



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 5 November 2016

**FOCUS ON USER GROUPS AND
BEHIND THE SCENES AT NAG**

BUDE CANAL ON FOOT

WINTER MOORING ISSUES



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The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

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Contents

- 4 Editorial
- 5 Chairman's column
- 7 Fly on the Wall
- 8 **Membership News:** NABO needs you ,Our website and security
- 10 **News:** (Not) an April Fool's joke! Do you have canal boat ancestors? Some good news: more money for the 'Monty' and the Rochdale reopens, New Kings Cross moorings, The answer to speeding cyclists? Online booking.
- 12 **Forums:** CRT's National Users Forum, CRT Annual Public Meeting, National Inland Navigation Forum.
- 14 **Around the regions:** NE Waterways and South Wales and Severn.
- 16 **Boating:** Where there's smoke, there's trouble.
- 19 Historic Pennine crossing
- 20 This canal is not for cruising.
- 22 **Talking Points:** Winter Moorings'
- 25 Stitchmilitz—The Sewing Boat
- 28 A glimpse behind the scenes at NAG
- 29 Letters



Cover photo

This month's cover photo was taken by Brian McGuigan of Renaissance & Four Counties Fuels on a misty October morning. It shows fuel boat Halsall on the River Weaver.

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. The Council meeting dates for 2017 will be decided after the AGM. Please email or post your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk by **19th November 2016**.

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CRT Emergency No: 0800 4799947 *EA Emergency No: 0800 807060*
 Contact CRT waterway managers at canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-regions



Winter's on its way

Editor Peter Fellows hangs up his tiller pin for the year.

After the boat spent the summer on the River Great Ouse, my last cruise this year was back up the River Nene to Northampton, which coincided with the Indian summer at the beginning of October—wonderful to be in shirt-sleeves not waterproofs! The aim was to get the boat back onto the canals before winter storms made the Nene impassable, but we needn't



Narrowing of the Nene
Photo: Peter Fellows

have worried: I travelled with a narrowboat having a draught of 30", and they were told by the EA that, due to lack of rainfall in the catchment area, the river was too shallow for them to proceed and they should hole up in White Mills Marina until it rained again!

Generally, the locks and river are well-maintained, so CRT will not have to incur vast expenditure if they take over the navigation, but there were a few places where tree growth restricted the river to a single boat width, not due to lack of cutting back over the last few years—some trees must be 20 years old.

Mike Rodd pens his last Chairman's report in this issue, and will complete his three-year stint at

the helm at the AGM in November. The Council is also looking for new faces and a new role for a willing member as Communications Officer—could this be you?

Mark Tizard peeks behind the scenes at the work done by CRT's Navigation Advisory Groups and sets out NABO's concerns about the seemingly unfair provision of winter moorings this year for some boaters. Mike and Stella Ridgway report on recent meetings with CRT. The Trust announced a 2.5% increase in licence fees, but the Head of Customer Services didn't feel it necessary to mention this at their meeting, and NABO found out, like everyone else, from a press release the following week despite CRT's CEO saying at a public meeting that CRT is "open to engaging with various stakeholders to enhance decision-making". They've done well to get the Rochdale reopened and there new money for the 'Monty'.

David Lowe sent a report of the first crossing of the L&L by a loaded boat for 38 years. News from the regions: Howard Anguish in the North East, Mike from South Wales and Severn. David Fletcher's East London walk last issue, prompted Helen Hutt to explore the unusual features of the Bude Canal on foot. Less happily, further recent deaths from fires and carbon monoxide prompted me to set out the basics for selecting smoke and CO alarms for your boat.

Roving trader this issue is Militza McCarthy on her sewing boat. Finally, but not least, thank you for all your letters—please keep them coming.

The (mostly) ups and (a few) downs of chairing NABO

Chairman Mike Rodd looks back over the last three years.



With our AGM looming, this will—sadly—be my last column as your chairman. When David (gently?) twisted my arm as he held me out over the K&A from the balcony of the pub where the Council had been meeting at Bradford-on-Avon, I (willingly?) agreed to do a three-year stint. I firmly believe that organisations like ours should be continually refreshed, and I am delighted that we have been able to find someone like Stella Ridgway to take over the reins, if she is elected at the AGM. I have so much enjoyed my time in office and it has always been a great privilege to be associated with NABO in this way. Council meetings are a sheer joy to chair, and I could not have wished for more dedicated and thoroughly pleasant and professional colleagues.

Being a 'critical friend'

I came into the Chairmanship with a strong belief that we should work with the (then) newly created CRT—always acting as a 'critical friend'. In many ways this has worked out; we have been close to the new senior management and have clearly been able to influence some of their policy-making. Of course, we have often disagreed and, indeed, still do—especially over aspects of their new terms and conditions of our licences. Here, having taken the best possible legal advice, we still believe that in certain areas CRT has gone beyond its legal rights under the terms of the Waterways Act, for example, the claim that, if you have a home moor-

ing, when you are away from that mooring you have to obey CRT's requirements for continuous cruising. Indeed, two recent contradictory statements from CRT itself have shown that some of the management team are confused over this!

Council is naturally alarmed by the reports from our members and our own personal cruising observations about lock failures and many examples of poor or inconsistent vegetation control. Here, we have very strong representation on the two relevant CRT advisory groups and they are doing what they can to help. Whilst we appreciate that CRT is underfunded and that they are dealing with a fragile, 200-year-old system that will always need regular maintenance, it is clear that in many cases, the organisations that have been awarded CRT contracts are simply not always delivering, possibly because they are not being sufficiently monitored, or perhaps because the requirements are not well-defined. We see different standards of vegetation management being applied across the network. Likewise, we are not convinced that their regular lock inspections are picking up all the potential problems—possibly because inspectors don't always see the problems with boaters eyes.

Balancing safety needs

NABO is especially active in the Boat Safety Scheme. In all their commitments and relevant working groups, we are professionally represented by knowledgeable people, who par-

ticipate actively in every aspect of the well-developed processes adopted in the BSS management system. We bring not only our own personal professional expertise and practical experience, but as representatives of the boating community, we always have to ensure that the scheme is proportionate in meeting the real (and not dreamed-up) needs of all waterways users. In the present culture of allowing 'elf and safety' to rule our lives, it is vital that we strike the right balance. It is all too easy to define safety standards that ensure that nothing (?) can possibly go wrong (probably because nothing is allowed to happen!), but is this really necessary or affordable in practice?

At this time we are wrestling with this balance in the recently established working party dedicated to examining electrical safety requirements. It would be easy to adopt a variation of the world-recognised standards, established by my ex-employers, the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE, now IET), through their famous and very successful 'IEE wiring regs' (which are now a European Standard). If, however, we were to do that, then our installations and BSS inspections would have to be done by persons with the appropriate electrical expertise and training, involving huge extra expense and complication. Conversely, however, our boats are becoming increasingly electric-based, with hybrid and electric boats starting to become a reality. The use of computer controls with potentially highly dangerous battery technologies that require very careful monitoring, and possibly wiring systems that, like our cars, are dependent on seriously complicated communications networks, means we need to see where the balance might lie. Looking at today's cars, can you fix even a simple fault?

