



# NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners  
Issue 3 July 2016

MEROPE

**ENFORCEMENT : BACK  
TO THE FUTURE**

**SE MOORINGS: SMALL  
CHANGE**

**A 'BOATMAN'S  
HOLIDAY' IN SCOTLAND**



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# NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

**Issue 3 July 2016**

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## 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](mailto:nabonews@nabo.org.uk) by **3rd September 2016**.



## Cover photo

This month's cover photo was taken at the Boat Museum, Ellesmere Port, by Tim Lewis [timlewis.smugmug.com](http://timlewis.smugmug.com).

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.

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## Big skies and lots of reeds

Editor **Peter Fellows** finds his Level

Following the article on the Middle Level in the last issue (my apologies for doubling the number of Levels by the way), I have just returned from a delightful visit along the River Nene and part of the Middle Level. If you like big skies, peace, solitude .... and lots of reeds, then this is the place for you. But it is not to everyone's taste, with straight waterways, high banks in places and few moorings or facilities. Many boaters take the shortest route between the Nene and the Great Ouse. The Commissioners seem to recognise this: on entering the Level, boaters are given a 'Navigation Notes' booklet, in which the Commissioners request boaters to use the 'Link-Route' - sort of saying 'move on, there's nothing to see here'. Unfortunately, the waterway map in the booklet has no scale and does not show any of the winding holes, there are no suggested cruising times between the seven mooring locations and little information on towns and villages that the navigations pass through - in short not much help for visiting boaters to plan their cruise .... Oh,

Middle Level—big skies, peace and solitude .... and lots of reeds!

Photo: Peter Fellows

and there's a fine of up to £5000 if you get caught breaking the speed limit by routine radar speed checks. It all seems very different to the canals.

In this issue, Mark Tizard brings us up to date with CRT's enforcement strategy and, with the assistance of NABO member, Peter Gregory, describes the latest attempt to develop a mooring strategy for London's waterways. The roving trader article is by Sue Cotton on The Herb Boat and for the first time I have included two reports from NABO's regional reps, Howard Anguish in the North East and Joan Jamieson in the East Midlands. This is something I would like to do regularly as our reps are the eyes and ears of the organisation, and I believe they should have wider recognition of the work they do for members. I've been sifting through the data in a report on mooring availability at Berkhamsted and Marsworth, and Helen Hutt reports on her first 'boatman's holiday' in Scotland, taking in the Falkirk Wheel, which is surely near the top of every boater's 'bucket list'. Have a great summer.



## It all boils down to money

Chairman **Mike Rodd** considers the costs of maintaining CRT waterways and taking on the EA's rivers.

As I sit writing this just before the crucial EU in/out decision, it seems to me that we're also facing a series of other critical decisions, related to our beloved waterways.

First, there is another in/out dilemma: the EA/CRT one. We know from the recent EA National Navigation User Forum that the EA's preferred way ahead is for its navigational responsibilities to be taken over by CRT. NABO, along with the River Thames Alliance, is among the very few organisations that have consistently been concerned about this possibility. Personally, the more I appreciate the differences between - and problems relating to - the EA's waterways and CRT's responsibilities, the more concerned I become.

When I talk to permanent lock-keepers (and indeed to some of the volunteers involved), it is clear that so much of their work involves not just seeing boats safely through locks (valuable as that can be) but also water level control and, especially, flood control. What they do is well beyond what volunteers can do and, with the reductions already being made in their numbers, the future issues look very bleak. (Did you know that 'double manning' of locks means a single lock-keeper looking after two locks at the same time? 'Triple manning' is being responsible for three locks simultaneously. This is now common practice on the Thames, with the result that many lock-keepers report that they spend more time driving between locks than actually working them!) So lock-keeping on the rivers is work for skilled people with local expertise, and how CRT

is going to manage just the waterway operations without also being responsible for flood prevention is simply beyond me.

The key issue driving all this, of course, is funding - and with EA already underfunded, especially in terms of the finances needed to maintain their assets, I can't see any way that CRT can justify taking on those responsibilities. Of course, a short-term sweetener 'pot of gold' might be found, but then - as CRT is already seeing in its own financing - any Government grant will inevitably be reduced further down the line. Yes, I know the response will be: "As a charity they will have access to new sources of funding." Oh yes? With more and more areas of our economy having to look for non-Governmental funding, where will that money come from? Can repairing a river lock hope to compete on a level playing-field with providing a new cancer drug?

### Cost of asset maintenance and repairs

Secondly, while we know that CRT's Executive Head of Asset Management and Performance, Julie Sharman, is doing extensive work on the long-term management of CRT's many fragile assets, as users we have to be deeply concerned by the number of failures that we've been seeing this year. I can only base this on what I am seeing and reading personally, but there does appear to be a significant increase in the problems being encountered. As a professional engineer, I fully understand the potential benefits of outsourcing. But I did have to question this when I was

held back for nearly seven hours (together with five hire-boats) by a relatively small tree that had fallen across the canal. This was simply because the contractors had to drive (with all their beautiful specialised equipment) from about 100 miles away to do a job that a locally based person with a saw and a 4x4 could have done in ten minutes (if they still had the saw and the 4x4, that is!).

I also can't help but wonder whether 'maintenance' is being done only when things actually fail. Is that because we boaters are not reporting failing parts of the system, or is CRT unable to react? Again on a personal basis, when we reported a concrete block about to fall out from a lock wall, our local K&A person was soon on the site. But we have also waited for over two years for a couple of locks that we use regularly to have both top paddles working. Yes, yes, I know that time isn't supposed to matter on the canals. Well, perhaps it does if you are running a public trip boat that generates nearly £40K a year for the benefit of the waterway, and you need to offer a reliable service to your customers...

In all fairness, I have to say that my colleagues on the two CRT National Advisory Groups report some very interesting developments – especially on dredging, with attention at last being paid to feedback from boaters, and the introduction of new equipment to support quick spot-dredging. We could certainly do with more of the latter, especially where canals are getting too shallow to allow even existing mooring sites to be usable – especially if, like our Vice Chairman, you have a beautiful but rather deep-draught traditional boat!

This all raises questions about the long-term funding of CRT, especially if it is indeed to take over the very extensive (and expensive) man-

agement of EA's assets – bearing in mind that CRT's own government funding runs out in about 12 years.

We all know that we are dealing with extremely costly, ageing systems – so do we actually need to look more towards introducing more modern techniques, technologies and methods, where these could reduce both short- and long-term costs? Yes, I know there are vital heritage issues to be protected, but surely the amazing modern materials now used to reline canals have set a very important precedent? You don't necessarily have to repair a failing Grade I listed structure using exactly the same techniques or materials employed when it was originally built; in their heyday, the construction of the canals was, after all, an evolving science.

### Modular lockgates

I can't help being frustrated by the lack of interest from CRT in the work we are doing in Wales on alternative lock-gate structures. June



24th saw the launch on the non-CRT section of the Mon & Brec of the first complete set of modular lock gates, produced by a Heritage Lottery funded project team<sup>1</sup>. Sections of these modular, composite gates<sup>2</sup> (steel-based but incorporating sacrificial wooden components) were welded together by a local company and moved by the volunteer-led project team to the lock site—along the existing towpath, on a small trailer pulled by a 4x4. The lock gates were assembled in a day or so, using a lightweight portable crane. These are the first results and more development work is probably still required to hone and prove the design, but with advantages of:

- a life of at least fifty years;
- sacrificial components that can be replaced in situ (for instance, in areas where a boat might push or rub against a gate); and
- no large installation cranes required.

The cost savings are staggering when compared to the traditional oak gate

replacement process. These gates are also, incidentally, far 'greener', given the number of oak trees that have to be chopped down to build a traditional set of gates! Every CRT maintenance yard could hold a set of modules, configurable on site, to be used to repair a failing gate within a day; it all seems to make an awful lot of common sense, doesn't it?

