is where I take one of the K&A trip boats, I also worry whether larger wheelchairs will get through them if I have to evacuate passengers in an emergency, which I had to do at this very lock previously.

A good use of CRT's limited funds?



NABO Responds

Proposed Towpath Mooring Plan for the Western K&A

Mike Rodd sets out the NABO Council's response

Although stated as a 'consultation' this questionnaire appears to be simply a list of intentions. Also the associated letter states CRT's intention to implement the proposals as a pilot exercise in early 2014, which implies that the results of the 'consultation' will be of little relevance to its plans. NABO believes that, once the results of the consultation are known, CRT should hold one or more workshops to discuss the results with all stakeholders and mutually agree a way forward. Only then should any timescale for implementation be agreed, along with the production of a formal Mooring Plan, scrutinised by CRT Head Office before promulgation, with definitions identified and inconsistencies removed.

NABO has made the following comments:

- It is recognised by all users that the K&A suffers from a serious shortage of residential and visi-

The serious shortage of residential and visitor moorings seems to be a fundamental question that needs to be addressed first.

tor moorings. In previous years much work was put into identifying new locations for residential moorings. This current proposal suggests this work is yet again

delayed. For an area under severe mooring pressure, this seems to be a fundamental question that needs to be addressed in advance of any proposed changes.

- The proposal is to produce a local mooring plan to which licence holders on the K&A will be required to sign up. While the trialling of proposals may be of benefit, NABO believes that (given the interconnectivity of our waterways) all such agreements should



be negotiated nationally through the national organisations. Any local arrangements which have broad local agreement should be authorised at a national level and a review date identified. In addition, NABO believes a local mooring plan should be a workable model that needs to be 'fit for purpose' and able to be introduced in other waterways.

- Further to the above, we are concerned that the repeated intimation that failure to adhere to the proposed 'voluntary' guidelines will result in enforcement action, which will be poorly received by many boaters. Indeed, if this is enshrined as a CRT document, it may cause CRT difficulties if taken to court.
- NABO supports the underlying principle, which it believes is fully compliant with s17 of the 1995 British Waterway Act, that boats can only remain on any (non-residential) mooring for a maximum of 14 days.
- NABO believes the proposal that 'all boats (except hire/hotel boats under hire) are limited to an accrued maximum stay at each visitor mooring section of four days per calendar month is potentially unworkable, unenforceable and illegal, and is simply not a practical proposal for those who use their boat on a regular basis. NABO would propose that any 48-hour limits be strictly limited to the months of July and August only.
- NABO believes that CRT should work with local and national associations to identify additional visitor moorings—these do not have to be expensive areas with rings but with cut back vegetation on towpaths and suitably dredged. NABO notes that the hire fleets on the K&A are alone

capable of overwhelming the currently available visitor moorings at hot spots such as Bath. NABO has also noted with alarm that several existing visitor moorings have been re-allocated for commercial use. This cannot be right.

- NABO agrees with the rejection by the working group of the introduction of Community Moorings (also called 'Roving Mooring Permits'). NABO acknowledges that there is a serious overcrowding problem on sections of the K&A with a small number of boats that do not move in accordance with their continuous cruising licence requirements. However NABO does not agree that the answer to this lies in a compromise solution such as Community Moorings/RMPs, but rather by clearer definition of the continuous cruising requirements and by improved monitoring and consistent enforcement.
- NABO has an expectation that CRT will implement the specific powers of s17 of the 1995 Act. This is as much to ensure access to navigation facilities for all classes of boaters as to protect the legal rights of those without a home mooring. NABO believes that it is not correct for CRT to take reward from boaters, who as a consequence, are permitted to circumvent the requirements of the 1995 Act and the guidance for those without a home mooring provided by CRT.
- NABO would like to be assured that all volunteer 'boat checkers' are trained, identified, insured and made fully aware of their liabilities regarding any possible legal action resulting from their reports. Have all the risks associated with such use of volunteers been fully assessed?