Representing boaters

What continues to amaze and please me about NABO is the respect we have achieved right across the waterways—sadly not necessarily from all boaters, but from most organisations with an interest in the canals and rivers—we are so often the first port-of-call when seeking advice, recommendations or approval. One of the roles of the Chairman is to field these many incoming requests; almost every consultation that impacts the waterways is referred to us and we are duty-bound to respond.

This is humbling, as it shows what our NABO predecessors have achieved in staking NABO's claim. However, the counter to this has to be the fact that our membership numbers have stayed pretty well constant over the last five years or so. Yes, they surge slightly when there is an issue that directly affects boat owners (such as the new CRT terms and conditions), but the truth is that the bulk of our boating community is relatively satisfied with things, and as long as they can cruise their favourite waterways, then why bother with getting involved? And this is the challenge to NABO's survival.

Therefore I read with much sadness in Narrowboatworld that boaters apparently need yet another organisation to represent them. It is always of concern to read statements like this: clearly, we've not been getting across first, the amount of work that we all put into NABO activities, and secondly, how damn hard it is to keep a representative body like this going! It is so easy to be critical, especially now in the many variations of social media, but few are willing to roll up their sleeves and actually do all the hard work involved. We may not always get things right, but we can only do what our members want us to. And if they don't tell us

what that is, then it is up to those who have been brave enough to stand up and be counted by joining the Council, to work out what we should and should not do.

Our Council meetings are open to all members and I am sure that those many NABO members who have taken the trouble to attend one

or more, have always found us open to suggestions. We, and any other similar organisation, can only be as good as our members allow us to be!

So I leave the Chairmanship acknowledging that there is still much to be done but, as long as I can contribute, will seek to remain on Council. Who wouldn't!?

Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at Council, October 15th

A nearly full house at Wolverhampton Boat Club, with a welcome return by Mark Tizard, guest Alison Tuck of Navigation Advisory Group (Licensing and Mooring) and Roving Canal Traders' Association, and Council's best wishes to Geoffrey Rogerson for a speedy recovery.

Chairman Mike kicked off proceedings with a report on a meeting with Ian Rogers, CRT's Head of Customer Services. Mike and Stella had emphasised that NABO has a wealth of experience that it is willing to make available for CRT's decision making. Although not as bad as BW days, there remains an impression that, sometimes, CRT's idea of consultation is to decide a policy and then hunt around for an organisation that will support it.

However, Ian will now be meeting CRT Council boating reps four times a year. There will be an in-depth review of boat licensing in 2018: currently there are many thousands of boat licence varieties that are difficult for the computer system to handle and mistakes are being made. The aim is to simplify licence provision and the review will include pricing structure, early payment discounts, widebeam and continuous cruiser licences, compatibility with EA registration, and a look at 'zoning' to see if licence fees could be used to control the numbers of boats in different areas. NABO will offer support for the review.

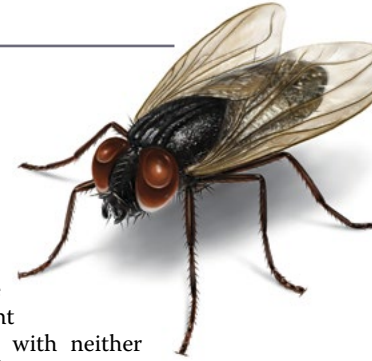
Renting out private boats for B&B accommodation, holidays or long-term residential lets is becoming a problem, especially in and around

London. Anecdotally, many boats are now being bought for renting out, with neither the owners nor the tenants aware of the special licence, BSS or insurance requirements. There is talk of a new 'landlord's licence', which would have the same requirements and cost as a hireboat licence, but Council members are worried that people won't comply or pay the higher fee, and the whole problem will be driven further underground (or under water!).

More CRT winter moorings were sold in the first week of sales, than the whole of last year, causing the system to crash for a while. NABO objects to the principle of restricting winter moorings for boaters who have a six-month licence. The new online booking system for paid visitor moorings, being trialled in London, appears to be popular: how long before it is extended to other areas (e.g. Bath)?

CRT staff have met to discuss improved management of vegetation standards and contract cutting, after complaints from boaters, especially about the South Oxford Canal and Market Harborough area. The CRT/EA discussions continue, with flood control on the agenda. Finally, the BSS has created an electrical sub-group to look at changes to regulations on boat AC electrics, particularly as they have become more sophisticated and most boat examiners are not qualified electricians.

Byeee....



Membership matters

NABO needs you

NABO is creating a new role of Communications Officer. The purpose is to disseminate NABO press releases and summaries of reports to waterway publications, local newspapers and national news organisations. It will involve working with NABO Council members and the Regional Reps, working from home. Membership of NABO Council is optional. If you think you have the ability to take on the role, please get in touch with the General Secretary, Richard Carpenter.

Geoffrey Rogerson has signalled that he will be stepping down from the Council, so NABO also needs a new Legal Affairs rep. Are you a solicitor with an interest in the waterways, or do you know someone who may be willing to take on this role? For further information on what is involved, please contact the Chairman, Mike Rodd, or Richard Carpenter.

Our website and security

Computer Security is the process of preventing and detecting unauthorised use of your computer systems. It involves safeguarding against intruders using your computer resources for malicious intents or for their own gains (or even gaining access to them accidentally).

NABO operates a website so that we have a presence on the web as a source of information, a communication tool, a means of recruiting members, and as a central depository for the management of the Association. Computer Security applies to all of us too.

Most of the information we hold is common knowledge and open to non-members and therefore of

low risk, but a few items are hidden behind a user name and password system that restricts access. The main items with restricted access, and useful for individual members, are the ability to download the latest NABO News and to have access to their own membership data. Many members have access to this and use it from time to time.

NABO Council members have a higher level of access, enabling them to publish and edit items on web pages. Anyone accessing these accounts could make unauthorised changes to the site to our detriment so it is important that these privileges are well protected.

From time to time organisations like phone companies and banks that have been hacked with a loss of data, causing great distress to customers and the potential for financial fraud. This is the last thing we want. Our approach is two-fold: first to protect against attack and loss of data; secondly to make sure that there is nothing 'critical' contained in the data.

We do not employ any money transfer systems. We have a PayPal account, and all money transfers are operated using PayPal's site. Our site provides an interface link, no confidential financial data passes through or is held on our site. We do not operate a direct debit system for several reasons, one important one is that we do not want the responsibility of operating such a system.

Your personal membership data held in the database contains only the data that you see on the renewal form, sent to you every year. We do not hold any bank account numbers, or dates of birth. We deleted dates of birth some time ago, as we do not re-

ally need them. The data consists of names and addresses, emails, phone numbers, names of boats etc. Other data is joining and renewal dates, method and amounts paid, records of contacts with members that enable us to run the organisation and prepare letters that are tailored to individuals. We do not hold data that would cause embarrassment to the membership.

Web security is an important part of providing this service and we work on that all the time. We aim to provide a level of security that is proportional to the risk, bearing in mind we are not GCHQ. The most likely risk for us is a malicious cyber attack: if this occurs we would simply take down the site and rebuild it using our back-up systems. With all these considerations in place, we are confident in our presence on the web.