At this time of declining Government funding and increased costs, NABO must do everything it can to ensure that the canals and rivers are run as effectively as possible, always focusing on the prime (and almost only) paying users—boaters. From a NABO perspective, our main concern has to be to ensure that our members are able to enjoy their own, not insignificant, investment in our beautiful waterways. Clearly, there are things that could be done to maximise the effectiveness of the funding available, with a bit of lateral thinking.

Happy holiday boating over the summer to you all.

**1** The project involved Torfaen County Borough Council, the Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust and the K&A Canal Trust, and was based on analytical work undertaken by Swansea University's Knowledge Transfer Centre (a world leader in mathematical modelling).

**2** The term 'modular' here implies a construction comprising self-contained units, bolted together to allow assembly and/or full or partial replacement, as and when required. 'Composite' means that they are composed of separate parts, not necessarily made of the same material, joined together to form a solid structure. When assembled, they look and feel like traditional gates!

# Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at June's Council meeting



I buzzed down to Wolverhampton Boat Club, where John Slee (NABO's Twitter coordinator) made a welcome guest appearance. Councillors supported CRT's efforts to get continuous moorers moving.

They want to find out what changes to boat movements by continuous cruisers with a temporary six-month licence resulted in them being returned to a full 12-month licence—this would effectively define bona fide navigating.

CRT is reportedly spending around £2m on boat checkers, which is a waste of money, and it is looking for other ways of monitoring boat movements. But overstaying problems are confined to a relatively few specific areas and most boaters can find a mooring when they want one.

There is talk of more bookable moorings (as at Rembrandt Gardens where the Regent's Canal meets the Paddington Arm) and charging for currently free moorings—both of which could be introduced by CRT if it chose to.

Feedback from NABO members indicates that lack of maintenance of locks, lack of dredging and unplanned stoppages due to lock failures are each increasingly causing problems. The Trust has produced maps showing the locations of its facilities, and boaters can fill in gaps or report problems using a mobile phone app or via the

CRT website. It is also looking at its dredging policy to make cost-effective improvements using some new bits of kit. But the huge number of outstanding maintenance and repair jobs is proving difficult to manage—and the new organisational structure with centralised engineering and local customer service teams is still bedding in.

So at present it is difficult for boaters to know who to contact in the event of, for example, a lock failure. Waterway managers are no longer in charge of repairs and they must notify central engineering, which then arranges for subcontractors or staff to make the repairs. Time will tell whether these changes can eliminate the repair backlog.

CRT's takeover of EA waterways is looking increasingly likely and NABO is one of the few boating organisations that is urging caution. On the Thames, the EA needs £14m to maintain the facilities but it has only £3m.

Council members hope that the CRT team has the negotiating skills to get a sustainable deal for both capital investment and ongoing river maintenance, without affecting investment in the canal system.

Some Council members who have had a long involvement now consider themselves to be too old and dodderly to continue and will be stepping down at the AGM, as will Chairman Mike after his self-allotted three years at the helm, although he will stay on the Council if re-elected.

That's me done until autumn. Bye ..... and enjoy the summer.

## NABO calendar 2016

Council Meetings in 2016:  
July 23rd (if required),  
September 3rd, October  
15th, November 12th  
(includes 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 inside front cover)

# Membership Matters

## Discounted boat insurance for NABO members

NABO members can now obtain a discount on their boat insurance through specialist brokers CETA Insurance. After analysing several members' existing policy cover, Dominic Hutt of Hutt Professional concluded that a blanket group insurance scheme—as previously suggested in NABO News and the Bulletin—would not offer sufficient flexibility for NABO members.

However, he has negotiated this alternative solution with CETA, which offers a 7.5% discount for NABO members. CETA works with a panel of insurers including Haven, Navigators & General, Towergate, AIG and Sompo Canopus, so there is a considerable breadth of options available. Council believes this arrangement provides an excellent additional benefit for NABO members and hopes it will provide a further incentive for more boat owners to join the organisation.

## What to do

For a new quotation, go to <http://ceturl.com/ymz6j>, complete the questionnaire, choose the

option which suits your needs and continue until you get to the 'shopping basket' page, where you will be asked for a promotional code. Type in 'NABO'; click on 'recalculate' and your 7.5% discount will be deducted. If you wish to proceed, click 'next' for the payment page.

Alternatively, or if you can't find exactly what you need online, you can call the dedicated phone line (01608 647601) and speak to a specialist broker. Remember to say that you are a member of NABO and have your membership number to hand.

If you are already insured through CETA, mention your NABO membership number and you will be offered the discount at your next renewal.

## Off to a flying start

The first NABO member to apply for a quote, Peter Gregory, said: "The renewal notice for our shared narrowboat came through with a premium of £206.71. CETA arranged the same level of cover, with the same excess, for less, and our NABO discount brought the total down to £123.42."

## Call for new blood ....

We need a new person, not necessarily a NABO member, to take over the role of auditor from next year. According to NABO's constitution, 'The Auditor shall be a member of a professional body recognised by the Companies Act 1985 as Auditors but need not currently be registered as an Auditor.' It's not a particularly difficult or time-consuming job and would be ideal for a retired accountant. Could this be you, or someone you know? Please get in touch with our Treasurer, Helen Hutt, if you think you can help.

## ... and on the Council

After several years in which nearly all of the Council's twelve places have been filled, some longstanding members have now decided to stand down. This is a golden opportunity to introduce new ideas, expertise and thinking to NABO. Please consider putting yourself up for election at the November AGM; we would particularly like to find someone who can replace the inestimable legal prowess of Geoffrey Rogerson.

# Regional News

## Joan Jamieson reports on the Central Shires Open Forum

I attended the forum at Mercia Marina, Willington, which consisted of two CRT employees with a stall full of the usual leaflets positioned in the car park (is this another way of saving money by not hiring meeting rooms?). I asked why they'd changed the format and they said it was cheaper in terms of staff time and that this was a pilot scheme, the first one.

I raised the question of crisis maintenance and repairs in certain areas (although it's not too bad here). Resources are being diverted to the North West which had more problems than other areas, but this is having a knock-on effect here and planned maintenance is not taking place. Waterway Manager, Darren Green, left at the end of March and there are no plans to replace him yet.

## Howard Anguish attended the North East Local Waterways Forum.

The meeting was very well attended with a full house. A forum is usually defined as a meeting where views are exchanged, but for the first time in the NE there was no invitation for input from the floor; rather it was a set-piece delivery of news and information by the local manager and others (including John Dodwell).

Understandably, given the recent flood devastation in the region—especially the Calder & Hebble and the Leeds area—the largest portion of the meeting was taken up by a very useful and interesting presentation by Mike Marshall, the local engineering manager, who described the chronology of events and the efforts subsequently made by CRT staff, and especially volunteers, to start the massive project to rebuild bridges, tow-

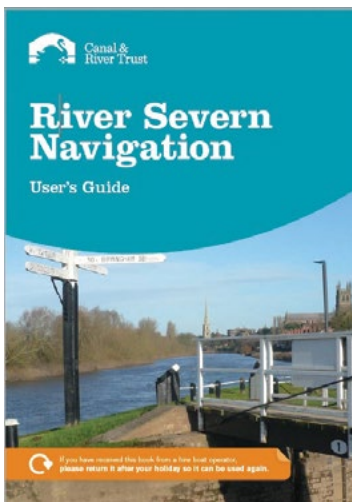
paths etc. Throughout the meeting, praise was rightly given to the magnificent input provided by local volunteers and, although it will still be some months before things are back to near normal, the situation would have been much worse without their efforts.

Other agenda items included 1) business plan priorities: because of the massive unbudgeted cost of the floods to the NE region (around £15 million) this has caused a major rethink in the programme of work for 2016 and also affecting 2017. The bottom line is that there may be around £5 million budgeted works that may have to be put on hold. 2) Volunteering opportunities: there may be an expansion of volunteering opportunities into more 'serious' areas, such as engineering, rather than the more familiar house-keeping roles. 3) A couple of good news items: freight carrying has resumed with the renamed Humber Pride tanker carrying 600 tons of lube oil from the Humber to Rotherham twice a week and the aggregate trade will resume very shortly to Leeds. Also CRT has received an Heritage Lottery Fund award of £496,000 to improve the environmental aspects of the Pocklington Canal and make repairs to two historic bridges. This

is in addition to the appeal to raise £250,000 to extend the limit of navigation at Melbourne for a further two miles, which will involve re-gating two broad locks and other clearance works. Finally, CRT is planning to make the carriage of VHF compulsory on the Yorkshire Ouse.