Moorers are an Asset

The views of CRT's Mooring Customers

A summary of a recent survey by **Simon Robbins**



The full results of the survey can be seen on the NABO website www.nabo.org.uk

CRT has recently circulated its findings from a survey of its moorings customers. There are many findings of interest but the key ones for me are: 1) satisfaction with maintenance is low; 2) only 22% of customers thought maintenance services were good or excellent; 3) only 31% felt that the quality of repairs, when done, were good or excellent. Despite this, two thirds of moorings customers volunteer with CRT at least once a quarter (though doubtless some of this effort is related to voluntary maintenance of the mooring where they berth their boat). The report acknowledges some of the ways that moorers contribute to maintenance of moorings and the local vicinity:

- General maintenance—grass cutting, tree pruning, cutting back brambles
- Litter picking, cleaning up dog poo
- Mending fences
- Clearing snow—keeping the tow-path accessible
- Planting flowers/contributing financially to this
- Writing a newsletter for local boaters
- Cleaning shower block
- Clearing debris out of the canal

As a mooring customer of many years, this is the first time that anything even close to a comprehensive survey of mooring services has been attempted. CRT advises that an action plan to improve services is being written and customers like myself await this with interest. Published maintenance standards, particularly response times and seeing items re-

paired promptly and 'right first time' are, from my own experience, a key issue that CRT needs to address to improve satisfaction. Explaining more generally what customers should expect for their fees is something we have long pressed for and is something both previous Waterways Ombudsmen have pressed BW and now CRT to improve. In 2011 the Ombudsman wrote:

*'Another issue that can arise for any moorers, but is probably more keenly felt by residential boaters, relates to the level and type of services provided at a mooring. This arose in Case No 495 this year, but it is not the first time I have raised concerns in this area. In my 2006-07 annual report I raised my concern about the lack of clear information for moorers on what services will be provided in their mooring contract. It appears that the situation has not improved since then. In Case No 495 the moorer was paying over £5000 for the mooring. As I said in my report, I cannot think of many services, for which people would pay such a large annual fee, and which affects them so significantly, for which the service they will receive is so poorly defined. Neither the general terms and conditions nor the site rules provided any clear information about that.'*¹

One hopes that this survey marks the start of a long-awaited change on this front and a concerted attempt to improve in this area. The volunteering figures show that boaters are an asset to CRT, not just as paying customers. I for one hope that this survey finally helps reinforce that fact in CRT thinking for the future.

¹ Waterways Ombudsman Report 2010-11 page 14 at www.waterways-ombudsman.org/docs/Annualreports2010to11final.pdf

Be secure on board

Darrel Walters, Managing Director of LocksOnline offers some tips

It is very easy to get complacent when it comes to security on boats. Everyone is enjoying themselves in a relaxed environment, for example as I sat at a pub recently, having my meal, I was surprised to see boats mooring up and people walking off straight into the pub. The only thing stopping someone climbing on board was a few inches of water between the bank and the boat. A person can jump onto your boat and make off with your personal items in a matter of minutes. Not to mention the two mooring lines that could be quickly undone, engine started and before you have ordered your drinks the boat is gone. You may suggest that they could not get far with the speed restrictions etc., but, especially on rivers, the boat can go a lot faster than you can walk. All the thieves are really interested in doing is getting the boat away from you so they can go through your possessions in their own time.

The main physical security is obviously the locks on the cabin doors and hatches, but these can be quite feeble. Many people use normal ironmongery and house-locking products. We always suggest that you consider yourself to be a burglar: how easy would it be for you to get into the cabin on your boat? If it is easy for you to bypass the locks on your doors or hatches then it would be even easier for a burglar. Having a nautical background myself and over twenty years' experience in locksmithing, I have been around a lot of boats and understand the principles of hatch and door security. We have a range of small narrow locks that suit the small doors that you

find on many canal and river boats. Hatches are another key area where security needs to be administered: there are hundreds of different types of locking arrangements and most are only 16 or 18 mm thick if you are lucky. Hasps may be the only way you have of securing hatches: perhaps the multi-link hasp and staples may be the preferred choice - having the dexterity of the joints allows the hasp and staple to cover a multitude of different locking possibilities. We also have marine locks for hatches that may suit your needs, or there are alarms that can be fitted to boats that help complement the physical security of locks on the cabin doors and hatches.

You may think that your boat is as safe as houses on a mooring or in a marina, but it is amazing the amount of kit that you can have on a boat - not that dissimilar to our sheds and garages at home. Take a look around your boat and start counting up the bit and pieces on it: anchor £60, life jackets £70 apiece, perhaps an outboard motor £350, music players, TV - the list just keep mounting up. To keep all these things safe, the best thing to do is to ensure that they are stored securely under lock and key within the cabin. But some things, like the anchor, cannot be stored in a locker, so make sure they are secured to the boat.