One vulnerability, where we can all help, is not to use simple passwords that computers can 'guess' by going through a whole dictionary very quickly. This means is using enough letters, capital letters and numbers to make sure that the combination is not in a dictionary and not guessable. Following a recent upgrade with new tools, we will be making changes in November to increase the level of complexity for passwords required to get access. If you have trouble signing in, you may need to reset your password to comply with the new rules. If you have any difficulty or if you are worried about data loss or any other issues, please get in touch.



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- Click on 'recalculate' for your discounted quote.
- Click 'next' to proceed to purchase

NABO Webmaster, David Fletcher, says: "The web system is good at displaying the quotes but I had questions regarding surveys, and our marina was not recognised, so it would have been easier just to telephone and hang on until all was settled. The end result was insurance from Canopus for £133, a saving of £44 (including the NABO discount) against the renewal quote from my previous insurer."

The scheme is still in its early days, so we are learning as we go along! Please give it a try and let us know how you get on.

(Not) an April Fool's joke!

CRT has announced that private and business boat licence fees will increase by 2.5% from 1st April 2017. For the last three years, from 2014, CRT has held licence increases at the rate of inflation, using the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) as a guide. CPI is currently 1% and an increase of 2.5% will have an impact on all boaters, trading boats and canal societies. It is not clear why the proposed review of the structure of boat licence fees will take place from April 2018, rather than next year.

Do you have canal boat ancestors?

'Spellweaver' is a website devoted to tracing ancestors who were boaters or those who worked on the canals. The creator of the website says: "One of the things I've found useful in tracing my canal boat ancestors is newspaper articles, which can be pretty informative, giving details such as who the individual worked for, where they were living, and so forth, the kind of information which wasn't really readily available elsewhere. Hence this site." For more information, go to www.spellweaver-online.co.uk



Photo: CRT

Some good news: more money for the 'Monty' ...

A £4.2m programme of work, starting in 2017 to be completed in 2020, to restore a further section of the Montgomery Canal, can go ahead after a £2.53m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The CRT bid, supported by the Montgomery Canal Partnership, is the next step in a 47-year restoration of the canal, with about 50% already restored. The work will add a further 1.25 miles of canal and a winding hole, to Crickheath, Shropshire. It will also improve access to the canal, create new nature reserves and improve four miles of towpath between Welshpool and Llanymynech. The project is also funded by Powys County Council, Shropshire Union Canal Society, the IWA and the Friends of the Montgomery Canal.

... and the Rochdale reopens

CRT engineers have completed a £3m programme of works to reopen the canal for the first time since the Boxing Day floods, reinstating the east-west trans-Pennine route. The damage was

caused when water from the River Calder overtopped into the adjacent Rochdale Canal. For example, around Todmorden, the floodwaters washed away a 15m section of canal bank, allowing water to drain onto nearby allotments. Contractors have worked to fill the void in the bank, repair the canal walls, reline the canal bed and reinstate the towpath (CRT has also restored the allotments). Helped by hundreds of volunteers, other work involved clearing thick layers of mud from towpaths and lock sides and repairing scoured towpaths.



New Kings Cross moorings

The mooring trial covers the length of towpath between Maiden Lane Bridge (York Way) and the Treaty St. access point. The mooring plan is as follows: Section 1 (Maiden Lane Bridge to Tiber Gardens pocket park). Length, 65m. Stay time, 7-day visitor mooring. Mooring rules: double mooring permitted—one widebeam or two narrowboats only. Section 2 (Tiber Gardens pocket park to Treaty St. access). Length, 55m. Stay time, 14-day casual mooring (no change to existing stay time). Mooring rules: Max. two lines of boats permitted (two narrowboats, or one narrowboat and one widebeam; two widebeams are not permitted).

The answer to speeding cyclists?

A poll, commissioned by CRT as part of its 'Share the Space, Drop your Pace' campaign, found that the top bugbears were speeding cyclists (23%), pet owners not cleaning up after their dogs (56%), people taking up too much space on footpaths (25%) and people not concentrating on where they're going because they're too busy looking at their phones (27%). The Trust is asking people to set an example of good manners by pledging to improve the harmony and politeness on the nation's waterways.

Dick Vincent, CRT's national towpath ranger, said: "Don't wait for someone to be nice to you

before you are nice to them! Whether cycling, running, mooring your boat, or fishing, please help by being considerate of others and slowing down. If you're in a rush, the towpath is not the best place for you so please choose a different route."

To help remind people to improve their manners, messages have been sprayed onto the towpath in the busiest areas to encourage people to 'smile and say hi as you go by' and to remember that they are entering 'a hat-tipping zone' as a sign of respect or a greeting. Canal Laureate, Luke Kennard, has penned a poem to help tackle towpath troubles, which he reads in a video at youtu.be/JXg6ieURW5M.

Online booking

CRT has introduced a new online booking system to allow boaters to book, up to two years in advance, a passage through the Anderton Lift, Standedge Tunnel, the Liverpool Link and Ribble Link and Frankton Lock, or the use of Wigan and Ellesmere dry docks. Go to the 'boater's portal' on the CRT website (canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating). You will know immediately if the booking has been successful and, if your plans change, you can change confirmed bookings online without having to fill in paper forms.

There will be no additional charges to those currently applied. If you prefer, you can still book a passage by phone. If the new system proves successful, the Trust will extend online booking to other passages and dry docks across the network.

NABO at the National Forums

Council Members Stella Ridgway and Mike Rodd report back

Mike at CRT's National Users Forum

The forum was held at The Bond in Birmingham on September 7th, and followed the usual structure of a series of presentations by CRT officers. Ian Rogers provided the introduction and then Mike Grimes and his team presented various reports on boating-related matters.

- Denise Yelland reported on enforcement and showed that 95.6% of boats were licensed and 90 boats had been seized for licence evasion. She also noted that over the past year there had been an increase of 400 boats in the London area. About 900 boats had received restricted licences, of which about 24% had then either moved off CRT waters or sold their boat. 8600 14-day reminders have been issued. The enforcement team's name would be changed to 'Boat Licensing Customer Support'.
- Matthew Symonds went through the recent boat owners survey—this has been well-circulated previously, so no surprises. An important bottom-line, though, is the decrease in the number of boats being used for leisure purposes and an increase in the use of boats as prime residences (over 60% of boaters in London). Matthew also reported on collaborative work to develop a mooring strategy for London, which should produce a draft strategy by April with the final report due in December 2017.
- Mike Grimes reported on his frustrations in trying to get Peel Holdings to rethink their recent decisions relating to CRT-licensed boats using the Bridgewater Canal. It seems Peel is simply not willing to listen—but another attempt will be made in October. Mike also mentioned the work being done on online pre-bookable moorings and passages—both of which will be available on the same portal as boat licences.
- An excellent presentation was then given by Kevin Kirkland on CRT's handing of the

winter flooding, illustrating the extent of the damage and how this was dealt with. It was also noted that in many cases local councils and authorities had made major financial contributions to the work and also over 5000 hours were put in by volunteers to reopen towpaths. The latest forecast for the repair cost is £10m.

