



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 4 July 2015

WELFARE OFFICER UPDATE

EXPERIENCES ON CRT COUNCIL

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NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

Issue 4 July 2015



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Cover photo

This month's cover photo is from Mark Tizard, boating on the River Trent

Win a year's free membership by having your photo selected for the front cover of NABO News. Please email photos as JPEG attachments, ideally portrait format with a file size of 2MB or larger.

Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images and photos in JPEG format please.

Please email or post your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk by **12th September 2015**

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Trust the Trust?

Editor **Peter Fellows** worries about CRT governance

It may seem odd to focus on elections to NABO Council and CRT Council in this issue as neither will be taking place for another four to five months. But NABO Councillors are taking a well-earned break until September and that wouldn't give members much time to put in their nominations to stand for election—so I've included the nomination form in this issue. Mike Rodd uses his Chairman's column to air his views on NABO Council (doing a good job) and CRT Council (plenty of room for improvement). Ivor Caplin, one of the boaters' representatives, gives his views on the first three years of the work of CRT Council, and Allan Richards has unearthed some very poor attendance figures at Council meetings by both members and trustees, which makes me wonder if we should trust the oversight of the Trust. Allan has also spent a lot of time digging into the workings of the Waterways Ombudsman Committee, which oversees the work of the Waterways Ombudsman—an aspect of waterway administration that is little-known to most boaters. His findings should give us all cause for concern. Overall, these articles point to the need for some radical rethinking on the governance of the Trust.

But it's not all bad news for CRT: I'm pleased to include an article by Sean Williams, CRT's Welfare Officer, on his first eight months in the job. He is making some good progress in building support networks that can help boaters in trouble. With a caseload of 70 boaters in this time, there is clearly a need for his work. He has already successfully helped 35 boaters, avoiding court

action and so saving CRT the huge legal fees that otherwise might have been incurred—hopefully savings that can now go to waterway improvements. I'm also pleased to introduce a regular column featuring people who earn a living by trading on the canals and rivers; this time, it's Helen and Andy Tidy on their 'Jam Butty'.

Finally in this issue, Mark Tizard brings us up to date with CRT's new terms and conditions and enforcement of the continuous cruising rules—and what the next steps might be. So, a packed issue to keep you busy over the summer. Please think about standing for election to NABO Council and give me a wave if you see me around the Midlands canals over the next few months.



Cosgrove Horse Tunnel
Photo: Helen Hutt





Why not stand?

Chairman **Mike Rodd** focuses on two upcoming elections

Two important events are looming for all of us who care about our wonderful waterways: Council elections for both NABO and CRT.

The past few years have been crucial for NABO, especially as we come to grips with our role as a 'critical friend' to the new team emerging under Richard Parry's leadership at CRT. The next few years, however, are likely to prove even more crucial for all boaters—not only with the new Terms and Conditions and CRT struggling to get a grip on the seemingly increasingly complex issues related to moorings and continuous cruising, but also with the inevitable takeover (in some form) of EA's navigational responsibilities by CRT.

It is no use just standing around and saying that things are wrong.

We always said that the only way that BW could successfully become a Charitable Trust (and not just be BW by another name) would be if there were major cultural changes in the organisation. This would, inevitably, require changes in leadership. Richard has largely completed these changes and we now have to learn to work with the new organisational structures and the new people involved—many of them with little waterways' experience. Let me make it clear that I have always been very supportive of much of BW/CRT, especially the guys on the ground, the heritage people and the engineering folk (the latter including some of the country's top professional engineers). Our problem areas have

always been linked to licences, regulations, moorings and many other legal issues.

Even if we don't always agree with the new folk, I have to say that they are far more open and willing to engage in debate, and largely accept and respond to us as professional, experienced people with the interests of the waterways at heart.

And it is your Council which leads on all these activities—as Chairman, I could not wish to work with a better team, and the feedback from most members has been very encouraging. Of course, not all members always agree with what we are doing, or the way we do it. That's what we are all about—we are all volunteers and can only do what we believe our members want us to do. NABO, incidentally, is legally 'An unincorporated association set up through an agreement between a group of people who come together for a reason other than to make a profit...' So, if you don't like something, please tell us! (We do also understand that most boaters just want to boat—and hence normally just 'lay low' and 'say nuffing'—until, that is, they get a rude letter from CRT or EA!)

But of course, any volunteer-driven organisation like NABO needs to continually to refresh its leadership. We have been very fortunate to have a strong NABO Council and now the elections are giving us an opportunity to enhance that, as well as to seek new inputs. While much of the day-to-day business is done by email, our regular meetings (~7 per year) are held on Saturdays at venues that are (as far as possible) close to

the centre of gravity of our attendees. Meetings start at 10.45 am and the pre-lunch session is devoted to strategic issues and policy decisions. The more routine matters are then dealt with in the afternoon, ending around 3.00 pm.

But, let's be honest and say this is not where the work ends! Each Council member is expected to be responsible for a particular area of our work (as listed in NABO News), some of which do require a fair amount of time. But, in all cases, the idea is for people to opt to do a job that they have a passion for and are really committed to—and the rewards are immense. Council members soon become well-connected experts in their area of expertise and also soon find that NABO punches well above its weight—both locally and nationally—and many doors are opened to us. NABO is in very good shape financially. Under David Fletcher's leadership, our finances were especially carefully managed and, with all tasks now done totally by volunteers, our expenditure is down to the absolute minimum. And the recent flurry of new members joining (issues like the changing T&C's always alert boaters to the role of NABO!) has meant that we are stable and secure. However, we still have gaps in the range of skills available: as mentioned elsewhere, we need more folk with IT skills, and also a Minutes Secretary. We could also do with more regional representatives who can make sure that we are well represented, and visible, in local matters.

CRT Council

Turning to the other election, that of the CRT Council, I must be frank and say that I always felt the CRT governance structure to be poorly thought through and not reflecting the needs of a charitable organisa-

tion.

For a start, I could not see how we boaters—the prime and most passionate users of the waterways—could have a proper and effective input under the current structure. The Trustees are largely non-users and the Council is seriously undemocratic. And yet, without boats on them, the canals would simply die.

We do understand that most boaters just want to boat and normally 'lay low' and 'say nuffing'—until they get a rude letter from CRT.

After all, besides the business users, we are the only users who pay to use 'their' waterways (no, actually, 'our' waterways—the canals are still in the end owned by the Government on our behalf).

A boater's only way of providing input (other than via organisations such as NABO) is through the CRT Council. That may seem all well and good, until we remember that the only 'power' the Council has is to appoint (and 'un-appoint!') the Trustees; everything else it does is purely advisory. The attendance records of CRT Council members (and the sad lack of attendance of Trustees at the two Council meetings a year!) is very depressing and indicates that the whole governance model is seriously questionable—this is a charity, after all.

However, it is no use just standing around and saying that things are wrong: we need people in the tent! And we also need NABO to keep up its vital role as a true 'critical friend' of CRT—and, indeed, of EA and other navigational authorities.

So, don't just moan and twitter, get onboard. You can't drive the boat from the towpath—unless you are a horse, I suppose.

Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at the Council meeting in June



NABO calendar 2015

Dates for Council Meetings in 2015: 5th September, 17th October, 14th November (AGM).