## Severn Navigation Guide

CRT has published an updated guide to the river at [canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnaill/27339-new-river-severn-navigation-guide-april-2016.pdf](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnaill/27339-new-river-severn-navigation-guide-april-2016.pdf)



# RCRescue training

Barbara Holford, RCR Course Co-ordinator, on a recent recovery training day

Fourteen staff from breakdown and assistance firm River Canal Rescue were recently put through their paces during a day of rescue training at Red Hill Marina, Nottingham. Front-line and office-based staff first went through the theory of a rescue, learning how to assess risks, formulate plans for safe rescue attempts and how to use rescue equipment safely and efficiently. Simulated rescues followed, involving the sinking and refloating of an 18ft cruiser, sunk to varying levels of raising difficulty four times during the day.

Operational Manager, Jay Forman, explained: "If health and safety allows, we like to train in a river as this is where the majority of our rescues are undertaken. The river flow and depth of water enables us to recreate difficult situations we've encountered in the past—without taking any risks."

During the simulated rescue, a chief, second in command and rescue workers are appointed, as they would be in a real rescue. Seniority is determined by the number of rescues staff have undertaken in the past. Jay advises: "The chief must have logged at least 100 rescues and the second in command, a minimum of 80. Any

trained member of staff can attend as a rescue worker, but they are usually put on light duties until they've taken part in at least ten."

Office staff are included in the training as they can support rescue teams who may be called to attend multiple incidents. Rescue training is held once or twice a year, dependent upon the number of call-outs, focusing on tackling grounded, stranded and sunken vessels.

Further information on RCR is available at [rivercanalrescue.co.uk](http://rivercanalrescue.co.uk) or its Facebook page.



# Right hand: “Meet left hand”

Roving trader **Alison Tuck** puzzles over CRT's apparent lack of communication abilities

**A**lison, a member of CRT's Navigation Advisory Group and one of two reps for the Roving Canal Traders Association (RCTA) on NABO Council, was sent a text message by CRT at 8pm one evening asking her to move to another place as she had been at her current location for more than 14 days. Not just once, but twice, since she owns two boats. She will be ignoring them as she is moored on her official CRT mooring!

She writes: “I originally had a 12-month licence from June 2014 to moor at Minerva Works. In June 2015, I signed a three-year licence to moor my boat and butty here. So I have been here two years. We adopted this stretch of canal and have spent the last two years cleaning it up and running art projects. Ian Lane, the Waterways Manager for the West Midlands, makes every effort to attend events here, so I see him all the time. I even allow CRT to use my mooring to put their workboat on when they are doing works on the locks either side of me. I know most of the ground staff around here and they sometimes pop in for coffee.

Imagine my surprise when I get two text messages saying: ‘It looks like you have moored in the same stretch for 14 days. Please move on or call to discuss’. So we phoned the following morning and the explanation was that, on the new computer system they are using, the mooring comes up as Minerva Wharf, so they put that as the mooring for my boats. Minerva Wharf is on the mainline just down from the

junction with the Curly Wurly in Wolverhampton! Minerva Works' postcode is B5 and Minerva Wharf is WV1, so you would have thought someone would have twigged that. When CRT Property sold the site to the Homes and Communities Agency the licence wasn't listed by Property in the enforcement computer records and the moorings at Minerva Works haven't been put on the new system. Enforcement people are going to confirm with the property people that this is a mooring!

This is another example of CRT's lack of communication between departments. I seem to notice it more than most people because I'm involved in many different aspects of CRT. I'm a friend of the Trust but I didn't receive my vote for the council elections because they can't link accounts on their computer system. So when I changed my email address, I assumed it would be changed for everything—not so.

I have had phone calls from chuggers asking for money, not knowing that I have two boats on their system (so I patiently explain that I think I contribute enough). I also have an adoption, something the volunteering department is pushing. But the people in the maintenance department have no idea how to integrate the adoptions into their normal day, so they have passed us over to the new engagement officers. This makes us feel like we aren't wanted. Since CRT property sold the site, the businesses who supported our adoption have said why the f\*\*\* would I volunteer for them! And too be honest I feel the same.

## Warwick Bar update

In the April issue ‘A *funny smell in Birmingham*’, the site at Warwick Bar was to be sold to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) as NABO News went to press. HCA has assessed the site and decided that Minerva Works will be knocked down and residential flats/houses will be built on this part of the site.

The Grade II listed junction works and banana warehouse will be a mix

of light commercial/office space. They want to start work in 2018 but, due to the nature of the businesses on Fazeley Street, planning permission for residential housing may depend on moving three ‘noisy’ businesses (the scrap-yard next to The Bond, the galvanising company on the opposite side of the street and Clifton Steel (in the FMC building), which have leases that run to 2026.



As a roving trader, I have to deal with CRT's business boating people. We have a new business boating manager that seems only interested in London and comes across in meetings as though roving trading is a nuisance, despite RCTA having 300 registered roving traders. When we raised a slight gripe about the fundraisers who attend RCTA markets, who seem to be less than knowledgeable about the canals (and a lot of traders don't want them next to their boats as trade suffers), we suggested may-

be having collection tins instead. But the business team looked a bit stumped as to who they would talk to about it and then said they can't have people handling cash. So basically they don't trust volunteers or staff with money! I know our concerns won't be passed on.

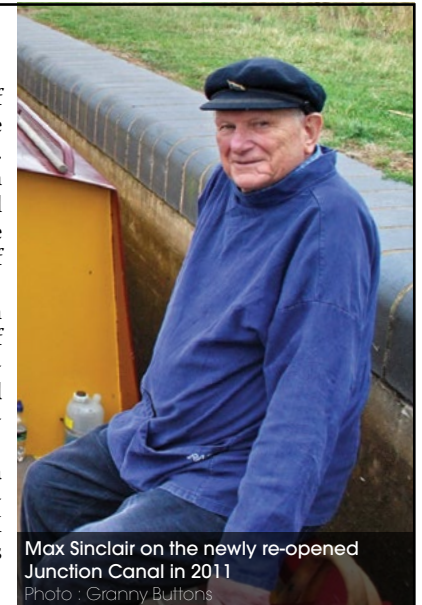
I have the patience of a saint but this is really pushing me to my limits! It's just so depressing. They seem to be going backwards to BW days of dictating what its customers want and not actually listening to us anymore.”

## Max Sinclair

Max Sinclair, who died on 18th April, was president of the Droitwich Canals Trust and the force behind the renovation of the Droitwich Barge and Junction canals. His dedication won him the Angel Award from English Heritage in 2012 in recognition of his protection of local landmarks from ruin. When Max took an interest in the early 1960s, the waterway was in a sorry state for most of its length and non-existent in some places.

He recalled: “There was a great opposition campaign that tried to block us at every turn. In the middle of Droitwich, the Council built a bowling green across the canal, they laid drains and sewers and water pipes and filled in the railway bridge. Luckily, the local authority chief architect and engineer were with us.”

The Droitwich Canals Trust was formed in 1973 after a public meeting voted overwhelmingly in favour of restoration. In 2004, the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded £4.6M to a consortium including the Trust and in 2011 the canals were finally reopened.



Max Sinclair on the newly re-opened Junction Canal in 2011  
Photo: Granny Buttons

# The lure of the Kelpies

**And now for something not quite different . . .**

**Helen Hutt** heads north of the border

When thowes dissolve the  
snawy hoord

An' float the jinglin icy  
boord

Then, water-kelpies haunt  
the foord

By your direction

An' nighted trav'lers are  
allur'd

To their destruction.

**Robert Burns 1786**

Farm Road lifting Bridge

I've been a continuous cruiser for ten years, occasionally taking holidays off the boat of course. But earlier this year I had my first 'boatman's holiday', joining a group of friends on a hire-boat in Scotland. What followed were ten days of (mostly) lovely weather, beautiful scenery, interesting historical and cultural excursions and a fascinating change from boating in England and Wales.