If you have concerns about security on your boat and want a bit of advice, drop me an email or give us a call. There is always a solution that can be adopted. But it starts with being alert and not getting complacent about security: 'locks are useless until used'.

LocksOnline

www.locksonline.co.uk
enquiries@locksonline.co.uk
 01646 698218

Darrel is offering a 5% discount to NABO members (Coupon code: NABO13)

Padlock love

- The preferred choice is weatherproof padlocks that have either a bronze or a stainless steel shackle.
- If possible use a disc-type padlock, a closed shackle padlock or one with a straight shackle (shutter locks) that can't be opened with a hammer.
- Don't be a skintiff with your padlocks: make sure they are a reputable brand and that the shackle is secured on both sides. Be prepared to spend at least £20 or more per padlock; anything less and you will be hitting it open with a hammer when it has rusted up
- If you have a number of lockers and end up having several padlocks on board, it may be better to consider having them keyed alike, so that you have one key for them all.
- Remember also that padlocks love to be used, lock and unlock them all the time and maintain them (not with WD40 - use a silicon-based dry lubricant).

A look at the past through NABO News



Winter Mooring by Nancy Larcombe, cover picture on Issue 7 1998

Issue 7

Roving Mooring Licence: BW is considering this idea, which would entitle holders to free winter moorings and stays of more than two weeks at unrestricted sites. All continuous cruisers would have to have one. This would be instead of a High Intensity Cruising Licence.

BSS Costs: BSS has announced swingeing price increases effective immediately.

Fibreways Contracts: It is rumoured that all four subcontractors who have been installing fibreways along towpaths have gone bust. BW, and therefore boaters, will have to pick up the bill for reinstating the towpaths.

NABO Member Wins Ombudsman Appeal:

A boater had to have his boat rewired at a cost exceeding £1000, only to discover that BW had moved the goalposts and would now permit the use of solid conductors in existing craft. BW refused to pay compensation until Lady Ponsonby found in the complainant's favour and ordered BW to pay 75% of the cost of the unnecessary work. The Flexible Mooring Co Ltd. has been formed to list members who are willing to swap home moorings for a period of time. The list is sold at £19.95.

ReWind 15 Years

NABO News in 1998

Tony Haynes continues his look back through the archives.

Signs of the times: A letter writer complains that he counted 14 signs at Gunthorpe Lock, including the ludicrous 12.43kph speed limit sign.

Issue 8

Yes Minister: Speaking on the future of the waterways, Alan Meale MP, Under-Secretary of State for the Waterways, expressed his concern over BW's large backlog of maintenance and the debt it accumulates. He hopes this can be reduced by additional funding and by contracting out services to save money. He also believes in simplifying bureaucracy. He has set a target of transferring 3% of road traffic to water-borne transport (including coastal carrying).

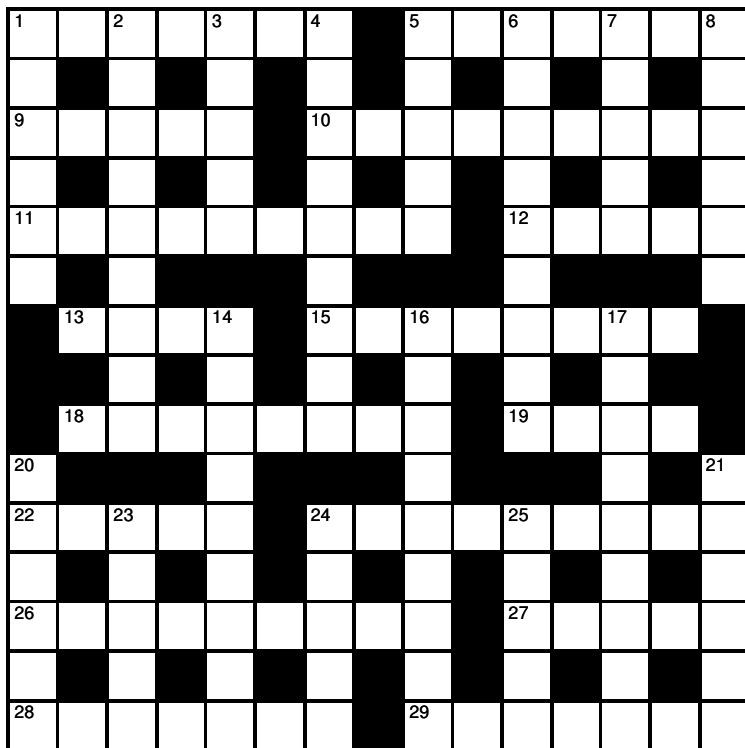
BSS Gaffe: The BSS has banned the use of new plastic fuel tanks, even though they are officially tested and CE marked for use in boats. The importers have complained to their MP. Rumour has it that the DTI is very annoyed with BW for trying to put itself above the CE marking system. BSS is also insisting on engine modifications that manufacturers do not recommend, thus invalidating warranties. So far, 4,600 boats have failed. 1,400 have since passed, so 3,200 boats are out there with failure certificates.