Council meetings are held at boat clubs in the Midlands area—see the website for details.

Remember that members are welcome to attend meetings—please just let the Secretary or Chairman know in advance (contact details p4)

Back to Wolverhampton Boat Club, where a stolen narrowboat had been found the day before and was awaiting the attentions of the boys in blue. There was a full turnout of twelve members, including Frank and Gillian Spagg and David Lowe from the Commercial Boat Operators Association.

There's been another towpath 'accident' in which a pensioner was knocked down by a cyclist, losing two teeth and needing twelve stitches. The police say no crime was committed and CRT still says more cyclists are injured than other towpath users. NABO will continue monitoring the situation to identify problem hotspots.

There are now 19 CRT mooring sites where overstay charges are being applied. These are not only for overstaying on one visit, but also for exceeding a maximum number of days allowed per month, which is causing problems for some shared ownership boats whose owners may be unaware of how many times previous crews have used a particular mooring.

Yet more on the new continuous cruiser enforcement: CRT will provide sighting data, but may now take up to 40 days to produce it because it takes ages to extract it from their system. The Trust also wants continuous cruisers to provide ID before

releasing the data, including a utility bill in the list of options!

Boaters say they like winter mooring permits, which last year allowed them to 'take their mooring with them' (i.e. moor wherever they liked for five months), but some local councils are less impressed. Problems caused by boaters colonising towpaths, issues with parked cars etc. have caused the locals to be up in arms in some areas. Although the income to CRT was a (rumoured) useful £300k, the scheme is now in doubt because of planning law – boats staying more than 28 days require an authorised change of use for the piece of land. NABO supports the earlier system of allocating winter moorings at fixed named sites and would be unhappy to see their wholesale cancellation.

NABO's response to CRT's changes to the licence T&Cs has been well-received by boaters, with numbers on its Facebook page who support its position growing every day and new members joining. CRT hasn't responded to NABO's submission and a new letter will soon be winging its way to CRT Towers.

Finally, a discussion of boaters' places in the CRT Council elections next winter. There was a collective 'one-step-backwards' at the meeting with no-one stepping forward to offer their services, the consensus being that the posts have little power to influence anything. But NABO will talk to other waterway organisations to see if they can identify someone who is willing to represent boaters. I'm off now for a summer on the waterways – so byeeee until September.

Membership Matters

We confused a few members last month by sending out membership application forms. They were intended for you to hand out on the towpath to attract new members and there is no need for you to reapply for membership every year. We send you a renewal notice when it is due and all we ask is that you respond to that, particularly if your address, phone or email has changed.

We are progressing with the move away from standing order payments to our Santander account. A big thank you to all members with renewal in the April to June period who have helped with this. Now it only applies to about 80 of the longer-term members who pay to this old account. We will write to you at the time of the next renewal if it affects you. If you want to check now, the sort codes of our banks are Barclays 20-37-13 and Santander 09-01-51.

Most of our members pay by standing order.... if you do not, please consider it. It saves on administration time, and means we can spend more of our time boating too. We will send details with your renewal. Most new members these days join with PayPal, because it can be done on-line there and then. This is great, and easy on administration, but the downside is that

it costs us about £1 per payment. If this applies to you, is there any chance of changing to standing order?

We are still very focused on paper systems with renewals going out this way. The Council are thinking about paperless membership as an option for the future. The saving in dealing by email is worth having. About 70 members elect not to take a paper copy of NABO News, and this is a saving too. The enormous growth of our Facebook site is another indication of the needs of our newer members. Is now the time to introduce an electronic membership at a different cost? Do let us know your views.

And finally, we understand that members do sell their boats and go ashore. It is part of the normal cycle of membership that we have always seen. Please tell us if that applies to you. If you continue to receive NABO News after your renewal date has passed, it is a sure indication that we are hoping and expecting you will renew. We do not cancel your membership for a couple of months in case you are away boating and missed the renewal. So please just let us know; it saves our time writing again, and checking and checking.

Now it's your turn...

The Annual General Meeting of the National Association of Boat Owners

Now is the time for you to join the dedicated souls that make up NABO Council and stand for election for 2015–2016, so you can have even more say in what we do.

The Council meets around seven times per year and the work is rewarding and interesting ... and occasionally frustrating. You'll learn what goes on behind the scenes and make new friends into the bargain. If you feel you might be out of your depth, worry not; one of us will act as your mentor to help you with the few formalities. Don't be shy!

Full details and the nomination form are on pages 16 and 17 of this issue.



Could you wake this lot up? Join NABO Council and make things happen.



Where is the Canal? David Young

Lost Wonders of the Waterways

The 'Lost Wonders of our Waterways World' competition was won by David Youngs with his photo 'Where is the canal?' of Horse Park Bridge on the northern reaches of the Lancaster Canal. David received £500 of photography vouchers. Two runners-up, who each received £250 of vouchers, were David Hopley, with an image of Walbut Locks on the Pocklington Canal, and Angela Marks, with her photo of Combe Hay Locks on the Somerset Coal Canal. There were more than 200 photos submitted to highlight the dozens of canal restoration schemes either planned or underway.

The judges were Jack Perks, an independent photographer, Geraint Coles and Vaughan Welch of IWA's Restoration Committee and Jason Leach, CRT's Midlands enterprise and restoration team leader. Jack Perks said: "There were

some beautiful and technically sophisticated images submitted, but we were unanimous in our selection of the top three. They really capture the spirit of the waterways and are poignant portraits of a fading treasure. I think people will see them and feel that they really are part of our history worth saving."

All the competition entries can be viewed at canalrivertrust.org.uk/gallery/view-all/lost-wonders-of-the-waterways-world-photograph-competition-2015/page/1

Details of canal restorations can be found at canalrivertrust.org.uk/restoration or details of planned and ongoing canal restorations at www.waterways.org.uk



Combe Hay Locks. Angela Marks

Walbut Locks. David Hopley



New moorings in Leeds

The North East Waterway Partnership has overseen the creation of four new moorings on the Aire and Calder Navigation and one has had its stay time increased:

- Knostrop Lock top (5 days)
- Leeds services pontoon (72 hours)
- Leeds Lock tail (72 hours)
- Brewery Wharf (48 hours)
- Fearn's Wharf (72 hours)

An agreement has also been reached with the owner of moorings in Granary Wharf to make them free of charge for visiting boats. A water point above Office Lock has been brought back into use and the Partnership is encouraging provision of a pumpout facility below Office Lock.



and in Little Venice

The moorings are on the east side of Little Venice Pool alongside the Green Flag Rembrandt Gardens, Warwick Avenue, London, W2 [google.co.uk/maps/@51.52103,-0.18243,17](https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@51.52103,-0.18243,17). There are two moorings, which may be booked for a maximum of seven days. 14 days may be booked in each calendar year but there must be at least a calendar month between each booking. You will

need to include your name and address and boat length, beam and index number when making a booking (first come, first served). The closest sanitary station is through the bridge on the west side of the pool. Land access is through the gardens during opening hours or through Stone Wharf and under the A40. Paddington and Warwick Avenue tube stations are five minutes' walk. To make a booking, send your request to rembrandtgardens@gmail.com and they will provide a provisional confirmation if your dates are available.