Our holiday home was Gosling, a 60ft narrow boat hired at Falkirk on the Forth and Clyde Canal. Having

settled in, our first manoeuvre was into the basin and the slim trough that takes boats up the Falkirk Wheel and onto the Union Canal in less than five minutes—what an amazing combination of engineering skill and design bravado. The original link between the two canals was the flight of 11 Port Downie locks, sadly all buried under new housing, with only the remains of the top lock festering in woodland adjacent to the main canal.

After a two-lock staircase above the Wheel, the remainder of the run



to Edinburgh was peaceful, pretty and unhindered. An intriguing feature of this canal around Philipstoun was the 'bings', pink pyramids of spoil left over from the days when paraffin and wax were extracted from shale around here. We had one overnight stop en-route to Edinburgh, another overnight there and a third on the way back, and then took the Wheel again to descend back onto the Forth and Clyde Canal. There we turned westwards and headed for Glasgow, making a detour down the two-mile branch to Port Dundas, and thence on to the end of the canal at Bowling on the Clyde estuary.

There are quite a lot of wide locks and moving bridges (swing, vertical-lift and bascule) on these waterways, but none of them present a physical challenge to the boater as they are all operated by Scottish Canals personnel.

One of the most interesting structures was the Dalmuir drop lock under the A814 at Clydebank; as its name suggests, there is a rising gate either side of the low bridge to drop boats by about 3ft to get under the road, by pumping out no less than 500,000 gallons of water. This unusual lock replaced the former swing-bridge which caused too much disruption to traffic.

I was fascinated by the construction of most lock gates. Instead of solid horizontal or vertical planks, these were laid diagonally (and most had substantial holes in them!). Another unique feature was the use of huge hooks instead of bollards on the lock sides, for holding the boat steady as the water rose or fell. And amazingly, the sides of the Forth and Clyde Canal were constructed of vertical wooden planks supporting huge coping stones: not surprisingly the bank had collapsed in several places! Every so often, we came across a motif which rep-



Dalmuir Drop Lock  
Photo: Dave Souza

## Dalmuir drop lock

A drop lock allows a short length of canal to be lowered temporarily while a boat passes under an obstruction such as a low bridge. It can consist of two conventional lock chambers leading to a sump pound or a single long chamber incorporating the sump—although the term properly applies only to the latter case. As the pounds at either end of the structure are at the same height, the lock can only be emptied either by allowing water to run to waste from the sump to a lower stream or drain, or by pumping water back up to the canal. To allow water to move along the canal and so supply locks further down the canal the gates are left open while not in use.

While the concept has been suggested in a number of cases, the only example in the world of a drop lock that has actually been constructed is at Dalmuir. This lock, of the single chamber type, was incorporated during the restoration of the canal, to allow the replacement of a swing bridge on the A418 by a fixed bridge, and so answer criticisms that the restoration of the canal would cause frequent interruptions of the heavy road traffic. It can be emptied by pumping—but as this uses a lot of electricity the method used when water supplies are adequate is to drain the lock to a nearby burn.

resented the mechanism used for bascule bridge operation; a lovely reminder of the effort which has gone into restoring these canals.





The mystical Kelpies in Helix Park



Halfway down the Falkirk Wheel



Sail-through chippy at Clydebank

Given the low number of boats on the water in April, mooring at designated sites was always easy. Most had pontoons, some with water and electricity posts. My favourite on the Union Canal was Causeway End, aptly nicknamed 'the secret basin', which has a couple of residential moorings and space for about five visiting boats, and delightful walks through woodland behind.

It seems that not many visitors bother to go down the 18 locks and five bascule bridges to Bowling, and back again the following day, but for me that was a highlight of the trip. The last lock down sits right under the mighty Erskine Bridge over the Clyde. Bowling itself is fascinating, with its sea lock (no longer in use), lovely old custom house, graveyard of rotting hulks and super pub with its collection of photos illustrating numerous community gatherings and celebrations. Thanks to an extensive regeneration partnership, the arches underneath the old railway bridge are being converted into shops, cafes and artists' studios, which should attract more visitors and boost the economy of the town.

Other sightseeing highlights included Edinburgh Castle, Linlithgow Palace, Helix Park (home of the famous Kelpies, which tower over the beautifully reconstructed eastern terminus of the Forth and Clyde Canal) and the Roman Antonine Wall (built by the adopted son of Hadrian) and associated hill forts, running parallel to the Forth and Clyde. In Glasgow we visited the Rennie Mackintosh-inspired Willow Tea Rooms for very upmarket tea and scones, and at the other end of the scale, enjoyed fish and chips bought from the only known 'sail through' chippy, McMonagles at Clydebank. All in all, a brilliant holiday, and especially fun for me as, hitherto, I had never helmed another boat!

## How black is your keel?

'Keelblack' is a low-viscosity bitumen emulsion that can be applied to new steel hulls, back-to-bare steel or to all previous hull coatings including bitumastic paints. Surfaces should be clean and old flaking paint should be removed. The blacking flows behind existing bitumastic, filling voids and helping to re-adhere previous coatings to the steel. Bare steel should be degreased and treated with a zinc-phosphate rust prevention system and primer.

It can be used on damp surfaces, eliminating the need for drying. The coating should be applied in dry conditions but once touch-dry, within around 30 minutes, it can be exposed to all weathers. Two coats are usually sufficient on

existing coatings or three coats on bare steel. It is quick to apply, with one coat on a 60ft narrowboat taking less than one hour. Hulls can be re-launched after 36 hours curing. The coating has virtually no odour and emits no fumes. It can therefore also be used inside to protect against corrosion and as a rust-resistant bilge coating. Keelblack is the hardest grade of emulsified bitumen available, and dries to a tough finish that resists abrasion.

The cationic product has greater adhesion to the sub-surface than anionic bitumens which can flake or plate. It has been tested for strength and wear characteristics at the University of Saarbrücken in Germany and found to outlast two-pack epoxy by almost two times and single pack bitumastics by a factor of six.



One litre will cover about 9m<sup>2</sup> and it is available in 5 litre amounts at £42.60 (£8.52 per litre) or 25 litres for £160.20 (£6.41 per litre). Further information at [www.keelblack.co.uk](http://www.keelblack.co.uk).

## The Bridgewater Canal: once is not enough

The Bridgewater Canal, stretching 40 miles from Runcorn via Manchester to Leigh, is owned and operated by the Peel Holdings Group. It provides an important link between the Trent and Mersey, the Rochdale, and the Leeds & Liverpool canals.

It's a wide canal with no locks and can be cruised in a few days. CRT licence holders are entitled, by a reciprocal agreement with the Bridgewater Canal Company (BCC), to be on the canal for seven consecutive days. The terms and conditions, last updated in 2014, can be found at [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk/boating/licensing](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk/boating/licensing). We are getting reports that the BCC has decided to change the rules and add an additional requirement of 'no return within 28 days'. This requirement is not published on the

company website so we have only the reports of boaters, the IWA and CRT to go by. For a visit, or one-way 'ring' passage, there is no problem. But for a through passage, say to visit Liverpool for a few days, returning within 28 days, enforcement staff are charging boaters a £40 supplementary licence fee for the return journey. Hire-craft and shared ownership boats are vulnerable too, as who knows what route the previous crew took?

CRT had recently extended the agreement to allow additional time for Bridgewater licensed boats to visit Liverpool, and so it is particularly disappointing that there seems to be no 'reciprocation' from BCC. So if you are cruising the Bridgewater, look out! We will investigate and see what is behind this change.

## Roving traders:

# The Herb Boat

**A look at people who make a living from waterway-based trading. This time, it's Sue Cotton on The Herb Boat.**

I've been trading on The Herb Boat for four years now. Originally, I worked as an archaeologist, then later retrained as a youth worker, working in youth homelessness. Alongside this I also ran a gardening business and small herb nursery, selling at farmers' markets. Over the years I have done markets off and on, selling everything from antiques to painted furniture to handmade hats.