Vandals: At Kings Norton a boater who threatened his assailants is being prosecuted by the police following complaints by the vandals!

Speeding: A letter writer complains that a boat passing his moored boat at speed, pulling out a mooring pin, was owned by NABO's chairman!

NABO News Crossword N° 14

By Canaldrifter



I name this boat ...

If you have spotted a boat name that made you smile, please let us have a photo. Thanks to Janice Steckerl for this one.

Answers to Crossword 13

Across: 1 Preston, 5 Paddles, 9 Anode, 10 Volunteer, 11 Tao, 12 Pages, 13 Basin, 14 Coins, 16 Tamworths, 19 Westwards, 20 Shaft, 22 Ahead, 24 Heads, 26 End, 27 Hobnailed, 29 Drier, 30 Rudders, 31 Eased up.

Down: 1 Plastic, 2 Economics, 3 Tie up, 4 Navigolor, 5 Poles, 6 Den, 7 Leeds, 8 Springs, 13 Buoys, 15 Sawed, 17 Mishandle, 18 Trade wind, 19 Weather, 21 Tide rip, 23 Ebbd, 24 Hulks, 25 Sides, 28 Ale.

Across

- 1 Babbled insanely and snitched (7)
- 5 Acrobatic trainee on course for L&L (7)
- 9 Arrive at a pound (5)
- 10 Point that we hear on the T&M (9)
- 11 Evil herb on the game (9)
- 12 Roles changed for failure (5)
- 13 Control the boss! (4)
- 15 Missed the waterwheel? (8)
- 18 Grow up and cease old ways (8)
- 19 This item holds position (4)
- 22 Unclear start to relationship (5)
- 24 Empty vessel for navigation aid? (9)
- 26 Released from the bilge we hear (6,3)
- 27 Value of a stretch of water? (5)
- 28 Be lying about L&L location (7)
- 29 Bust of the Queen on the Shroppie? (7)

Down

- 1 Mad about note found by Yorks Derwent (6)
- 2 Desolate Ted to follow a group performing! (9)
- 3 Faith teacher takes TNT from bad habitant (5)
- 4 Do countries make gifts for CaRT? (9)
- 5 Protection for a restaurant boat? (5)
- 6 Clandestine anarchists hide in his list (9)
- 7 Spoils wrecks (5)
- 8 Encourage the other about ten (6)
- 14 Anti-roll fin, possibly to be like leg (5,4)
- 16 Industrious nice egret hops about (9)
- 17 Shut tutor out and push away (3-6)
- 20 Noise from a gearbox? (6)
- 21 Creature prised out of a corner? (6)
- 23 Change, you say, a lock-part? (5)
- 24 Awkward towing post (5)
- 25 Early English pet climbs tent! (5)

Full Steam Ahead!

CRT's activities to minimise the effects of HS2

George Ballinger, Head of Engineering at CRT, gives an update

The Draft IWA response to HS2 can be seen at www.waterways.org.uk/news_campaigns/campaigns/hs2_campaign/documents/hs2_phase_2_consultation_iwa_response

Well, it's probably going to happen. Yes, a high-speed (sorry, high-capacity) railway is going to connect London to Birmingham and onwards to Manchester and Leeds. For our waterways, this is a major concern. Phase 1 alone impacts on the Canal & River Trust's network at 14 locations, with a further 13 intersections due in Phase 2. Add to that the effect on restoration schemes, such as the Chesterfield Canal, and HS2 can be viewed as a real threat.