- Dean Davies reported on the summer and winter stoppage programmes, noting that there had been 17 summer stoppages. In the up-coming winter period, there will be 228 stoppages—up from 170 last year, covering 180 locks and 18 bridges. CRT's Direct Services will carry out 174 stoppage works, expected to be completed by mid-March 2017.
- Richard Wakelen reported the Trust's asset value is £18bn, including 3200 canal lengths, locks, bridges, aqueducts, etc. CRT has an obligation to report to Defra on agreed thresholds for the grades of principal assets, and the Trust had been consistently below the thresholds. CRT has an asset management policy and inspections are carried out regularly. Self-assessment is carried out against ISO 55000 and the Trust is currently between Levels 2 and 3 (which indicates that it knows what to do and is doing it). Work is ongoing to identify areas of improvement to take it to Level 3. New asset category investment strategies and long-term asset-specific strategies are being developed.

In the brief discussion that followed, NABO reported that it believes CRT was not responding publicly to the very well-crafted PR strategy produced by the National Barge Travellers Association in relation to the alleged unfairness towards the CCing requirements for boaters with schoolchildren and pregnant women. The result is a high degree of misinformation going out without being challenged. Ian Rogers agreed to investigate this.

Finally Richard Parry summarised progress and mentioned that work concerning CRT pos-

sibly taking over the running of EA navigations is progressing well and he hoped a decision would be finalised in three months' time. He noted that: "The Trust is open to engaging with various stakeholders to enhance decision-making".

Overall? As always, very interesting and the people-networking is valuable, but I feel that the format is wrong and the available knowledge of the large numbers of representative delegates from waterways-related organisations is not being tapped into.

Stella at the CRT Annual Public Meeting

I travelled to Birmingham on September 22nd for the Annual Public Meeting and the Council Meeting in the afternoon. I have been to Birmingham previously, but never been able to visit the canal. I met a dear friend and, after the morning meeting, we went down to the towpath to meet her fellow traders in Birmingham for the Trader's Market the following weekend. What a tonic after a morning of corporate-speak and a short Q&A session. CRT doesn't get the whole boater community thing; how liveboards provide safety and draw the gongoozlers to see the quaint boat people and the pretty boats. CRT talked about engaging communities, but forgets that boaters provide a third of their income stream. They have an aspiration of 70% boater satisfaction; yet less than half bothered to reply to their boater's survey.

The Council and trustees are there to talk about CRT spending and income, in the main, unaware of boaters' frustrations. They talked about the economic effects of Brexit on asset values, and sales and acquisitions that they have made in the last three months—and a lot of talk about the resilience of the Trust. I would encourage every boater to phone, tweet or email every fault, and then maybe they will realise what an asset they are not utilising.

There is going to be a meeting between CRT and Peel Holdings about the shenanigans on the Bridgewater Canal. If you experience any difficulties, let CRT know.

All in all, it was interesting: a lot more time for comment/discussion from the floor in the Council Meeting and I think if I can speak to every trustee, I can encourage them to see it

from the boater's point of view. The next Council meeting will be in March 2017, but we have a meeting of the boaters' reps with the Boating Team and I have sent them our questions.

Mike at the National Inland Navigation Forum

NINF met at the St Pancras Cruising Club on 22nd October and, as usual, proved a useful meeting, bringing together the bodies involved in CRT, EA and other waterways. Much of the meeting was discussion of reports from all members about the generally poor state of CRT's canals, with many examples of uncut vegetation and lock failures. Problems on the Thames were also discussed. Recognising that CRT was restricted financially, sharing a long-term asset management programme with NINF would be welcome. To this end it was agreed to seek a meeting with the responsible CRT director. The EA felt that their leadership was strictly in a 'wait-and-see' mode. Concern was expressed about the continuing problem of lack of full-time lock keepers, existing ones being overstretched. In a discussion of the possible takeover by CRT of EA's navigational responsibilities, delegates all saw this as inevitable, and only NABO seems to question its viability. It was reported that CRT Trustees would be presented with a proposal November or December.

The CRT review of all aspects of boat licensing was discussed and NINF will get involved. This would also be an opportunity to merge the EA registration processes with CRT's licensing.

The proposed Milton Keynes/Bedford Link was discussed and some members, who had been involved in the past, felt that despite some recent PR, there was in fact little real progress.

Finally, several members raised the issue of boats which are 'suitably prepared' to pass their BSS inspection, but then clearly became unsafe between inspections. The nature of the BSS scheme as essentially a third party approach was pointed out, and that random inspections between regular formal ones would be expensive and unpopular with the bulk of users. It was mentioned that (apparently) several of the smaller navigational authorities do in fact undertake such random inspections. The AGM will be held on 25th February 2017.

...and the regional forums

Howard Anguish reports on the recent NE Waterway user forum and Mike Rodd on the South Wales and Severn autumn forum.

NE Waterway user forum

I attended this meeting on 20th September at Castleford on behalf of NABO. I didn't think it was quite as well attended as in previous years, with around 45-50 people, including numerous CRT staff. I suspect this may be down to the changed start time of 17.00 instead of 18.00, with some people still at work. The meeting followed the pattern set in the last few meetings, with a number of set-piece presentations, mainly by CRT, with no Q&As encouraged. Rather, there seems to be a keenness for attendees to take part in networking after the general presentations, which in my view is less than satisfactory. I may be in the minority, but, although networking has its place, I much prefer to hear a debate in open forum, whereas relying totally on networking means that inevitably many people don't get their chance to put their point to CRT management.

A large part of the CRT presentations was taken up by a 'where are we now' PowerPoint review of how CRT was brought about, its history, aims and ambitions and how it is progressing towards its goals. It was a very bullish outline, and one of the conclusions was: "After four years, nothing has gone wrong and we are in a good place". This review was very largely a waste of time in that the same points have been made frequently over the last few years at these meetings, and it gives a distinct impression that CRT is not really interested in open debate.

There was frequent mention of 'customers' and I find it difficult to identify what this term actually means. Do they mean only 'paying customers' or do they including non-contributing visitors? A great emphasis was placed on the need to have all the strategies in place to reach the targets previously set, for achievement by the year 2022 when the next round of discussions with the Government will take place. It was also emphasised that, to make sure the targets were reached, these strategies should all be working

successfully by next year, so that they can demonstrate five years of satisfactory progress prior to 2022.

There was also a presentation by Leeds City Council and their contractors about the progress of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme, during which the meeting was told that there will be a previously unannounced minimum two-week stoppage next year during April/May or even June. This will effectively prevent any passage through Leeds, and indeed stop any visiting boats from reaching Leeds City Centre. It was also said that the timing of this stoppage, which is in two different locations at Knostrop and Crown Point, will be dependent on any slippages either by weather or any other cause. This will make it extremely difficult for people to make any plans for next season and is especially difficult for any commercial enterprises, such as hire-boat companies in the region. This unexpected news did cause some angry responses from those present, and despite it being suggested that it should be discussed in the networking session after the presentations, it did raise a number of lively contributions from the general meeting! It seems that the line of communication from CRT to the people they are fond of describing as 'customers' had broken, and CRT was left in no doubt that users should be kept more in the loop in future about such important developments.