Transformer by Trent

In June, a huge 270-tonne electricity transformer was delivered to Staythorpe power station on the River Trent. The transformer was delivered to Hull and then loaded onto the 'Inland Navigator', a converted former river tanker barge, owned and operated by Robert Wynn and Sons. The barge can carry abnormal indivisible loads of up to 300 tonnes on the waterway network between Leeds, Nottingham, York and Hull. The journey up the Trent replaced an 85-mile road delivery, which was not only quicker, but also prevented disruption on the region's road network.

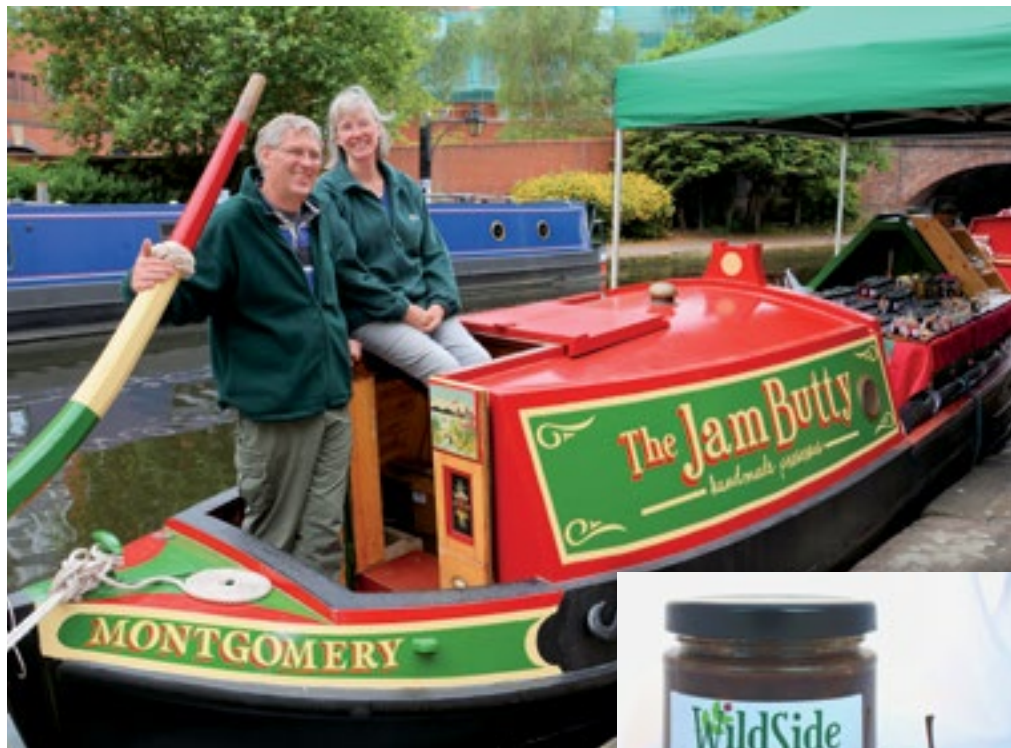
Inland Navigator in Cromwell Lock near Newark

Photo: Malcolm Slater



Roving traders

A look at people who make a living from waterway-based trading. This time, it's Helen and Andy Tidy with their 'Jam Butty'.



After a bad accident in 2010, Helen was left with impaired vision and chronic neuralgia, making her unable to continue her academic career. As part of her convalescence she spent a lot of time aboard our narrowboat 'Wand'ring Bark', taking things easy and watching the world go by.

As her strength returned she began collecting fruit and making small quantities of



jam. Then word got around and people began asking for her preserves, and within a few months the Wild Side brand was born.

For more information about Wild Side Handmade Preserves visit wildsidepreserves.co.uk

or check us out on Facebook at facebook.com/wildsidepreserves

Floating markets 2015:

Ellesmere Arm, 17-19 July; Merry Hill embankment above shopping centre, 21-23 August; Stourport, York St. lock, 4-6 Sept; Birmingham, NIA and Sheepcote towpath, 25-27 Sept.

The business maintains strong ties with the canals as many of the ingredients are picked from the towpaths (with the blessing of CRT) and the end results are mainly sold at canal festivals in and around the Midlands.

The concept was initially to operate from a table at the stern of our 42ft boat, but the limitations of this space soon became apparent. We toyed with the idea of buying a larger boat or stretching our current one, but then we thought, why not operate from a second towed boat which would, of course, be called 'The Jam Butty'?

The Jam Butty was successfully launched at the floating market at Birmingham in 2014 where we invited those traders present to a wonderful evening of Pimms, beer and preserves, which we all thoroughly enjoyed. In a few years' time we plan to cruise extensively in the summer months, picking wild fruit, making preserves and selling our wares as we go.

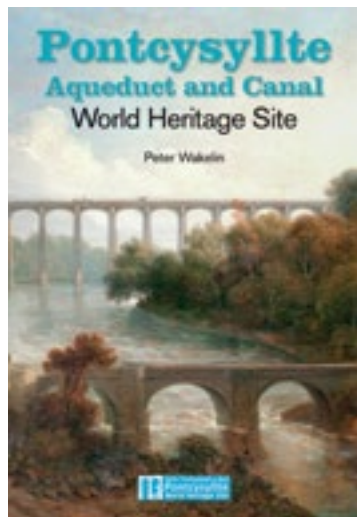
For the time being, however, the small matter of Andy's day job limits our reach to about a week's cruising from our Staffs & Worcs base. If you see us out on the cut do give us a wave, or better still buy some delicious jam!

Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal : World heritage site

A new book written by historian Dr Peter Wakelin examines how and why the ('pont-cussull-the' meaning 'the bridge that joins') aqueduct and canal were built 200 years ago, how they influenced the Industrial Revolution and what is there to see today—the aqueducts, tunnels, cuttings, embankments, wharfs, settlements and remains of industries.

Topics include engineers, Thomas Telford and William Jessop, canal navvies, boat people, wildlife and other nearby world heritage sites. Maps, diagrams, historical photographs, paintings and reconstruction images illustrate the text and bring the story of the canal to life.

An image from the book:
J.C. Edwards Brickworks workers



Buy the book

For £9 from CRT offices at Trevor Basin, Anderton Boat Lift, Standedge Tunnel and the Ellesmere Port, Gloucester and Stoke Bruerne museums.

By post, send a cheque for £12.50 (inc. P&P), payable to Canal & River Trust, to Jenny Rogers, National Waterway Museum, South Pier Road, Ellesmere Port, CH65 4FW with your postal details

Email a contact number to jenny.rogers@canalrivertrust.org.uk to purchase by credit card.

Come and join us ...

at The Annual General Meeting of the National Association of Boat Owners

Nominations must reach us by 9th October 2015

Please send the General Secretary any **Resolutions** you wish put before the AGM meeting with the names of proposer and seconder by 2nd October.

Please send to:

gen.sec@nabo.org.uk

or by post to;

RICHARD CARPENTER,
PO Box 104, Leyland
PR25 9AN

The NABO AGM is on Saturday 14th November at the Wolverhampton Boat Club, Barnhurst Lane, Bilbrook, Wolverhampton, WV8 1RS (by boat it is on the Shropshire Union Canal, about one mile up from Autherley Junction). We will start at 10.30 am with the AGM formal business, followed by a presentation and discussion. After a light lunch, there will be a meeting of the new Council, to which NABO members are welcome.