The first thing to realise is that there is little that can be done to stop it, unless the will of Parliament can be overturned. Here, at the Trust, we have taken the view that the 'will it, won't it' debate will only deflect our limited resources away from trying to make the best of the situation. Since the birth of the railway network there has always been conflict with canals but they have now managed to co-exist in relative harmony over the last half-century. High speed is nothing new – see the Marple crossing the Marple Viaduct, alongside the magnificent Marple Aqueduct. I am sure many of us sneakily welcome the sight of trains crossing the canals. Technology has also moved on a long way with noise reduction and vibration damping having a science and standards all of their own. As I write this article, I am travelling from my home in Preston to Birmingham - a journey that closely follows the canal network. Personally I have good memories of working closely with Network Rail to construct a new tun-

nel under the Glasgow to Edinburgh railway line. Without their huge support and advice the construction of a modern wonder of the canal system, the Falkirk Wheel, would simply not have been possible.

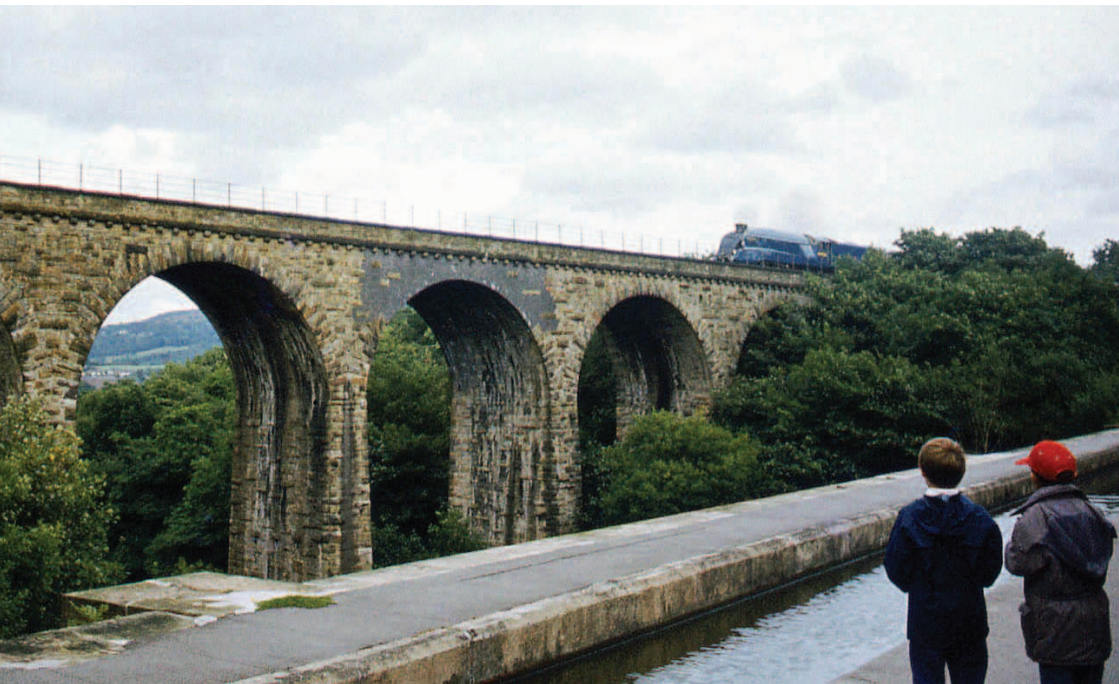
It's beginning to sound as if I support the scheme but my overarching concern is to ensure that our waterways are safeguarded from blight. So, how are we doing that? The starting point is the consultation phase in which all issues must be lodged with HS2. This is complete for Phase 1 and concludes in January for Phase 2. After that the consultation issues are considered by HS2 and the route altered – or not! The backstop position is to petition against the scheme.



Such an approach is expensive and, given that the final say lies in the hands of a few MPs, I will let you make your own mind up in terms of the chances of success. At the Trust we have taken a different approach and we have set up a Working Group with HS2, which highlights the issues and seeks agreement on a resolution. We will have a 'Side Agreement' with HS2 that outlines those agreements and this will sit alongside the Parliamentary Bill. The range of subjects is huge: navigational envelope, noise, vibration, breach risk liability, aesthetics and so on. Coupled with this approach we have discussed at length the issues faced by several restoration groups that have close interfaces with HS2. The Chesterfield Canal Trust is one such example with significant conflicts at Staveley, Renishaw and Killamarsh. We believe HS2 is listening but we should not underestimate the difficulties at all these sites. Intensive discussions are also ongoing about