Other presentations included a very positive view of NE volunteering, certainly showing great interest and involvement by many local organisations and individual volunteers. This had been boosted by the terrific efforts of the volunteering community during and after the floods last year. The engineering review highlighted the work presently underway to replace the two bridges that were washed away during the floods. Elland Bridge will be open to road traffic by December this year, having reopened to boat passage in June, and Crowther Bridge, which also reopened to boat passage in June, will be completed and open to road traffic by March 2017.

South Wales and Severn autumn forum

Held in the Old Rectory at Llangattock, alongside the Mon & Brec canal, on 17th October, this well-attended meeting concentrated largely on the very extensive winter work programme that will effectively close the canal from November until Easter next year. Of special importance; much of this work will be funded by a Welsh Government grant of over £2m, in recognition of the important role that the canal plays in both attracting visitors to South Wales and supporting the health and wellbeing of the local communities. The work will continue to address the ongoing problems of water losses, as well as a range of maintenance issues.

It was good to see one of CRT's new Trustees, Nigel Annett, as well as a member of the lo-

cal partnership, at the meeting. They will have been impressed by the active programme being pursued by CRT, aimed at encouraging local community engagement with the canal and its associated infrastructure. An example is the extensive volunteer-led work being undertaken to clear and expose the many lime kilns found at sites along the canal—a major part of the history of this once commercially successful waterway.

The meeting ended on a very sad note, noting the recent death of Brian Forder, who, with his wife Helen on their boat Tamarisk, has been cruising on the Mon & Brec for many years. Brian has quietly, but firmly, represented the interest of both NABO members and other boaters in the Cambrian Marina, on every possible occasion. A very popular authority on the waterway and an active member of the Mon & Brec Canal Trust, Brian will be so missed by all.

moorlikeatwat.com: Part 1

With the growth of social media comes the inevitable amusement of social-shaming. If you like a giggle at this kind of thing we can thoroughly recommend the Facebook group; [Moor like a Twat facebook.com/groups/1786496984898811](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1786496984898811). Send yours in and who knows, it could become a regular feature of NABO News



Above: Slows down the cyclists! John Henry

Right: What could possibly go wrong? Brian Scooby Talbot and He has a safety broom, it'll be ok... Stephen Dennison

Left: All secure now Maffi Oxford

If there's smoke, there's trouble

An alarmed Peter Fellows reviews protection for your boat

Both smoke and CO alarms are available for people with hearing loss.

Further information is available at the BSS website boatsafetyscheme.org/search/?q=smoke+alarms and the Fire Industries Association www.fia.uk.com has produced a list of smoke alarms that are suitable for boats. The CO alarm manufacturer's association, CoGDEM cogdem.org.uk, has published a list of alarms produced by its members that are suitable for use in boats.

Every year, boaters are killed or injured by boat fires and carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Both are preventable by fitting the proper alarms and making sure that these, and the heating appliances on your boat are well-maintained. Here are the basics.

Smoke alarms

There are two types of detector in smoke alarms: optical (or photo-electric) and ionization detectors. The best choice for boats is an optical alarm, fitted with a 'hush button'. This type is more effective at detecting slow-burning fires, such as smouldering wood or foam-filled furniture, overheated wiring etc. It is also less prone to nuisance alarms from cooking fumes and if it does go off while frying food or making toast, the hush button can be used to temporarily silence the alarm. The second type is an ionisation alarm, which uses a radioactive isotope. This type is very sensitive to flames and can detect a fire before the smoke gets too thick. If you think your boat is at risk from both slow-burning and flaming fires you should consider installing one of each. Some alarms have both types of sensor in the same housing or a combined smoke detector and carbon monoxide (CO) detector. Others have an emergency light to illuminate the escape route.

Battery or mains-power?

A smoke alarm with a flat battery is not a smoke alarm; it is useless. Alarms with 'sealed for life' lithium 7-year or 10-year batteries are better than replaceable 9-volt alkaline

or standard batteries. If you do use alkaline or standard batteries, they should be replaced at least once a year, or more frequently if the cabin atmosphere is damp. Alarms should be tested at least once a week when the boat is in use and after any period when the boat has not been used.

Unless a boat has a permanent shoreline electricity supply, or you are confident that you have sufficient capacity in your boat's battery and inverter system, mains-powered alarms are less suitable. They are hard-wired in and have to be installed by a competent person.

How many smoke alarms do you need and where to fit them?

Obviously, the number of alarms depends on the size of your boat, but as a guide, no area of the boat cabin should be more than five metres from an alarm. Longer narrowboats therefore need multiple units for maximum protection. If you choose to fit more than one alarm on your boat, it is recommended that they are connected to each other so that, when one detects smoke, all the alarms sound. The interconnection can be wireless or via a 12v bell wire. These are useful for anyone who needs a loud noise to be woken from deep sleep or for people with hearing difficulties.

The ideal location for an alarm is on a well-insulated part of the ceiling (avoiding cold spots) along the centreline of the boat. Alarms should be placed in a cabin space that has a heater or a cooker, but not too close to the appliance. If possible, avoid putting them closer than 300 mm



to a vertical surface (a cabin wall or wardrobe for example). If you can't mount the alarm on a ceiling (e.g. if headroom is a problem), mount it on a wall 150–300 mm below the ceiling, but not directly above a ventilator or opening window. The location of the alarm should be easy to reach for testing or pressing the hush button and in a place where you are able to hear it, particularly when you're asleep or when doors are closed. Check if you can hear the alarm before you fix it in position. Do not fix a smoke alarm in the galley or bathroom, where it could be set off by cooking fumes or steam, or close to a heater or a roof ventilator.

CO alarms

Boats are built to keep water out, but this also makes them good containers for gases and fumes—especially carbon monoxide. 'Black-spot' colour-changing CO indicator cards are not good enough: they do not give an instant warning of dangerous CO levels and have no alarm to wake you up. CO alarms are designed to protect you from CO produced by incomplete combustion of any fuel

(including LPG, coal, charcoal, wood, paraffin or diesel used in domestic appliances such as cookers, boilers, stoves, etc.), or from exhaust fumes from a boat's engine or generator. The main causes of CO build-up in a cabin are faulty, badly maintained, or misused appliances and escaped flue gases from solid fuel stoves.

How many CO alarms do you need and where to fit them?

If the boat has a single multi-use cabin, one alarm is sufficient, but otherwise all cabins with a fuel-burning appliance should have a CO alarm fitted. If fuel-burning heaters, generators or engines are used while people sleep, all bedrooms should have their own alarms. Follow the alarm manufacturer's installation instructions as far as the space and nature of the boat allow, but if the directions are difficult to meet on your boat, the following are best practice points:

10 TIPS TO KEEP YOU AND YOUR CREW ALIVE

1. Install fuel-burning appliances properly, in line with manufacturer's instructions.
2. Follow servicing guidelines, with routine and competent maintenance.
3. Use appliances as per their instructions (e.g. never use cookers for space heating).
4. Don't allow any bodged repairs, adjustments and adaptations to appliances.
5. Never use equipment you suspect has problems; deal with them immediately.
6. Don't block ventilation.
7. Don't bring charcoal BBQs on board, or have them near a cabin during or after use—only stone-cold charcoal is safe.
8. Prevent engine fumes from entering the cabin and never use a portable generator in or near a cabin.
9. Learn about the danger signs; identify potential hazards before CO can be produced and make sure that all crew know the symptoms of CO poisoning and how to react if it is suspected.
10. Install a certified CO alarm (BS EN 50291-2), test it routinely and never remove the batteries.