I went on a scheme for new business start-ups through the Job Centre when I first moved on board. This gave a small income for the first three months of trading, required the production of a business plan, attendance at some workshops on being self-employed and marketing, and provided a business mentor. Despite having been self-employed for years, these

proved useful, particularly the business plan which included making realistic financial forecasts. I really recommend doing this if you actually need a proper income from your boat business, as it makes you really consider profitability, stock control and practical issues like production, deliveries, storage, point of sale issues and seasonality.

More by accident than design, I have pretty much followed the business plan, but no amount of theoretical planning prepares you for the actual reality of trading from a boat, particularly trading alone. Storage space, packaging and weather are my key concerns, along with getting to the loo and making a brew when I am busy. I am lucky to have a large area under my front deck, though this

demands Houdini like manoeuvres to access, so proved not ideal for daily use with a dodgy hip. Pretty packaging is great but needs careful thought for packing up and storage between trading and durability against the weather.

My plan was to expand into online trading in the third year. I have done this and sales online now equal towpath trade and help maintain a regular income. However, I have not actually launched the online shop, as I quickly realised that I could not keep enough stock to meet increased online demand. Also, the realities of parcelling up orders and getting to the Post Office or using couriers proved tricky, particularly as I like to moor in remote places. The weeks before Christmas saw me rapidly disappearing in a sea of boxes and loading my little motorbike up with precarious towers of parcels. However, I have learned from last year, and will be developing the online business further in some areas this year.

Because the herbs and spices I sell are relatively cheap, I have to sell a lot of items to make money. But on the plus side, people often have a few quid in their pocket and their purchases are light and small enough to fit in a backpack. I will be getting a card reader this year to serve the bigger spenders. I have also experimented this year trading off the cut, at local events and markets when the towpath was not suitable. This sometimes meant a long walk with a dangerously overlaid trolley, but it was fun and earned money; although much easier if you run a vehicle.

I really enjoy the RCTA markets and trading at festivals, especially being with fellow traders. It is definitely worth the risk of a booking fee as long as the weather holds. That said, I often take as much on my own on the towpath and being tied to an itinerary can also be a pain and does

Find the Herb Boat at these events this summer

**16th July : Cosgrove Canal Festival**

I will be trading at the amazing Cosgrove Canal Festival and Craft Fair on 16th and 17 July ... a great weekend.

**11th-14th August : Cropredy Music Festival,**

You don't need a festival ticket to enjoy the "fringe" festival at Cropredy where I shall be trading with other boats in the heart of the village and festival at Cropredy.

**16th-18th September : Tipton Canal Festival**

I shall be back at Tipton for this most friendly, colourful Festival on the Old Main Line Canal at Tipton.

This year's attractions include: working and trip boats, arts, crafts and bling fair, live entertainment, various trade, charity and carboot stalls, children's rides, canal crafts, real ales, a wide range of food and drink and much more.

**23rd-25th September : Birmingham Floating Market**

Back for the third year, this huge gathering of trading boats is a spectacle to behold and a great opportunity to get some really distinctive early Christmas gifts.

not allow for illness or breakdowns. Last year I just roamed free, with no fixed trading commitments, which was great and equally profitable.

I love developing new stock ideas and like to change what I sell regularly to maintain customer interest. I hope to invest in a laser printer this year to make my labels more durable and will be expanding some areas, and dispensing with less profitable lines. I don't watch much TV, but quickly learned to keep an eye on cooking programmes as the herbs and spices they feature always cause a spike in demand. Facebook produces less income than it used to, due to their new algorithm and 'likes' do not necessarily translate into purchases. My website produces most online income, along with a lot of repeat custom. I did some totally unscientific research into who buys from The Herb Boat. Most are not boaters, many are walkers and by far the biggest spenders are 50+ aged women, closely followed by young men and couples. Every day's trading is different, with no predictability at all. I can sell lots of teas and no spices one day and no teas and lots of spices the next.



# Where to now?

**Mark Tizard** looks back to the future of CRT Enforcement Strategy

If you have any comments or suggestions on the current enforcement strategy or latest mooring review please contact me at [moorings@nabo.org.uk](mailto:moorings@nabo.org.uk).

**H**istory: A consultation was held towards the end of 2013 to address CRT's concerns that boaters on the western K&A were not moving sufficiently. As a result, in March 2014 a voluntary pilot plan was launched, suggesting that boaters would be required to move through 12 designated 'neighbourhoods' in a range of movement of 20 km. Soon after its launch this voluntary code became compulsory.

A six-month review showed:

- 50% of boats had travelled through three (out of six expected) neighbourhoods or fewer;
- 25% of boats were at the start of the enforcement process;
- 10% of boats had exemption due to medical or breakdown issues.

Boaters who were applying for a licence for a boat without a home mooring (continuous cruisers) were contacted by CRT to ensure that they understood the requirement to cruise in accordance with its guidelines. These boaters were also contacted during the period of their licences if their cruising pattern caused concern to CRT.

In January 2014 at a meeting of boating associations, CRT provided some stark statistics:

- approximately 5500 boats did not have a home mooring;
- 66% (or about 3600 boats) cruised less than 20 km; and
- 16% cruised less than 5 km during the licence period.

CRT proposed a three-stage strategy:

**Stage 1**—Focus enforcement action to encourage boats to move in a 15-20 km range;

**Stage 2**—Having moved boats

from Stage 1, focus on boats that moved less than a 15-20 km range;

**Stage 3**—Steady state, with boats moving in a range 15-20 km or more unless in enforcement.

NABO and other associations were in favour of this approach. Associations were asked to support a statement declaring a minimum cruising range but NABO refused, believing it should be for CRT, as the navigation authority, to declare what would satisfy it from a bona fide navigation viewpoint.

## Action

The strategy outlined above came into force in April 2015, without waiting for the pilot scheme that had run for the previous 12 months to be analysed and any conclusions drawn. CRT wrote to all boaters without a home mooring, reminding them of the enforcement action that would follow if they did not follow CRT's guidelines. This upset many NABO members ("it's a bit like Tesco writing to all their club-card holders telling them that if caught shoplifting they would be prosecuted"). The initial three-stage process became two as the first two stages were amalgamated.

Very quickly after the launch of the strategy, CRT amended its guidance to read that any boater who cruised in a range of less than 15-20 miles (note: miles not kilometres) would be unlikely to satisfy the Trust that the boat was being used bona fide for navigation as required by the relevant Act.

Licence terms and conditions were also changed, requiring all boaters to continuously cruise, even

## Licence evasion levels 2011-present (%)

Figures: CRT

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
North	5.2	4.2	4.1	4.5	5.8	5.9
Midlands	5.1	3	4.3	4	4.5	3.8
West & Wales	5	3.4	4	4.2	4.9	3.8
South East	3	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.3	2.1
South & K&A	6.4	4.1	6.5	4.5	5.1	5.2
London	7.9	5.5	5.7	5.3	5.7	5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>4.4</b>

though NABO believes that this is an unlawful change as far as boats with a home mooring are concerned.

NABO members reported that boats did seem to be cruising in a wider range in certain areas and CRT's own figures gave the real scale of the problem in a four-month snapshot from May to September 2015: 58 boats were issued with a reduced three-month licence and 245 boats were given a reduced six-month licence. The policy would appear to be an overwhelming success as instead of 66% of all boats without a home mooring moving less than 20 km, it would appear that some 6 months after the launch of the new guidelines only 5.5% now move less than 20 miles; an improvement of 61%. So either, boaters have, en masse, moved much further, or CRT's original figures—to get the boating associations to back this latest push—were hopelessly inaccurate. The answer lies between the two, I suspect.

## Reactions

Some boaters with reduced-term licences, together with those who are against the current guidelines, have organised some fairly powerful media campaigns and protests that have been picked up by both social media and the mainstream press and

TV. CRT's press office would appear to have been caught by surprise and has been struggling to get its side of the story across. A more concerted PR push to get across a balanced story is required, especially to the non-boating public.