This year, why not make a decision to join the dedicated band of discontents (only joking guys and gals!) that represent our increasing membership and stand for election to NABO Council for 2015–2016? The Council meets around seven times per year and the work is rewarding and interesting, giving an in-depth insight into what is really happening on (and to) our water-

ways. You'll learn what goes on behind the scenes and make some new friends along the way. There are few formalities and you can choose how much or little you are able to contribute—either from the comfort of your home or out and about at meetings. This year, the Council really needs people with social media skills to help with supporting our Facebook and Twitter presence, so if this is you, don't be shy—let us know.

Please complete the nomination form in this issue, photocopy it if you would rather keep your NABO News intact, and then return it to Richard Carpenter, General Secretary, by 9th October. If you don't have anyone to propose and second you, just phone one of the Council members and we can sort that out. Please use the space on the nomination form for necessary declarations or include them on an attached sheet.

In relation to nominations, the NABO Constitution states:-

Only full members are eligible to be nominated for election to, or to be members of, the Council.

Any member seeking election or re-election to the Council who is, or has at any time in the previous 12 months, held any position of influence or authority in any organization which is involved with the inland waterways, or has any personal interest which is likely to affect their dealings with outside bodies on behalf of the Association, shall declare their interest at the time of being nominated for the Council.

Any member seeking election or re-election to the Council shall declare the full circumstances and current status at the time of being nominated for the Council if he or she is, or has been at any time in the previous six years:

- convicted of any criminal offence,
- involved in or threatened with litigation,
- involved in or threatened with formal insolvency proceedings,
- or the subject of a formal inquiry.

Nomination form for the Nabo Council

Nominee

Name

Address:

Tel:

Email:

Boat name:

Signature and Date:

Proposer*

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Seconder

Name:

Address:

Tel:

In 80 words or less, please tell members why they should elect you to NABO Council:

Any declarations required by the Constitution:

Send to: RICHARD CARPENTER, PO Box 104, Leyland, PR25 9AN to arrive by 9th October 2015

*If you don't have anyone to propose and second you, don't worry, just phone one of the Council members and we can sort that out for you.

Please use the space on the nomination form for necessary declarations, or include an attached sheet.

Signposts to support

Sean Williams looks back on his first eight months as CRT's Welfare Officer



Photo : Elliot Kennedy/CRT Waterfront

Sean Williams joined the Canal and River Trust on 3rd November 2014 as their first Welfare Officer. He previously worked as a tenancy sustainment officer for a Hertfordshire housing association.

Sean's remit includes:

- Helping vulnerable boaters find the right solutions for their issues and particular circumstances.
- Working in partnership with the Waterway Chaplaincy and a network of external organisations to provide welfare assistance to those in need.
- Providing expert advice for staff, volunteers, and stakeholders on matters involving vulnerable boaters.
- Establishing the Trust's policies on vulnerable boaters and assisting in its compliance with relevant legislation.

A mighty task for one man! But, thanks in the main to NABO Council member Mark Tizard, CRT are at last acknowledging that their unwanted role as housing provider comes with some responsibilities to the least able of their customers.

Sean Williams can be contacted at sean.williams@canalrivertrust.org.uk

It's mid-June, the sun is almost shining and summer feels like it's just around the corner. I can't believe it's almost eight months since I started working for the Canal & River Trust.

My role as the Trust's Welfare Officer is to put in place a signposting support system for vulnerable boaters, to ensure that the advice and support they get is consistent.

I've been busy carrying out some research to see what some of the issues and concerns are. I wanted to experience as much as I could and I thought a hands-on approach was the best way.

My role is to put in place a signposting support system to ensure that advice and support to vulnerable boaters is consistent.

I've spent time with internal teams, external agencies, boating organisations, local authorities, the Department for Work and Pensions, housing benefit teams and enforcement officers. I've met a number of vulnerable boaters and walked a fair few miles along the towpath (my muscles have only just stopped complaining).

Making Connections

I've met with the Waterways Chaplaincy and I've even been out on a few narrowboats. On top of that I've met with or spoken to national charities like Thames Reach, Citizens Advice and Turn 2 Us, and

outreach teams like Julian House in Bath. I've also looked at old cases to get a better understanding of the issues and, more importantly, I have met with lots of boaters to discuss their concerns. The research was interesting and informative and I saw that a lot of good work goes unnoticed, both internally and externally, despite some very good, compassionate solutions being found. That said, there are areas we can improve on and that's part of the reason I'm here.

Signposting people to appropriate agencies for the help they need

So what is my role in this? Primarily, I will be working on building support networks and relationships with relevant support agencies and partners, and getting this information to our local teams so that they can correctly signpost people to the places that can help. A key part of my role is to improve partnership working, so that when signposting is offered, the relevant support network knows what its responsibilities are. In between meetings, I've reviewed or advised on 70 cases since I started: 35 have been resolved (without the need for legal action) and 35 are still 'live'. I want to share some of the issues that came up and how they were resolved.

- We helped a boater who no longer wanted to live on a boat but didn't know how to get housing on land. The boater was signposted to the Citizens Advice Bureau and I liaised with the local authority, which didn't have much experience with the boating world. Further support networks were also engaged and the boater was happily re-housed.
- We signposted a boater, who wanted help to stop drinking, to a charity called Turning Point www.turning-point.co.uk which

specialises in helping people to make a change in their life. The boater is working with them and has seen a big change in (his/her) health, wellbeing and financial situation.

- Several backdated claims for benefits were paid to boaters. We en-

[Of] 70 cases since I started, 35 have been resolved without the need for legal action.

gaged the Waterways Chaplains to help with applications and they supported the boaters through challenging decisions: this proved effective as the claims were then processed, backdated and paid out. In some situations where benefits were not eligible, we signposted boaters to www.Turn2us.co.uk, which has access to grants and benefit calculators. We then arranged payment plans with the boat licensing team.

- It's been fantastic working with the Waterways Chaplaincy team, who have been instrumental in resolving several concerns over unlicensed, uninsured boats. These have been sorted out and no further issues have arisen.

Partnership

So much of the above has been about great partnership work. We hope we haven't just resolved a situation; we have supported people and empowered them to be able to understand what they need to do. This should in turn allow them to manage their own situation in the future and build a more sustainable lifestyle. I look forward to meeting with as many NABO News readers as possible but hopefully (and I mean this in the nicest possible way!) in situations that don't require support.

All the best, Sean.

Toeing the line

So what is CRT's enforcement strategy?

Mark Tizard summarises the present situation.

Members will recall that in recent editions of NABO News we have written about CRT's push on enforcement of continuous cruising and our concerns regarding the approach that CRT is taking. The vast majority of NABO members are unlikely to be concerned with this. Of course, the proviso is that it leads to affected boaters cruising within a range that is acceptable to CRT, rather than causing an increase in unlicensed and uninsured boats—beware the curse of unintended consequences!