A smoke alarm should meet BS EN 14604:2005, have a British Standard Kitemark, a BRE Global Loss Prevention Certification Board (LPCB) horseshoe certification mark or the square VdS symbol.

A CO alarm for a boat should meet BS EN 50291 as a minimum and BS EN 50291-2 standards (suitable for boats) for greater assurance. Also look for the BSI Kitemark or a LPCB horseshoe certification mark.

Combined alarms should comply with standards EN 14604 (including Annex L) and EN 50291-2 and carry a recognised approval mark. The manufacturer should state that they are suitable for use in boats.

Place the alarm:

- in living quarters between 1 metre and 3 metres from the appliance;
- in living quarters high up on a wall, at least 150 mm from the ceiling and where the indicator lights can be seen;
- in sleeping quarters in the 'breathing zone' near the bed head.

Before fixing, check that you can hear the alarm from any position in the boat (or buy additional alarms). Test the alarms when you first board the boat and then weekly when the boat is in use.

Write a replacement date on the alarm. Do not use it beyond that date and if in any doubt, replace it earlier. When working on the boat with paints, solvents, degreasers etc., cover the alarm or remove it temporarily to protect the sensor.



NOTE THAT CO ALARMS

- only detect CO, they cannot prevent it;
- do not detect fires, smoke or leakages of petrol or LPG fuel vapours;
- can activate if they sense hydrogen (e.g. from the boat's batteries gassing off when under charge).
- may not fully safeguard individuals with specific medical conditions;

Replace the alarm as soon as the air clears and before you use any appliance or the engine. Consider removing the alarm from a winterised boat to prevent long periods of sub-zero temperatures affecting its sensor and battery.

parklikeatwat.com: Part 2

Diane Richmond took this photo, and another one by Sarah Edgson during the same week near Rugby. Comments included, Brian Holt: "Well it looks like the hazard lights are on, so it should be OK", Mark Jones: "I see the problem: no green and red navigation lights!" and Sadie Dean: "Just shows how shallow it is in parts!" Finally, in the recent crop of photos, this one taken near London by Alexandra Cat, with a comment by Andy Ellis: "That is stupid mooring - anyone knows you need more than one line to moor properly". From the NABO Facebook page



History crosses the Pennines

David Lowe records the first passage of a loaded short boat from Goole to Liverpool in 38 years.

Ribble Photo: David Lowe

To mark the bicentenary of the completion of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, David and Margaret Poole, owners of the 1934 Leeds and Liverpool short boat 'Ribble', organised a demonstration cargo run across the Pennines. A tribute to those who built and worked on the canal and, on a purely practical level, a good test of the recent extensive dredging. It was also chance to see what a loaded short boat looks like—a sight once commonplace, but not seen for nearly 40 years. In David Poole's words: "It would bring joy to those who knew what they were looking at, an education to those who didn't."

The Commercial Boat Operators Association arranged the cargo, 32 tonnes of sand in one-tonne bags, donated by member, AC Marine Aggregates and its loading in Goole Docks by North West Trading at no cost on 21st September with assistance and advice from Humber Barges Ltd. The MCA gave the trip its blessing, and CRT's NW Waterway and NE Partnership supported the project. The sand was donated to the Trust at the end of

the voyage. This was the first load of sand to be taken up the Aire and Calder Navigation for three years, the first loaded short boat to traverse the eastern end of the L&L since 1982 and the first across the summit since September 1978, when Derek Bent's short boat *Weaver* crossed from Selby to Manchester with a load of fishmeal.

The journey achieved its objectives: considerable interest from towpath users, boat owners and Trust staff. Passage through Yorkshire and onto the summit was relatively trouble-free, especially through the recently dredged lengths, as was the section from Wigan to Liverpool. Navigation between Barrowford and Wigan, however, proved to be a challenge, especially on the return, with very low water levels, shallows and rubbish in bridge holes. A comprehensive report of the trip will enable CRT to plan its future dredging programme for the western end of the canal and perhaps revisit its policy on water levels. 'Ribble' was unloaded at CRT's Rose Grove Wharf near Burnley on 13th October, having travelled back from Liverpool.

While the 'Ribble' voyage was not a true commercial cargo, resumption of sand deliveries to Leeds is expected later this year or early next.

The canal is not for cruising...

The Bude Canal, on the north coast of Cornwall has some very unusual features.

Helen Hutt explores the history and context of this interesting canal

More information is available from the Bude Canal Trust at bude-canal-trust.co.uk

The canal, which opened in 1823, was originally intended to link up with the River Tamar and Plymouth, but it never progressed beyond Launceston. The waterway was built to transport sand from the beach to farms inland, to be used as fertiliser, along with limestone and coal brought in from other UK ports.

The sea lock

One of only two canal sea-locks in the UK, leading directly out to sea (the other is at Tarleton on the Rufford Branch of the L&L), this Scheduled Ancient Monument was restored in 2000 and is fully operational—although one of the gates had to be repaired after coming off its hinges during a storm in 2008.

The lock is set into a huge break-water and leads to a wharf where sea-going vessels came to trade. Today there are craft-shops, a café, museum, rowing boats for hire and a few moored fishing and pleasure craft.

Ground breaking technology and inclined planes

Bude was the first canal in the world to use 'tub boats' with fixed wheels and one of the few UK canals to use inclined planes—similar to the one built at Foxton, but designed to carry tub boats, rather than narrowboats, uphill. It was also the first canal in the UK (and second in the world) to use chains driven by underground waterwheels to raise the

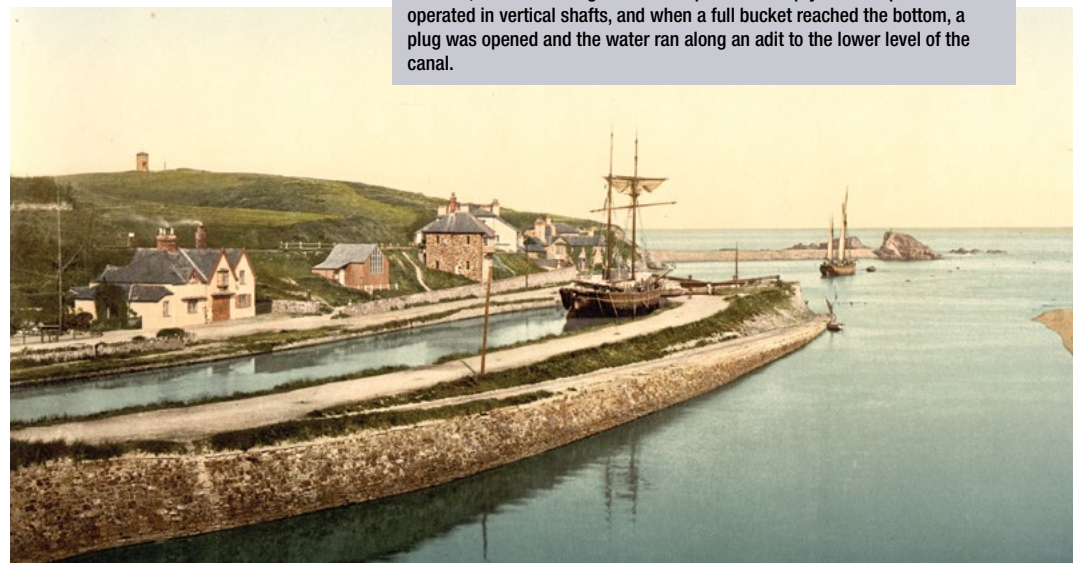
Abandoned tub boats on the Bude Canal
Opposite: A ship enters the sea lock at Bude at the end of the 19th Century



tubs (see table). Material was loaded into the tubs at the wharf and a train of around six of these was hauled on the water and then individually up a series of six inclined planes with the wheels running in channel rails; at the top of each inclined plane the tubs were refloated and hauled on to the next using horses. You can still see sections of the rails which led from the beach to the wharf but, sadly, there is no trace of the inclined planes' machinery.