the key areas at Fradley, Curzon St. Station, the Aire and Calder at Woodlesford, and the approach at Leeds. Much lobbying is also underway and Richard Parry is meeting with many of the most influential politicians to ensure our views are heard. The IWA has also worked closely with the Trust on all our discussions. We must all remember that the old adage of 'united we stand, divided we fall' could not be more appropriate in this situation. By all means let us argue behind closed doors, but let's resolve our differences so that we can present a strong and united front that prevents the railways trying once again to threaten the future of our beloved waterways. I would encourage everyone reading this article to 'do their bit' and lobby in whatever corridors of power you have access to, in order to make the voice of the waterways drown out the noise of a rapidly approaching 250mph train over to you.

Mallard crossing Marple Viaduct
Photo: CRT



Trouble on t'Thames

Louis Jankel reports on lost opportunities at the EA

Louis adds: "It would be great to receive views on this from NABO members. Please email me at thames@nabo.org.uk with any thoughts you may have that can be included in our input to this revitalised initiative."

In September I attended the Thames Navigation Users' Forum (TNUF), representing the interests of NABO members. In that capacity I have been attending these quarterly meetings and those of its predecessor, the Waterways Working Group, for almost 10 years.

The members of TNUF represent all aspects of boating on the River Thames and most membership organisations send delegates. This forum meeting was the first time we could consider the implications of the ministerial announcement to postpone the merger of the Environment Agency (EA) naviga-

tion with CRT. It is the view of the majority of Thames user group's membership that the merger is now a defunct proposition. Any merger, if not effected by 14th December 2016, will require primary legislation to proceed—and that will never happen.

we have been told at meetings that our aspirations were not appropriate as the Thames would soon be part of CRT. On the direction of the Secretary of State all joint committees between Defra, CRT and the EA have now been disbanded as a waste of time and money. It is worth repeating that the view of most user representatives on the TNUF is that the proposed merger will never happen and the deferred EA investment must now be re-examined. FoN has now changed its function to pursue a relevant investment plan and we have asked for five- and ten-year plans as soon as practicable.

Following the cancelled navigations merger, problems that have been ignored and left for CRT now need to be resolved.

Following the cancelled navigations merger proposal the problems that have been ignored, to be left for CRT, now need to be resolved: namely prioritising 'enforcement'. The rules covering 'registration' on the Thames have changed, becoming effective in financial year 2011. ('Registration' is the name used by the EA for what CRT terms 'licensing' and registration (licensing) charges for Thames boaters do not attract VAT). New rules enshrined in the Inland Waterway Order (IWO) were introduced to bring 'harmonisation' between all inland waterways. Now all boats 'on' the water, including backwaters and marinas, must hold a valid registration. Prior to 2011 and the IWO registration only boats that were being 'used' on the waterways were required to register. This condition was much abused by boat owners: in 2010 it was estimated that there were 1,000 plus extra boats (>10% of the total) that would have to be registered and that would bring in a further half

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million pounds of income to the EA. (This is a statistical estimate but acknowledged by the EA to be about right). The figures supplied to the last TNUF meeting show that since 2011 the actual number of registered boats has fallen, albeit very marginally. Last year the enforcement team, who represent 10% of the navigation staff, established that the average registration evasion rate was in the region of 15%, with their various boat checks showing between 10% and 25% unregistered. This summer the enforcement team proudly announced four prosecutions for registration evasion, although one of these failed as the defendant had sold the boat two years previously!

FoN has at last grappled with the issue of 'accommodations'. These are structures that use the riverbed, mainly to allow the construction of safe bankside moorings. Unlike CRT, the EA may not charge boats moored by riparian owners on their own

In the commercial world this organisation would have gone bust years ago.

land, but a fee is levied for the structure they may need. The navigation authority needs to be sure that these structures are safe and that they are able to survive the most significant flood flows. In the 2012/13 River Thames Annual Report, the EA navigation income from accommodations was stated to be £400,000. In the FoN paper presented to TNUF, a detailed survey of two sections of the Thames estimated that only 25% of those considered liable for registration were registered accommodations. Even when taking into account that the majority of 'big' accommodations are registered, it is statistically reasonable to assume that this represents a further million pounds of uncollected income.