The majority of boaters would appear to support CRT's current guidelines, but some have concerns that CRT would seek to change the goalposts by increasing its minimum acceptable range at some later stage.

CRT has reiterated its recent guidance and, on the basis that boaters are now moving further, has withdrawn the option of a reduced three-month licence. It has retained the option of a six-month licence for boaters who are not travelling in a range that fully satisfies the Trust.

Meanwhile, licence evasion rates remain stubbornly high (see table), which has surprised us given the amount of data-logging that is now carried out as a result of the current enforcement activity. If the historically low evasion rates in the south east are removed from the latest figures, then evasion is running at 4.78%—a very high figure. What is the reason for this? All parts of the system are now meant to be patrolled once a fortnight and the busier areas are covered weekly. One wonders whether it is inefficiency

in the on-line renewal process that is resulting in more late payers, or perhaps the negotiations regarding reduced period licences cause more late renewals—although as the licence survey is a snapshot on one day, this is unlikely. We have had reports of more boats that have no obvious name or index number and perhaps this is an increasing trend.

### The future

NABO remains broadly in favour of the current guidance and continues to press for any enforcement action to be applied in a consistent and professional manner, with the Welfare Officer's involvement where appropriate. We understand that CRT is confident that any future legal action will result in the courts

**CRT recently sent the email below to a boater and has subsequently approved its wider publication. NABO believes this gives boaters without a home mooring further clarity on CRT's published guidelines.**

“When we are looking at boat movements we are looking for characteristics of bona fide (genuine) navigation, these fall roughly into four categories:

**1. Range:** by ‘range’ we mean the furthest points a boat has travelled on the network, not merely the total distance travelled.

While the BW Act does not stipulate what that distance is, the Trust has previously said that anyone travelling a range of less than say 20 miles (32km) would struggle to satisfy the Trust that they are engaged in bona fide navigation and that normally we would expect a greater range. You can find the statement here: [canal-rivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/licensing-your-boat/enforcement/boaters-without-a-home-mooring-how-far-is-far-enough](http://canal-rivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/licensing-your-boat/enforcement/boaters-without-a-home-mooring-how-far-is-far-enough). While it would be possible to satisfy the Trust with ranges less than this, we'd look at other factors, including those discussed below, and would expect to see a pattern something like a boat moving in one direction in regular hops and not returning to the same places often.

**2. Overstaying:** we look to see how often boats overstay, either the 14-day limit on the main length of the canal, or shorter periods where local signage dictates; for example short stay visitor moorings. While we expect the occasional overstay from most boaters due to breakdowns, illness or other emergencies, we will look at the overall pattern balanced with range and move-

ment pattern in order to form a view.

**3. Movement:** continuous cruiser licences are intended for bona fide navigation around the network, rather than for a boat to remain in one mooring spot, place, neighbourhood or area. We would expect boats on these licences to move around the network in such a way that they don't gravitate back to favoured areas too often (i.e. in a way that it's clear to us that they're living in a small area of the waterway).

The basic principle of this is that these licences are not intended for living in an area and, if it looks like a boat is habitually returning to a particular part of the waterway, then this would not generally satisfy the Trust.

Within an acceptable range, we'd expect a genuine movement so, for example, it would not satisfy the Trust if a boat went on a 60 mile trip during the course of two weeks, then returned to cruise in an area of 5 miles the remainder of the time.

Generally speaking, the smaller the range the less we'd expect to see boats back at the same locations. Of course people need to turn around and they're perfectly free to re-visit places they have been to before, it's living in a small area on this kind of licence that would cause a problem.

**4. Mitigating circumstances:** we will consider mitigating circumstances, but generally we only make allowances for reasonable time periods and seldom over large periods of the licence, unless we have made a formal adjustment, for example in the case of an Equality Adjustment' (e.g. if a boater develops a handicap or disability after obtaining a licence, which curtails his or her movement pattern).”

supporting its current guidance and enforcement activity and that this will provide further clarity.

NABO believes that CRT has now defined bona fide navigation. A boater who was previously given a six-month licence and has now been issued with a 12-month licence has obviously been deemed to have used the boat bona fide for navigation

and other boaters could reasonably rely on that boater's cruising range if challenged.

However, it needs to be recognised that boaters cruising within a wider range does not provide a solution to congestion. For example, a net gain of 400 boats in the London area in the last boaters' licensing survey demonstrates this.

## ‘Off the Cut’

A well-made film by Wendy Zakiewicz that gives an insight into the pressures facing liveaboard boaters on the Western Kennet and Avon. Wendy says of the film and its reception “Off the Cut provides unique insight into a community of boaters living on the Kennet and Avon canal. The film follows a family on their pedal powered boat as they embark on a journey in which their way of life, and that of the whole community, comes under threat.”

“A lot of support is coming not only from the boating community but from others in the wider community who are strongly voicing their support for boaters in their local areas. For example we had a meeting the other day with CRT CEO Richard Parry, a local MP and then the mayor of Bradford on Avon, members of Wiltshire council, 2 head teachers... plus others, and we are asking CRT to rethink their methods and work together with liveaboard boaters. Its really powerful when non-boaters see the film cause they have no idea of problems faced by people on the canal.”

It is available to watch on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=5upAf7waaLg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5upAf7waaLg) and has been viewed over 50,000 times.



# As you were...

**Peter Fellows** sifts through the South East mooring consultation figures

The South East has some of CRT's busiest waterways. In 2013, in response to complaints about congestion at moorings, the then waterway manager proposed introducing new shorter stay times at a large number of visitor moorings. The proposals were unpopular with a large number of boaters and as result of a consultation including workshops resulted in CRT withdrawing most of the proposals. Instead amended visitor mooring stay times and extended stay (or penalty) charges were initiated at just three sites (Foxton Locks, Stoke Bruerne and Thrupp).

In 2015, CRT worked with the Navigation Advisory Group to agree a Short-Term Mooring Framework that set out a process that would be followed before any changes were made to either existing or proposed new visitor moorings. The framework sets out how evidence should be gathered and a clear case made for why any changes should be made to moorings, with the decision resting with the relevant waterway manager.

## Consultation at Berkhamsted and Marsworth

CRT began collecting sighting data at these sites to understand how the moorings were being used. This data was presented and CRT's pro-

posals for change were approved by the SE Boaters Sub-group of the SE Partnership and a consultation was announced by CRT.

Between December 2015 and February 2016, CRT undertook the consultation on proposals to introduce two-day moorings at Marsworth and two-day/seven-day moorings at Berkhamsted, based on sightings carried out between September 2014 and August 2015. The consultation received 807 responses, with over 400 individual comments. 789 people gave a response to the proposals for Berkhamsted and 688 to the proposals for Marsworth. This high level of response reflected the strong feelings about the proposed changes to moorings. A large majority of respondents objected to the proposals. When asked 'Please tell us which of the following best reflects your view on the proposed changes to moorings?' the breakdown of the responses in Figure 1

Comments related to the proposals included:

- The proposals would negatively impact on boaters (especially continuous cruisers/those who live aboard) by reducing the places they could moor/would force them to get moorings (99 respondents).
- There is not a shortage of moor-

ings in the area where the changes are proposed/current mooring stay times are acceptable (86 respondents).

- I oppose any restrictions of less than 14 days/I believe that any restrictions of less than 14 days are illegal (45 respondents).
- Insufficient data or evidence provided to understand the justification for the changes proposed (41 respondents).
- Better monitoring and enforcement of the 14-day stay times/behaviour is required (35 respondents).
- Reducing stay times here will have a negative knock-on impact elsewhere (several respondents named Cow Roast)/have an impact on increased use of locks and other infrastructure (30 respondents).
- The proposals are excessive, only a short section of short-stay mooring is necessary/helpful (22 respondents).
- Short-stay mooring is needed to enable continuous cruising/accommodate hire boats/visitors by making it easier to find moorings/visit these locations (21 respondents).
- Concern that the proposals are in response to complaints from a small number of residents/local organisations and not based on mooring need (15 respondents).

mooring of approximately 210 feet beside Waitrose. These restrictions will apply between 7am and 9pm. Overnight mooring will be permitted.