A linear wildlife haven

At the end of the wharf is Falcon Bridge; to me it looked hardly high enough to float a tea tray under but I guess an agile canoeist or rowing boat hirer would manage! Beyond that, all that remains of the original 35 miles is a short but delightful 'navigable' stretch from the sea-lock to Helebridge, about two miles inland, where there are two more working locks, with lots of charming and interesting buildings en route. Marhamchurch, the site of the first inclined plane, is about a mile further on and there is a good towpath all the way to this point, but here the footpath peters out.



Until this year, the canal had never seen a narrowboat, although a short stretch has been restored and is home to a few small boats. Phil Goulding spotted this narrowboat on Bude Canal in September, which had first been assisted by lifeboat into Ilfracombe harbour, having fouled its propeller with fishing lines, before continuing on to Bude.

Inclined Plane	Vertical lift (feet)	Length (feet)
Marhamchurch	120	836
Hobbacott *	225	935
Vealand	58	500
Merrifield	60	360
Tamerton	59	360
Bridgetown	51	259

*All inclined planes, except the one at Hobbacott, were operated by overshot waterwheels. The Hobbacott Inclined Plane (having both the steepest gradient and height difference) used about fifteen tons of water filled into a very large bucket to pull the ascending tub boat up the incline in about four minutes; the descending bucket also pulled an empty bucket up. The buckets operated in vertical shafts, and when a full bucket reached the bottom, a plug was opened and the water ran along an adit to the lower level of the canal.

Winter Moorings

Vice Chair Mark Tizard sets out NABO's concerns about this year's provision.

Winter Moorings this year are sold in four price bands:

Band 1—£15 per meter/per month—a visitor mooring site with mooring rings or bollards, in/within walking distance of a popular village/town/location with local amenities. There are good facilities at the mooring or nearby (including water, elsan, pumpout and rubbish facilities) and good public transport links (e.g. the site is close to a station/public transport routes or, in London, is in travel zone 1-4).

Band 2—£13.50 per metre/per month—a visitor mooring site with mooring rings or bollards, in/within walking distance of a popular village/town/location with local amenities. This site has good facilities (most including water, elsan, pumpout and rubbish facilities).

Band 3—£10 per metre/per month—this could be a visitor mooring or towpath site with some facilities on site or within a short cruise. The site is likely to be quite close to a village or town.

Band 4—£6.50 per metre/per month—a quieter towpath location, which doesn't have any facilities on site.

NABO has supported CRT's provision of winter moorings enabling boaters to stay at a pre-determined fixed location for a bookable term. This year, we are pleased that, as a result of requests from NABO and other organisations, together with the Navigation Advisory Group (Licensing and Mooring), they are back to five months' duration.

An important income source

Revenue from winter moorings is an important income source for the Trust. In the winter of 2014/15, the income was £389k (this was for five month moorings and included the roving winter permits) and 863 permits were sold, covering 3662

In the first week of October alone, CRT sold more winter moorings than in the previous year.

months. In 2015/2016, the figure was £184k (only 4 months available) and 1319 permits were sold, covering 462 months. For the winter of 2016/7, moorings went on sale on October 2nd and, despite the fact that the booking system opened two hours earlier than previously, high demand meant that many boaters struggled to get through. It may be that CRT should stagger the sale next year to ensure that their systems can cope with the demand. We are advised that, in the first week of October alone, CRT sold more winter moorings, both in terms of value

and months booked, than in the previous year.

As last year, visitor moorings revert to 14-days, apart from those located in a few popular signed areas.

Why the increased demand?

The fact that CRT's lines are swamped when winter moorings go on sale says much for the pent-up demand for boaters without a home mooring to obtain moorings. NABO thinks it would be a good idea for CRT to analyse this demand further. The analysis could be interesting when linked into consultations, such as the ongoing London Mooring Strategy deliberations.

Over recent years the number of boats with a home mooring has remained broadly static and the increase in licensed boats is almost entirely due to the increase in boats without a home mooring (continuous cruisers). Does this increased demand just reflect the increase in the number of continuous cruisers, CRT's higher enforcement profile, or is it that a high percentage of continuous cruisers are actually looking for on-line moorings at winter mooring prices and locations? Or can we still blame the harshness of the English winter?

Confusion around who is eligible for a winter mooring

NABO has always understood that the only boaters not eligible for a winter mooring were those already in the enforcement process, or boaters who had been offered a six-month restricted licence as a result of not

NABO recently wrote to Mike Grimes, CRT's Head of Boating, pointing out these anomalies and is awaiting his reply. This is the letter sent by Mike Rodd:

Good morning Mike,

I understand from Mark that sales of winter moorings are already well in advance of last year, which is good news. However, we would like to raise some concerns with you that have recently been brought to NABO's attention, and which were discussed at our recent Council meeting. We had understood that winter moorings were available to all unless a boater was subject to enforcement and/or under a six-month restricted licence. Indeed, Matthew Symonds confirmed this when Mark asked for clarification, but a subsequent email exchange with him has shown that this is not the case.

We now understand that if you have a 12-month licence and receive a mid-term licence advisory letter, you will probably not be entitled to a winter mooring—even though you are in possession of a full 12-month licence. The current guidance refers to a minimum range of 15-20 miles over the course of the licence period. This is turning winter moorings into a lottery in that, if my licence starts (for example) in June, I'm guaranteed a winter mooring as my licence will only have been running for four months. However, if my licence starts in March and I receive a mid term advisory letter, then I may not be guaranteed a winter mooring.

I don't want to raise individual cases that have been brought to our attention, but it is clear there is a lack of clarity and consistency here.

We have supported the published cruising guidelines for boats without a home mooring in the belief that enforcement should be fair, consistent and transparent. We believe the refusal of winter moorings to some boaters, who currently have a full 12-month licence but not others, is unfair and illogical, and would ask that you please rethink how this is applied. Hence, a boater with a full 12-month licence should be entitled to apply for a winter mooring without any restrictions. Further, the decision on whether a boater is offered a restricted six-month licence on renewal should be made by assessing their cruising range in accordance with your guidelines over the entire period of their licence—not at the 6 or 10 month stages—which should only be advisory.