The EA is desperate to obtain ex-

Busy summer scene at a Thames lock

Photo: Panda Smith



tra income but the paper presented to the meeting, which covered new income initiatives, itemised just one single initiative, namely a new café/shop at Molesey Lock. The café is indeed most welcome and is run by a delightful couple. The EA was coy as to exactly how much income will be derived from this project, but I doubt it will be more than the odd thousand pounds. The wages that the EA has paid to date to 'new business' dedicated staff who have generated this minimal income must be £100,000 plus.

It is a miscarriage of management that such limited action on enforcement leaves £1.5m+ in uncollected revenue, despite being highlighted by users over the last two years! As one colleague said after the meeting: "In the commercial world this organisation would have gone bust years ago."

This funding problem would not have been solved by a merger with CRT. The BW management are all, more or less, still in situ and the existing EA management team were likely to have transferred to CRT. The problem has actually been exacerbated by the proposed transfer be-

cause of all the uncertainty created by it and the hiatus on investment plans, which has allowed indifferent management to ignore the difficulties that surround them.

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The EA consulted users on annual fee increases and there was an almost unanimous recommendation from boaters that an inflation increase of 2.8% was justifiable. The extra 2% suggested by the EA to help counter funding cuts was comprehensively rejected. Arrogantly, the navigation management is, at this date, to request a full 4.8% extra. What is needed is for the EA Board to grasp the problems on the Thames and empower the South East management to identify realistic income opportunities. We need to see the EA Thames management tasked to find an extra £1m next year from registration and accommodation fees. That would justify their wages—which we users pay through our fees. It would also negate the need for a silly registration increase and dangerous staffing cuts. However the managers' plans to cut staff and penalise users with fee increases is much easier to achieve than actually doing their jobs. To quote the 2012-13 River Thames Annual Report's section on finance: 'We also need to make sure that we collect all the charge income we are due! Chance would be a fine thing!'

Early morning on the Thames

Photo: Bruce Markos



Letters to the Editor

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

Volunteers with attitude?

We were involved in a serious altercation with CRT volunteers in September that resulted in one volunteer waving a notebook around and demanding to know our names so that he could report us to CRT, saying we were awkward sods who should get out of the flight as soon as possible. We were also told that they, the volunteers, were not there to help but to ensure that boaters behave themselves and work the flight correctly. I wrote to CRT outlining what had happened and received a letter from Mark Whitfield saying that he had spoken to the volunteers about the way they interacted with boaters. The incident would perhaps have appeared to be a one-off, had we not been delayed for 21/2 hours the previous day by volunteers 'working' Watford, who, when asked politely what the delay was, said that 'it is the nature of the beast'. In all, Foxton and Watford probably cost us half a day's delay without there being many boats around. This incident is part of a worrying trend and I have suggested to CRT that badly trained volunteers have no place on busy staircase locks that they appear not to understand.

Rant over.

Hugh Cauldwell

Mike Rodd adds: Thank you for feeding this experience back to us. As it happens I recently attended a meeting with CRT and the issue about volunteer lock-keepers being overly authoritarian came up from several organisations represented there. I had a similar experience recently on the Mon & Brec Canal where the guy really upset my wife by loudly telling her she was 'doing it wrong' and then opening a paddle without first checking with me at the helm.

Caption Competition

My suggestion is: 'Memo from Vince Moran to Richard Parry: We've cut expenses to the bone....'



honest guy. This is Darren Green inspecting the Trent & Mersey Canal!

By the way, I've very much enjoyed reading recent editions of NABO News. It's so nice to read sensible, reasoned, arguments and reports of the important issues. Not the sort of thing you find in the boating press which tends to be just reprints of CRT 'propaganda'.

Ralph Freeman

CRT approach to mooring management

For some time I have been mulling over the fragmented and inconsistent nature of CRTs approach to moorings. I don't just mean CC policies but the emphasis on marinas, lack of cheap residential moorings, flawed and partial enforcement, and the farce that is mooring auctions. As a hack my natural inclination is to put it all in a feature article and that is now being planned. I would welcome observations, experiences, and even suggestions for fruitful research. I want to get moving now so swift would be good. Please email me at peterunderwood2@gmail.com.

Peter Underwood

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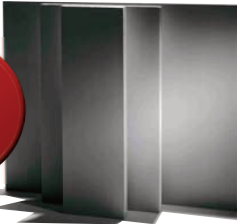
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