“Our sightings records are never going to be a full cruising log. As I see it, if a boat moves from A to B to C and we don't record them at B, then this will not cause us concern as we would still log the distance that a boat has travelled as A to C. However, if a boat moves from A to B, then turns round and cruises back to A and we miss recording the boat at B, then we will have missed logging the distance A to B. In reality, I need to understand how often do people keep turning around and cover the same stretch again and how best to advise a customer to log a change of direction.”

A three-tier approach

The statistics seen by NABO in February this year show that 16% of all boats with no declared home mooring cruised less than 5 km in the previous 12 months and a further 50% cruised less than 20 km—so in total two-thirds of boaters without a home mooring cruised less than 20 km per year. CRT explained that it

intended to introduce a three-tier approach to enforcement:

Tier 1: Boaters who had cruised, or continued to cruise, less than 5 km per year would be warned that their licence would not be renewed on expiry, unless they immediately started cruising at a Tier 2 level.

Tier 2: Boaters who cruised less than 20 km per year would be offered a reduced licence period upon renewal, until their cruising range exceeded 20 km—in which case they would move to Tier 3.

Tier 3: Boaters whose cruising pattern was of no concern to CRT would remain unaffected.

NABO supported this approach. We felt that focussing on Tier 1 boats would have a trickle-down effect and result in the need for less enforcement, because Tier 2 boaters would recognise that CRT was serious in its intent and move their cruising range to Tier 3.

NABO was asked to support a minimum cruising requirement and refused. We believe IWA's suggestion of a minimum of 500 miles a year to be unrealistic and unenforceable. NABO believes that it is for CRT, as the navigation authority, to decide whether boaters are using their boat bona fide for navigation as required by their licence and where necessary to enforce this accordingly.

At the same time as CRT announced its new enforcement push, it also undertook to rush through changes to the licensing terms and conditions (T&Cs). This was driven by the legal department rather than Customer Services (respon-

On the radar?

If you are concerned that your cruising pattern may attract CRT's attention then we recommend that you take the following actions:

- Start keeping a log of your movements with evidence of the places where you have stayed.
- Obtain a copy of CRT's sighting data on a regular basis (e.g. quarterly) to see if it corresponds with your own data. Don't worry if there are gaps, as long as the greatest range of movement is accurate. Advise CRT if this is not the case by contacting sarina.young@canalrivertrust.org.uk.
- Ensure that you move to a new place every 14 days. Inform CRT's local enforcement team if you are unable to do so (e.g. through ill-health or mechanical breakdowns). You can find a list of enforcement officers and their contact details at canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/library/8515-enforcement-officer-regions-and-contact-details.pdf.
- If you receive confirmation that you will be offered a reduced licence, reply enclosing the details of your log and asking for CRT's sighting data. If you are still offered a short-term licence, request confirmation of the reasons why you have not been offered a full licence and ask for guidance on what additional cruising pattern will satisfy them. If you consider that this is reasonable, you should adapt your cruising pattern accordingly—again keeping a log.
- If you are still refused a full-term licence then you should consider getting your own legal advice. Legal advice is available at the Community Law Partnership communitylawpartnership.co.uk. There are also extensive resources and commentaries on your rights at kanda.boatingcommunity.org.uk, help can also be found at NBTA bargee-traveller.org.uk



sible for boating) to coincide with the push on enforcement. We have previously documented our opposition to many of the changes to the T&Cs. CRT now states that boaters WITH a home mooring will become subject to exactly the same enforcement criteria as boaters without a home mooring when they are away from their home mooring. NABO believes this is beyond CRT's powers and is talking to its legal advisors for confirmation.

Sighting data

At licence renewal time, CRT now issues letters to all boaters without a home mooring advising of the requirement to continuously cruise, but it gives no guidance as to what this might mean in terms of distance covered (but it does not issue these

letters to boaters with a home mooring who might now be subject to the same level of enforcement—still with me?). Many boaters who have never been on CRT's radar were upset by the tone of the letter and questioned why CRT had contacted them (this is seen by some people as being the same as Tesco writing to all club-card holders advising them that they will be prosecuted if they are caught shoplifting). This is not good PR, given that many boaters support the premise of CRT enforcement against boaters who do not move.

As a result, many boaters have requested and reviewed their sighting data held by CRT. In some cases they have become concerned that it might not be as accurate as they were led to believe. Under constant social media pressure and despite its initial

The Community Law Partnership is one of the organisations focusing on threats to people's homes

letter, CRT decided to issue guidance to the effect that those boaters who cruise in a range of 15-20 miles or more per year are unlikely to attract its attention, although CRT would normally expect the range to be more than this.

As far as NABO can ascertain, CRT has ignored the three-tier approach highlighted above, which was discussed with and supported by NABO and other waterway organisations. Instead, CRT has focussed on boaters whom it has identified as moving less than 15-20 miles and is offering them shorter 3-6 month licences. The aim is to enable these boaters to change their cruising pattern to one that is acceptable to CRT. The effect is ongoing, and is resulting in more and more boaters requesting their sighting data on a regular basis.

NABO asked CRT why its sighting data is not given to boaters at the time that they are offered a limited-period licence. We were told that the current data-recording system makes it a time-consuming exercise to produce this information (although boaters invariably ask for it anyway!). We were also told that new sighting software is being introduced in June, which will make the

data more accurate. We wonder why this was not tested and introduced before this latest enforcement push. CRT enforcement must now be groaning under the weight of sighting requests, which probably would not have happened if the initial phased approach had been followed.

After requests by members, NABO approached CRT for advice on what evidence boaters should accumulate to prove their movements. An extract from CRT's reply is as follows:

'Our sightings records are never going to be a full cruising log. As I see it, if a boat moves from A to B to C and we don't record them at B, then this will not cause us concern as we would still log the distance that a boat has travelled as A to C. However, if a boat moves from A to B, then turns round and cruises back to A and we miss recording the

CRT now states that boaters WITH a home mooring will become subject to exactly the same enforcement criteria when they are away from their home mooring.

boat at B, then we will have missed logging the distance A to B. In reality, I need to understand how often do people keep turning around and cover the same stretch again and how best to advise a customer to log a change of direction.'

Meanwhile, as a result of a recent legal challenge in which the defendant has been granted leave to appeal to the High Court, we understand that further Section 8 (boat removal)

cases have been put on hold, pending the outcome—so watch this space.

NABO believes that CRT's guidance (that boaters should cruise in a range of 20-25 miles over the course of a licence) is not unreasonable and will not present any difficulties to the vast majority of boaters without a home mooring. It should be noted that many of the boaters who are affected by the change in enforcement policy are not 'live-aboards,' but leave their boats on moorings for extended periods.

However, we also believe that boaters who come within CRT's enforcement radar should be given accurate sighting data that enables them to modify their cruising pattern. After all, the object of the exercise is not to remove boats from the waterways. In the meantime, hopefully, some of the additional legal expenditure by CRT could instead be used to ensure that additional moorings and facilities are available outside the prime congestion areas to encourage and support additional movement.



'George' and 'Mosssdale' restoration

George is a rare Leeds and Liverpool Canal horse-drawn 'short boat' and Mosssdale is the last remaining all-wooden Mersey flat, both at The National Waterway Museum at Ellesmere Port. They will be fully restored to their original condition, with George spending summers on the L&L as part of a community outreach and education project.