- The winding hole close to Berkhamsted Station will be signed as 'no mooring'.
- To maintain access, a short section of towpath adjacent to the dry-dock between bridge 141 and lock 54 will be signed as 'no mooring'.
- All other sections of towpath will remain as 14-day and will continue to be monitored to ensure compliance with statutory boat movement requirements.

These changes will be implemented by summer 2016 and reviewed in 12 months' time.

## Marsworth

The proposed two-day moorings will not be introduced. Appropriate signage is to be reinstated on the section of canal from the Aylesbury Arm junction north to bridge 131 to demarcate angling and no-mooring zones.

## Batchworth (Rickmansworth)

No changes are being proposed at Batchworth.

## Braunston

No changes are being proposed at Braunston.

## Responses to the findings

### Berkhamsted

The proposed two-day and seven-day moorings will not be introduced. The findings show some support for a number of smaller changes, which will be introduced on a trial basis and monitored for a year. These include:

- A four-hour 'stop and shop'

## Further investigations

Mark Tizard queried with CRT and his Navigation Advisory Group (NAG) (Licensing and Moorings) colleagues what evidence was available to show that there was insufficient mooring availability at the time the data was gathered. After much prevarication from CRT, it

Figure 1: Please tell us which of the following best reflects your view on the proposed changes to moorings?

	I support the proposals	I neither support or oppose the proposals	I oppose the proposals	No opinion
<b>Berkhamsted</b>	14.5%	4%	80.5%	1%
<b>Marsworth</b>	14.5%	5%	75.5%	5%

was discovered that this information was not collated and not made available in the consultation document to either the SE Boating Group or boaters generally. There was also much discussion on social media boating sites, including NABO's Facebook page. Following discussions at the NAG meeting in February 2016, CRT agreed to undertake further work with a NAG representative to look in more detail at the boat sighting data at Berkhamsted and Marsworth during the peak months of May to August 2015.

**Berkhamsted**

Independent analysis of the sighting data was made by Tim Parker, a member of the NAG (Licensing and Moorings) for the 2 km lengths that cover Berkhamsted GU-168 and GU-169. This analysis looked at the number of boats moored and the average length of the boats against the length of available mooring. The average boat length was checked against the CRT licence database and was found to be 55 feet. It was considered that there are ap-

proximately 1,600 useable feet for mooring on GU-168 and 2,150ft on GU-169. It is important to note that it would be difficult to get 100% utilisation of any space unless there was a full-time moorings warden directing boats, which is neither sensible nor cost-effective. So a percentage of utilisable space has to be estimated and this will vary on a daily basis depending on whether boaters have moored 'tidily'. The figure of 60% has been used as a rough benchmark of a mooring being 'badly filled' (17.5 boats on GU-168 and 23 on GU-169). From this, the average percentage utilisation of GU-168 and GU-169 for each month can be seen in Figure 2.

48 boats were found to have been counted frequently during the period May to August, and questions were asked of enforcement whether these were complying with their licence requirements. Of these, 23 were in receipt of enforcement action. Boats making multiple and frequent return visits to Berkhamsted would have an effect on the figures and would raise questions about the fair sharing of

Figure 2: The average percentage utilisation of GU-168 and GU-169 for each month

	Average number of boats	Average utilization (%)	Number of times over 60% full
<b>May</b>			
GU-168	17	58.4	3 from 8 sightings
GU-169	5	12.8	Nil
<b>June</b>			
GU-168	16	55.0	2 from 7 sightings
GU-169	11	28.1	Nil
<b>July</b>			
GU-168	11	37.8	Nil
GU-169	10	25.6	Nil
<b>August</b>			
GU-168	20	68.7	8 from 9 sightings
GU-169	18	46.0	2 from 10 sightings

*The high level of response to the consultation reflected the strong feelings about the proposed changes to moorings....*

*..... A large majority of respondents objected to the proposals.*

mooring space. Maximum stays of 14 days per month would appear sensible to counteract any abuse.

An analysis of the average stay times on each of the sites was as follows:

- GU-168**
- 2 days or less = 61.3%
- 3 to 7 days = 3.2%
- Over 7 days = 35.5%
- GU-169**
- 2 days or less = 68.2%
- 3 to 7 days = Nil
- Over 7 days = 31.8%

It should be stressed that these figures are indicative only because sightings did not take place each day. But they are important as, to take an extreme, if everyone stays for exactly 7 days, reducing stay times from 14 days to 7 days will have no effect. However, if everyone stays for 10 days, a lot of space will be released if the time allowed is reduced from 14 days to 7 days.

**Marsworth**

Analysis was undertaken on length GU-158 for May to August. The average boat numbers were: May = 18, June = 17, July = 18, August = 15.

There was a complication on the usable length of GU-158 because the local fishing club stated that an agreement was made with BW that there would be no moorings in the length opposite the new housing development. This has not yet been accepted by CRT, but this length has been excluded (giving a worst case scenario) and the useable length is calculated at 2,280ft. Using the 60% (badly moored) rule, this gives 25

boats as being full moorings. There is only one sighting of this figure for May, none for June, two for July and none for August. It is obvious that there is not a general problem of mooring at Marsworth and for this reason, stay times were not investigated.

Mark Tizard commented: "Well, common sense has prevailed and no significant changes are to be made. I hope the outcome is that CRT will in future ensure it follows its own guidelines. If NABO and others had not challenged CRT's assumptions and asked for the evidence of lack of mooring availability (which had not otherwise been questioned) then the reduced stay times would have been introduced. My being a member of NAG helped, as by engaging with the committee we were also able to raise our opposition to the fact that the guidelines were not followed. But it's concerning that this was passed previously by the South East Partnership Boater's Group, which is meant to be representing boaters interests in the area. I have proposed that CRT use this agreed visitor mooring framework to investigate whether all current visitor moorings are meeting the needs of boaters and if necessary adjust stay times up or down, but there would appear to be little appetite to do this"

# Another mooring strategy for London

Mark Tizard and Peter Gregory report on the implications of the latest developments for boaters in the capital.

What do NABO members think is needed? Let us have your comments to [moorings@nabo.org.uk](mailto:moorings@nabo.org.uk). Pete Gregory took notes of the meeting, the full report is at the Trust's London web pages at [canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-regions/london-waterways](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-regions/london-waterways) under 'London Mooring Strategy')

For years, BW and now CRT have struggled to identify a mooring strategy that meets the needs of boaters who wish to cruise and visit the London area. Some people will no doubt recall the Lee and Stort consultations of 2011 and other initiatives, which led to the recently lapsed 'Better Relationship Group' then a review by the London Assembly. The last strategy for moorings in London was announced in July 2014. All seem to have failed to significantly improve facilities and mooring provision within the city.

There is no denying that London is an increasingly popular destination as a lifestyle choice for those that are attracted to the work and social life of the city. Central and East London have seen a huge growth in popularity and in London generally the number of boats has increased from 2101 to 3662 in the five years to 2015.

I suspect many thought that the tougher enforcement regime launched just over a year ago, seeking to ensure boats cruised in a range exceeding 20 miles, would solve the problem. This has resulted in more movement, but with boats still cruising within the wider London area, London remains full and the existing facilities are stretched with more urgently required—there are more water taps at Foxton than in central London!

In June, CRT launched its latest strategy consultation. Its aims are:

- Better provision and management of a range of facilities and mooring types in London;
- To manage the large number of

boats in London and to mitigate the environmental impacts on the waterways and neighbours;

- To help ensure fair sharing of water space to enable a wider range of boaters to visit and navigate in London;
- To protect existing income and generate additional income to maintain the waterways in London;
- To support a London waterway destination and tourism strategy;
- To ensure that the mooring strategy contributes to the Trust's aim: that London's waterways help to transform neighbourhoods and enrich people's lives.

The first meeting was well attended by 160 boaters and residents, who had a presentation and round-table group discussions. The meeting heard that on CRT's London waters (GU from Rickmansworth south, Paddington Arm, Regents Canal, Hertford Union, River Lea) and non-CRT waters the number of boats increased by 100% from 2010 to 2015. Over the same period, the number of boats without a home mooring has increased from 413 to 1615, with the biggest increase on the Regents Canal, Hertford Union and River Lea. There is therefore substantial pressure on mooring space and facilities.