Council experience

One of CRT Council boaters' representatives **Ivor Caplan** looks back over the last three years.



Ivor Caplan

My experiences as a Boaters' Representative on CRT Council will hopefully be of general interest to NABO members but more specifically to those who may be considering seeking nomination for the election later this year. Looking back over the three years it is clear that it has been a learning curve for all those involved, both Council members and CRT managers, and I am confident that those taking this on will have a greater understanding of the role and expectations.

To reiterate the objectives of Council as stated; it has an important role in helping to shape policy,

We have been fully aware of a dichotomy between representing boaters who elected us and acting in the interests of the Trust.

raising and debating issues, providing guidance and perspective and acting as a sounding board for the Trustees. It also has the power to appoint or dismiss Trustees. In a

legal sense, Council members are the Members of the Canal & River Trust and as such they have certain responsibilities under charity law.

It is worth making it clear exactly what Council members cannot be expected to achieve in terms of representing their constituents, as I do believe that this could have been explained better in the early days of CRT. We were not representatives in the sense of being mandated to take particular positions on particular issues. I have been made aware that this is a disappointment to some boaters, who believed that we were elected to bring to Council any specific concerns that they had with the Trust, either as individuals, groups or organisations. We have been fully aware of something of a dichotomy between representing the boaters who have elected us and acting in the interests of the Trust and its charitable objectives as a whole, taking into account the views of other Members.

I believe that we have resolved this by acting as a sounding board, taking to Council debates a general perspective on our constituency. As an example of this, I believe that we have kept navigation, and more specifically boating, high on the CRT agenda. This may seem an obvious point to NABO members but, in the early days of the Trust, there appeared to be a shift towards other waterways users.

I am pleased to report that throughout Council there has been a general understanding of the importance of boats and the vitality and economic benefits that they bring;

If you want to stand for the CRT Council

Election to the Council take place in November with nominations opening on 11 September 2015. If you're thinking of standing, you have just under three months to prepare your manifesto and find sponsors.

The Council is made up of 40 nominated, co-opted or elected members as well as the Chairs of the waterway partnerships. The elections will decide four posts representing the interests of private boaters and, for the first time, elected posts for volunteers and people who make a regular donation to support our work maintaining the waterways. Council members will take up their four-year voluntary post from March 2016.

All the information about eligibility and nominations is here: canalrivertrust.org.uk/councilelections2015

people simply like to see boats on the move. We have also been in a position to assist individual boaters by directing their concerns to the

I would like to see future representatives on CRT Council covering the widest range of boaters.

relevant manager within the Trust and can report that we have always received cooperation. The results may not have always satisfied individual boaters but at least I hope that they have had a fair hearing and reasoned response.

Council meeting time has been limited and focused on reporting back to members. It is fair criticism that time to have meaningful discussions has been limited and I hope that this will be addressed. However, as boaters' representatives we have been able to influence the agenda and ensure that boating matters were fully addressed. As one example, we took a paper on encouraging more young people onto the waterways and, following a constructive debate, this was discussed by Trustees and contributed towards the Trust's strategy on this vital issue.

For those who want to find out more about how the Trust operates and take an active part, I would certainly recommend seeking nomination to Council. Like many things, you get as much as you want to put into it; influencing the direction of the Trust is possible if not easy. I would like to see the future representatives on CRT Council covering the widest range of boaters; leisure and residential, continuous cruising and with home moorings, narrowboats and cruisers, members of waterways organisations and non-joiners. Of course that's up to you!

Low attendances at CRT Council meetings

Allan Richards examines the figures

After a Council meeting in March, CRT is to review attendance levels. This is because more than one-third of Council members failed to attend the meeting held at Dudley in the West Midlands. The Trustees blame nominated Council members and have decided that a review is to be carried out by the CRT Trustees and Council Appointments Committee.

Just 22 out of 34 Council members attended the last Council meeting. However, the minutes also record that just four trustees found the time to attend the full Council meeting with one attending part of it. What the minutes don't record is that six trustees failed to attend—a poorer attendance record than Council members!

Poor attendance at Council meetings is nothing new. At the previous Council meeting in September 2014, which included CRT's second AGM, about one-third of members and half the trustees failed to attend. Yet CRT's trustees criticised Council members for their poor attendance.

Surely they should put their own house in order regarding attendance before criticising the Council members. Better still, perhaps the Trustees should also review if the Council is making any meaningful contribution to the governance of the Trust.

First published at narrowboatworld.com

Roll of Shame

Council members who did not attend:

Alison Ward, Welsh Local Government; Charlotte Atkins, Chair Central Shires Partnership; Charles Trotman, Country Land & Business Association; Chris Bailey, Employee Representative; Chloe Donovan, Co-optee, National Council for Voluntary Youth Services; Mark Lang, Chair All Wales Partnership; Mark Penny, Chair North East Partnership; Martyn Brunt, Sustrans; Paul Owen, British Canoeing; Rafid Al Khaddar, Society for the Environment; Tony Matfs, Boating Business Representative; Walter Menzies, Chair Manchester & Pennine Partnership

Trustees who did not attend:

Jane Cotton; Manish Chande; Ben Gordon; Steve Shine; Simon Thurley; Allan Leighton.

Something rotten in the apple cart

The Waterways Ombudsman Scheme

Intrepid investigator **Allan Richards** uncovers some uncomfortable facts about this little-known area of waterways administration.

All the ombudsman's reports and the committee minutes can be downloaded here; www.waterways-ombudsman.org/publications/

Photos opposite: the current Ombudsman, Andrew Walker, and his predecessor, Hilary Bainbridge.

The Waterways Ombudsman Scheme is not something that is at the forefront of boaters' concerns. Indeed, most are only vaguely aware of this service and only start finding out about it if they feel they have a grievance against the Canal and River Trust that is not being addressed to their satisfaction by the Trust's two-stage internal complaints procedure.

However, the Waterways Ombudsman Scheme has been in operation for many years. Its rules last received a major overhaul in 2005 as the result of a BW consultation regarding openness and accountability. The overhaul improved the independence of the scheme such that it was recognised for full membership of the British and Irish Ombudsman Association (now simply called the Ombudsman Association). According to the Ombudsman Association, a model Ombudsman scheme is designed to provide protection for the individual where there is a substantial imbalance of power.

Independence

The success of such schemes depends to a large extent on ensuring that they are administered by committees that are demonstrably independent. In the case of British Waterways this independence was ensured by having the eight committee members falling into three distinct groups. Two members represented British Waterways, three represented users of the scheme (ap-

pointed by the British Waterways Advisory Forum) and a further three, including the group's chair, were 'independent' (i.e. they had no connection with the waterways). CRT Trustees resolved to adopt BW's scheme with some minor changes.

Duties

Duties of the 'arm's length and independent' Waterways Ombudsman Committee include the exclusive power to appoint, remove from office, and set the terms and conditions of employment of the Waterways Ombudsman and ensure that remuneration is appropriate. Further duties include ensuring that an annual report is published, detailing the committee's activities and also those of the Ombudsman.

Under BW, the committee met once or twice per year, always producing minutes. These, together with annual reports, can still be found on the Waterways Ombudsman website (www.waterways-ombudsman.org).

The duty of the Waterways Ombudsman is to consider complaints of injustice that arise from maladministration or unfair treatment by BW/CRT or its subsidiaries and to make recommendations and/or awards of up to £100,000.

Appointments

Since 2005, the rules of the scheme stipulate that committee members may serve no more than two terms of office of up to three years. The chair, Professor Jeffrey Jowell QC, was appointed initially to serve until



THE WATERWAYS OMBUDSMAN

30th April 2008, but was reappointed to serve a further three years, and subsequently, following a temporary revision to the rules, a short third term.

A new Ombudsman, Hilary Bainbridge, was appointed in 2005, replacing Stephen Edell who had been the Waterways Ombudsman since 1997. Ms Bainbridge also served two terms of office and a shortened third term following a temporary revision to the rules. She was replaced by the current Ombudsman, Andrew Walker, in November 2012.

Two complaints

My first experience of the Waterways Ombudsman Scheme dates back to 2005/6 when I made a complaint concerning BW's treatment of shared owners. The complaint was partially upheld and although I had one or two minor quibbles on the handling of the complaint, the scheme appeared to be working well.

Unfortunately, my experience when making a complaint more recently was totally different, with the current Waterways Ombudsman seemingly being reluctant to consider the complaint and obstructive in dealing with it. At first I put this down to a different way of working

to Ms Bainbridge but later the alarm bells started ringing when the Ombudsman produced a draft report finding in my favour, but not making any recommendation to prevent further maladministration occurring.

Sham scheme

The penny dropped when I found that the Waterways Ombudsman website held no record of minutes of Waterways Ombudsman Committee meetings since May 2011 and no annual reports since 2011/12. Despite a resolution by the Trustees that CRT would continue running BW's 'arm's length and independent' scheme, and contrary to information published on both CRT and Waterways Ombudsman websites, the scheme was no longer in operation.



In response to a request for information made in June 2014, CRT tacitly admitted maladministration saying it was intended to reform a committee to administer the scheme. It also stated that, despite supposedly having two appointees on the Waterways Ombudsman Committee, it held no copies of 'missing' annual reports and no copies of minutes of meetings subsequent to May 2011. In short, CRT had been caught out running a sham Waterways Ombudsman Scheme.

Andrew Walker

The admitted absence of a Waterways Ombudsman Committee gave rise to further evidence of maladministration. Under the rules of the scheme (as adopted by CRT's Trustees), the new Ombudsman, Andrew Walker, could only be appointed by a quorum of six members of the 'independent and arm's length' committee.

Both Mr Walker and CRT have been asked to provide evidence that he was properly appointed. Both have failed to do so. Indeed, CRT has gone some way to admitting that Andrew Walker was not properly appointed. After some consideration, I withdrew my complaint.

Maladministration continues

It would be good to think that a few heads have rolled following the gross maladministration that has occurred regarding the Waterways Ombudsman Scheme. Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, in re-forming the Waterways Ombudsman Committee, CRT appears to have gone out of its way to ensure that the 'not properly appointed' Waterways Ombudsman is retained and that 'users' (who might have wanted a 'properly appointed' replacement) are excluded from be-

ing members of the committee.

On 16 February 2015, a reconstituted Waterways Ombudsman Committee met under the supposedly 'independent' Chairmanship of Professor Jeffrey Jowell. CRT's appointees to the reconstituted committee were Trustee, Lynn Berry, and Head of Legal, Jackie Lewis. The 'independents' on the committee were three people newly appointed by CRT's Head of Governance, Roger Hanbury.

Also present at the meeting were Andrew Walker and CRT's Assistant Company Secretary, Yetunde Salami, who wrote the minutes. The new 'independents' were told that Professor Jowell was chair of the Waterways Ombudsman Committee and not scheduled to step down until September 2015. This appears to be a complete fabrication!

Professor Jowell stepped down three years ago, having served two terms of office and a shorter third term by temporary revision to the schemes rules. An invitation to CRT to provide evidence that Professor Jowell was appointed for a fourth term has been ignored.

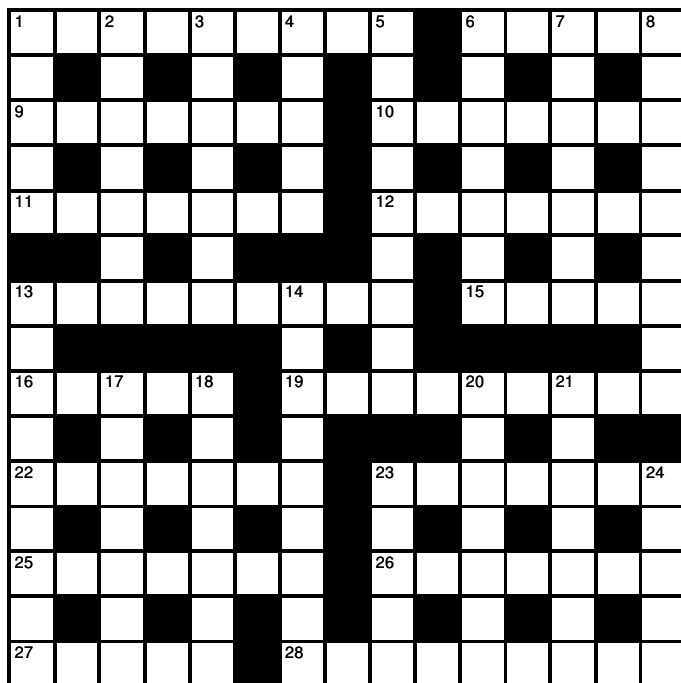
No user involvement

It appears that CRT had already decided that three committee members representing 'users', as required by the scheme's rules, would be excluded from the new committee. No 'users' were invited to attend the meeting and the new 'independents' agreed with CRT that it would be preferable for the reconstituted committee to operate without them.

As such, the rules of the scheme have been changed so that 'users' no longer form part of the committee.... and without 'user' involvement in the committee, CRT has already been able to push through major changes that will disadvantage scheme users.

NABO News crossword 24

By Canaldrifter



I name this boat ...

If you have spotted a boat name that made you smile, please let us have a photo to use in future issues. Here's one from Brian Holt.

Answers to Crossword 23

Across: Across: 1 Animals, 5 Dunnage, 9 Bipartite, 10 Piles, 11 Rounded, 12 Snubber, 13 Sedgellike, 15 Exits, 17 Laden, 19 Top planks, 22 Tipcats, 25 Run into, 26 Rhone, 27 Backering, 28 Lighter, 29 Lantern.

Down: 1 Alberts, 2 Impounded, 3 Abridge, 4 Spindrift, 5 Deeps, 6 Neptune, 7 Ad-lib, 8 Ensures, 14 Empirical, 16 Ion engine, 17 Lateral, 18 Nearest, 20 Linnean, 21 Shotgun, 23 Prong, 24 Sober.