The following are notes kindly taken for us by NABO member, Peter Gregory:

## What's been done already?

Improved towpath moorings, new short-stay and long-term moorings, a different strategy for winter

moorings, and improved boating facilities. These were welcomed but it was acknowledged that they were still inadequate to meet the volume of need.

## Project objectives

Better provision and management of the range of moorings. An attempt to manage the environmental impact of new and changed moorings. Protect current income and generate more. Encourage visitors and a fair sharing of water space.

## Key themes

Short-term visitor moorings, general towpath moorings, long-term moorings, short-term bookable moorings, winter moorings, business boating.

A group discussion on 'What would a fair and successful mooring strategy look like?' The people on our table thought: all moorings (regardless of length of stay) should be bookable; charges should be made for moorings in the central area (say Alperton-Paddington-Limehouse-Tottenham); and there should be a central availability/booking system for moorings. The main other suggestion that came out was to increase the education of boaters on boating etiquette, backed up by enforcement.

The workshop finished with a 'group mapping exercise' using a detailed map to mark what each person thought could be done to improve things and how. In the central area, various parts that need dredging were marked, and areas of towpath where mooring—possibly chargeable—could be allowed, subject to



installation of rings and monitoring of subsequent occupation.

I hope that CRT, both formally and informally, seeks the views of NABO and other boating associations so that there is a mooring strategy implemented that caters for the needs of boaters who wish to remain in the wider London area (while following CRT's current guidelines) and those who wish to visit. This is preferable to the piecemeal introduction of premium charged short-term visitor moorings as an interim measure. The introduction of additional facilities and mooring availability remains subject to provision of additional funding, which is currently not budgeted for.

## Next steps

There will be a working group, a steering group and a stakeholder engagement group. The early focus will be on three specific areas: winter mooring strategy; short-term moorings; and bookable short-stay moorings. The overall aim is to improve boaters' and others' experiences in London. A new Development/Engagement Manager has been taken on to find outside funding.

# When is a vessel not a boat?

**Peter Fellows** examines the implications of the EA's 'failed' prosecutions

The full Approved Judgement is at [www.hartfordmarinaca.org](http://www.hartfordmarinaca.org) and further information is at [narrowboatworld.com/index.php/news-flash/9049-environment-agency-dragging-its-feet](http://narrowboatworld.com/index.php/news-flash/9049-environment-agency-dragging-its-feet).

A judgement affecting EA boaters at Chertsey and Reading marinas is reported at [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-34883856](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-34883856).

**Hartford Marina Community Association successfully challenged threats of eviction by the local authority and succeeded in proving that the EA's prosecutions for failure to register the homes as boats had no basis in law.**

Residents of homes on permanently fixed floating pontoons and connected to mains services at a Cambridgeshire marina have successfully fought demands that they pay a £430 annual registration fee imposed by the EA or face fines and a criminal record. The homes cannot be fitted with engines and are therefore not capable of navigating the waterways. A Peterborough Crown Court judge overruled local magistrates and quashed the convictions of two residents under Article 2 Environment Agency Order 2010. He found that the homes were not vessels and not subject to registration fees, and refused the EA leave to appeal.

Despite the ruling, the EA instructed Queen's Counsel (at an unknown cost) to appeal directly to the Administrative Court. In April 2016, almost a year after the Crown Court quashed the convictions, the Divisional Court affirmed the correctness of the Crown Court judgement.

A houseboat "navigating" in Hartford Marina  
Photo: Hartford Marina Community Associations



Lord Justice Lindblom said that the Crown Court had been right to find that the floating houses were homes on water rather than vessels capable of navigation.

NABO rep, Simon Robbins, commented: "This looks like another 'failure' in the Transport and Works Order (TWO) process that EA went through to try to get more/most craft on adjoining EA water paying registration fees. I say 'failure' and that may be controversial with some. Although some people were enthusiastic about seeing more boaters pay fees to the EA, this was not a universal view and I'm not surprised some are kicking back.

"In the detailed judgement there is what looks to be strongly implied criticism of the way in which the TWO was drafted; this has it seems left a small gap in the registration rules. In the judgement, two of the Judges seem to say that because of the way the TWO is worded, one has to look at the physical construction of each 'houseboat' case by case; it seems to turn on the use of, and detailed legal interpretation of, the word 'vessel'. The success in this case from the boaters point of view, turns on the fact that the houseboats in question were never constructed to a standard that intended that they could ever be movable by water.

"The implication of all this seems to be that, although there will undoubtedly be some houseboat owners on EA waters considering whether they can claim back registration fees, some 'houseboats' will still be liable to pay a registration fee if, for instance, they are a converted barge or lighter".

# Letters to the Editor

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

## Farewell

I'm very sadly about to leave NABO when my subscription runs out. This most certainly isn't because of any problem I've had with NABO. On the contrary, I think that NABO is just as much needed now as it was when it was established, and I have the most tremendous respect for the leadership with their tremendous knowledge and their support and thorough tolerance and understanding of every type of boater. I am making the change simply because age has caught up with me, and I am now very reluctantly selling my boat.

Do please keep up the good work—especially educating and keeping CRT on their toes, and also sticking up for the boaters who seem to be coming under nothing other than constant criticism these days. The rare and wonderful old 'live and let live' ethos which has always existed on the canals still seems to reside in NABO!

Although no longer a member I shall always in conversation stand up for and promote NABO with any boaters that I meet. With very best wishes as always

**Robert Hamilton**

## Every boater's nightmare?

While out cruising, I was unlucky enough to have a ball of spring wire caught on the narrowboat propeller. The wire was from a seat cushion with coils and straight sections, and it became completely wrapped around the prop like a bird's nest. The engine stopped immediately. This was the worst prop event I have experienced in 35 years afloat on the canals.

Off with the weed hatch to investigate, down the black hole with trusty B & Q wire snippers in hand; this won't take long I thought. Half an hour later, it became clear this was not going to be an easy one. The snippers were no match for the hard spring wire, and my wrist was no match for the job either. Every cut produced two sharp spring ends that stabbed and scratched my

hands and I was getting nowhere.

Fortunately civilisation was close and I found a tool shop with a specialist spring wire cutter and started again. At least now every cut was a success, but progress was very limited. After three hours, I had removed about a quarter of the ball and could turn the shaft. But the main part, including many turns tight around the shaft, remained. The spring cutter had only a small jaw opening and was difficult to get into position. Working by feel, the tool was proving too precise. And my back was gone, energy levels were dropping, and there was too much blood in the water. Time for reinforcements from RCR.

Two hours after the call, and another hour down the hole, the cavalry arrived, wire snippers in hand. A short while later, there came a call: "I need a bigger pair of cutters". Off to Halfords, two miles up the road, and then back for another hour before final release and salvage of the wire. Full marks to the young man from RCR, who managed to catch the ball of wire and stop it falling back into the canal.

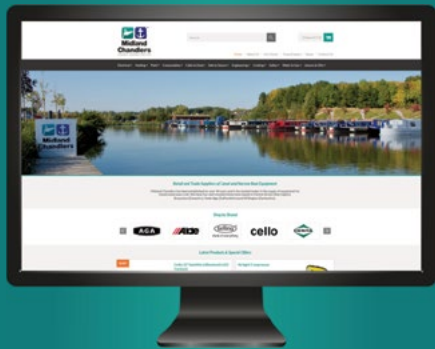
This was a bad one, both for the volume of material and the type of wire. The spring steel was very hard to cut, and for the most part had to be cut strand by strand. The coils were so dense it was impossible to find the key strands that would allow a quick release. It had to be attacked by nibbling away with many cuts, and the best tool proved to be a large size standard wire cutter, with open jaws and capable of cutting more than one strand at a time. Oh yes, and a young man on the end..!

I have since heard that the wire cutters used by reinforcing steel fixers are very good. What do other boaters suggest?

**David Fletcher**



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