Across

- 1 Bosun rant about the junction (9)
- 6 Star in a Rolls Royce going very fast! (5)
- 9 Why a car can turn under the bridge? (7)
- 10 About men on a southern canal (7)
- 11 A meal for a platter? (3-4)
- 12 Time spent hanging around a rough bar in port! (7)
- 13 I am shortly to reconcile the present (9)
- 15 Present broken poetry (5)
- 16 Get on a launch? (5)
- 19 The greatest talk more than the others! (9)
- 22 Saw it wasn't frozen over? (7)
- 23 Made certain of being definite in the end (7)
- 25 Outcast from the reticent (7)
- 26 A broad region for neither people? (7)
- 27 Supports for loobies on working boats (5)
- 28 Boat specialist turns his hand as a milker! (9)

Down

- 1 Vessels mostly carrying grain? (5)
- 2 Enthusiastic approval for an assertion about a note (7)
- 3 Recent daring tunnel? (7)
- 4 Considered lightly what to do yet, possibly? (5)
- 5 Points to navigational limit at Tewitfield? (5,4)
- 6 Wishes for notices? (7)
- 7 Steer a trip on a Brindley canal? (7)
- 8 Restore a rest cure about right (9)
- 13 I'm hamming around an east coast port (9)
- 14 Cute quads disturbed by long canal bridges (9)
- 17 Arrives in reverse to make improvements (7)
- 18 Historian in a crumpled cat suit (7)
- 20 Ian walks out of the Ruminators breaking the stage (7)
- 21 Look at the car crashing into the gunwale! (3-4)
- 23 Scatter nine around the bend in tedium (5)
- 24 Cruise round a dark port (5)

Rewind 15 years

Tony Haynes continues his look back through NABO News from August 2000

B2MK: BW has bought Sawley Marina. Is this part of their plans to build the first new canal for 100 years from Bedford to Milton Keynes? Talks will soon be taking place with landowners along the old Bletchley to Bedford railway line route.

BSS 'Independent' Review: the panel is formed from BW, the EA and two IWAAC members. Boaters have one representative on the review panel as an observer only. How 'independent' is that?

“The only reason that anglers fish where there are 'No Fishing' signs is because the signs are in the wrong place.”

Baffled by Baffles: BW has consulted with NABO concerning the fitting of baffles to gate paddles. NABO considers them to be dangerous

as they clog up easily and sometimes prevent paddles from closing properly—'dangerous if you are descending a lock and it is jammed open. We told BW this—they haven't listened.'

Leeds and Liverpool

Lock Keys: Because gate paddles are locked, a key will be given to 'competent' boaters. To qualify, find a lock keeper of at least two years' standing and ask him/her to watch you go through a lock. If you are suc-

cessful you may have a key, but you must not share locks, operate locks for anyone or reproduce the key.

Safety Gates Stolen: 'Clapper' gates, to prevent cyclists from speeding on the towing path at Newark, have been stolen.

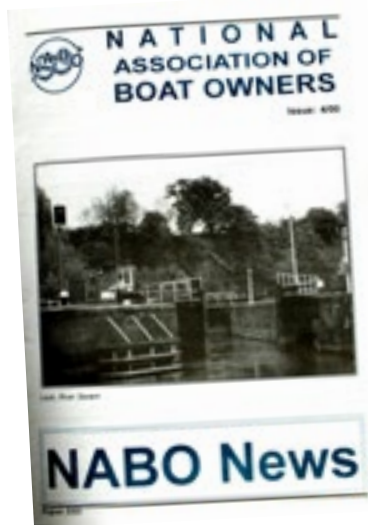
Coconuts: are first spotted floating around in the waterways of North London. A lost cargo from a fair-ground perhaps? NABO News asks readers for further information.

The Sheriff of the G&S: An ex-policeman who speeds up and down the canal in his speed-boat 'Virago' complete with blue light on top has stated to a user forum that he is there to 'make things happen'. He has. In two months he has virtually cleared the canal of moored boats.

Fishy Fishing Quotes from anglers: "I don't believe that lead shot was ever a problem for swans. Some loony found a couple of dead swans, opened them up and found lead shot inside, and so lead shot was banned. Show me the proof; that's what I say! Yes I know that some birds get caught in fishing lines, but that is just another hazard they have to face."

"Boaters always look so glum. I reckon about one in five might raise a smile. Most of them don't even seem to notice that you are there. Only last week I had a big fish on and a boat was coming. I shouted at him to stop, but it was as if he didn't hear me. He kept going, broke my line and I lost the fish."

"The only reason that anglers fish where there are 'No Fishing' signs is because the signs are in the wrong place."



Letters to the Editor

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

Not charges—fines

I've just read the May NABO News and I am very concerned about the quote within it from CRT: 'At the moment we are using volunteer mooring rangers and issuing extended stay charges routinely...'

As someone who was involved with the framing of what became the 1995 Waterways Act, I am very concerned about these 'extended stay charges': they're fines. BW and now CRT cannot impose them. Is there any information about how many people have paid these illegally imposed fines?

Robert Hamilton

Charges at popular moorings—the future?

It just goes to show what a shower of muggings we boaters are. The sums are very simple. CRT promised to take the waterways off Government books. It takes £150 million a year to maintain the canal system properly, but CRT offered to do it for £85 million. So maintenance (already a third of a billion in arrears) gets neglected. Instead they go for cheap hits (low hanging fruit?), like towpath upgrades that help cyclists, walkers and anglers, but not boaters. In the meantime, the only source of income apart from Government (and sporadic bits from the Lottery and the like) is the boaters. The anglers pay peanuts on long-term rights leases, the cyclists and walkers pay nothing. CRT's (and BW's) 'commercial' ventures have been generally financially disastrous—and the CRT executives aren't boaters, they were brought in because of their business acumen, it's believed. The boaters pay the licence and mooring fees, and that's the only certain income CRT has. There are 30,000 or so boats on the system. They pay a thousand or a bit less each all told. That's £30 million a year, or about a third of the meagre sum CRT means to raise. To finance themselves, they need to raise

£3000+ from each boat. And that's with a deteriorating system.

Someone has looked at caravans and thought: "Hey, they pay £10-£50 a night for a pitch". So let's make boaters pay that, 180 days a year at an average of £15 a night is not far off £85 million.... in a few years, that's what you'll be paying. Popular spots like Stratford, Llangollen, etc. £50 a night or more. Hire boats will of course be prepaid (with a commercial discount), but I can't imagine any real concession for shared boats. The old days of the freedom of the waterways were just an indulgence to these days of austerity. After all, we're all in it together, aren't we?

Paul Burke

Boat logs

I want to comment on the issue of logging boats and the potential to miss a boat moving through a place. I regularly decide to take a short trip, especially on an attractive or interesting waterway, and may turn around more than once and do the same stretch of water several times in a season. CRT needs to realise that boaters' use of the waterways varies enormously. It seems reasonable to expect any boat owner to keep a log of each day that the boat is moved and, if there is an issue, to request to see a summary of movements over a certain period of time. 'Innocent until proven guilty'—if the log provided is consistent with sightings then the matter should be closed unless the log itself shows a problem. It could be made a condition of the licence to maintain such a log and keep it on the boat. Many owners use email so they could easily provide such information. CRT could keep a record of boats that have not provided a summary after such a request and their staff could then spot the boat and ask to see the log. What we must avoid is CRT assuming that, because a boat is seen regularly at a particular location, there is a 'violation'.

Dave Turner

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