We would be happy to discuss this further if necessary and look forward to your response.

With very best regards,

Dr Mike Rodd, FIET, CEng.

Chairman, National Association of Boat Owners

meeting the cruising guidelines during their previous 12-month licence. Indeed I have had this confirmed by CRT at a recent meeting I attended, only for this to be shown not to be the case when I subsequently raised a boater's query. We have been contacted by a couple of boaters, who, while in possession of a full term 12-month licence, have been refused a winter mooring. It would appear that if you receive a mid-point re-

view letter, there is a reasonable chance you may not be offered a winter mooring, despite the fact that this letter is shown as a 'reminder letter' and does not constitute the boaters being in the enforcement process. The mid-point 'reminder' letter states: "We've been looking at our sighting records and they suggest that your boat, boatname, index xxxx, hasn't been moving [far/often] enough to meet the terms of your



Photo: Les and Jaq Biggs
boatlife.blogspot.co.uk

Boaters in possession of a full term 12-month licence have been refused a winter mooring.

licence. We're writing to you now as a gentle reminder (my italics), as we don't want you to run into trouble when it comes to renewing your licence. Please be aware that if we continue to have concerns over your movement pattern it may affect your ability to purchase a winter mooring from the Trust in the future" CRT's FAQ is more forceful and states: "You will not be eligible for a winter mooring unless we are satisfied that your boat's range of movement has improved sufficiently since that letter was sent".

By all means, CRT should issue reminders if it is concerned, just as they do if a boat has not moved after 14 days. However, given that winter moorings cover a five-month period, the exact time of your licence renewal becomes important, depending on your cruising style/range. For

example, if I get my new 12-month licence on 1st June, I will be entitled to a winter licence as I would not have received my six-month reminder letter before they go on sale. However if I cruise in the same range but renew my licence on 1st April, then I may have received a six-month 'reminder' letter and may not be entitled. NABO's view is that if a boater buys a 12-month licence and CRT subsequently has concerns about the cruising range being 'bona fide' in accord-

ance with the published guidelines, this should be evaluated at the time of licence renewal, and not at six months as it now appears, except in exceptional circumstances.

NABO broadly supports the published guidelines for boats without a home mooring and believes that enforcement should be fair, clear and consistent. Given that winter moorings now cover a five-month period, it would seem fairly easy for CRT to simplify the rules for winter moorings: it could state that if a boater does not meet the published guidelines over the course of the 12-month licence (which will include any period when a winter mooring is taken), the boater will be subject to a restricted six-month licence, and as such will not be entitled to a winter mooring the following year.

The same rule could be applied to the restricted six-month licence: if boaters can show that they have met the guidelines when the winter moorings go on sale, why should they not also be eligible?

Roving traders:

Stitchmilitz, the Sewing Boat

A regular series looking at people who make a living from waterway-based trading. This time, it's Militza McCarthy who trades as Stitchmilitz.

"My trade, before I started sewing about three years ago, was as a chef, and then I took a City and Guilds course in tailoring in 2014. I love using quality wools and tweeds for my work and source wools made in Great Britain. With fabrics stashed up and a front extension on the boat I decided to start trading. Having had a few customers from my Etsy site and orders from friends too, it was a pleasure to get some interest from fellow traders. After meeting Joshua from the Beverage Boat at Norbury festival in May, his wife Kayleigh was keen to have a waistcoat made for him. They chose a lovely Scottish tweed fabric; I took some vital measurements and arranged to meet at a later date at Chester. Another order came from Brian Greaves, the Blacksmith, again his wife, Jane, was keen for Brian to have an upgrade from his current leather waistcoat, which was a bit on the small side for him (I gladly took this off his hands as it was a good fit for myself). The Scottish tweed was again chosen with a wool back instead of lining. Again, I arranged to catch up at a later date.

Meanwhile, in Chester, we spent a short while in the basin and decided to put a few things on show. I was approached by a lady who wanted a waistcoat for her husband, Jed, to wear for his job as the driver on the Chester heritage tours. The couple both worked on the bus and they dressed up in lovely Edwardian clothing. They were also boaters and had moorings just by the basin. The waistcoat was a good fit on Jed, so I thought I would go and see them in action on the bus which started just outside the Town Hall. I got pictures of Jed in his black and gold waistcoat and his wife in her stunning costume. Both Joshua and Brian came to Chester with their boats for the floating market. I was still in the area and took their waistcoats to them—and very smart they looked too!"



Militza is on Etsy, [etsy.com/uk/listing/264593067](https://www.etsy.com/uk/listing/264593067) or you can contact her on Twitter @stitchmilitz



A glimpse behind the scenes

Mark Tizard explains the workings of CRT's Navigation Advisory Groups

The Navigation Advisory Groups (NAGs) comprise boaters who have a wide variety of backgrounds and experience, and are one of several national advisory groups that provide the Trust management with specialist advice and guidance. They exist to bring as broad a range of perspectives as possible to help shape policy and plans and to guide CRT's decision making in their areas of specialism. There are two sub-groups: 'Operations' and 'Licensing and Mooring.' Members are all volunteers and are seconded for a period of three years. NABO currently has a member in both groups. However, members are not there to represent any specific organisation, but as you can see below, most have access to a wide boater audience to ensure that they are well informed.

Membership

NAG (Operations) provides advice relating to safety standards, waterway operation, maintenance and repairs, and customer service standards. It currently consists of eight members: Mike Carter is a committee member of the Commercial Boat Operators' Association, the owner of a mooring basin and, latterly, owner and proprietor of a repair yard/dry dock. He currently operates as a marine surveyor and consultant, and was appointed chair of the Operations sub-group in Spring 2013. Sue Cawson is the owner of an historic narrowboat and champion of navigation issues for the Historic Narrowboat Club. John Baylis has extensive experience of national boating issues, amassed during 45 years of boating. He is an

ex-chairman of the IWA Navigation Committee. David Fletcher is an engineering consultant in the oil industry and ex-chairman of NABO. Ian Harrison is a chartered civil engineer, specialising in ground engineering. He is experienced in local government and has a focus on regeneration and external funding.

Members are not there to represent any specific organisation.

Malcolm Blundell is a lifelong boating enthusiast, boat owner and boat builder, who now cruises the system extensively. Kevin East is a waterway and environment manager at Canoe England and a member of the Canoe Camping Club National Council. Nigel Stevens and his wife operate a hire fleet and full service boatyard with moorings in Yorkshire. He was a Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) organiser and a past chairman of the British Waterways Advisory Forum and the Association of Pleasure Craft Operators.

NAG (Licensing & Mooring) provides advice relating to boat licensing and moorings policies and the way in which they are implemented. There are currently 11 members: Mike Annan has over 30 years' experience working in the voluntary sector, more recently (before retirement) as CEO of various housing associations. He has been chairman of the Buckingham Canal Society and is also the chair of this sub-group. Paul Le Blique is a professional engineer and narrowboater of many years. He is responsible for



Above: Mike Carter, Chair of NAG (Operations). Right: Mike Annan, Chair of NAG (L&M)



navigation authority liaison for the Association of Waterway Cruising Clubs. Tim Parker is a former chairman of Association of Pleasure Craft Operators, recently retired from the major hire fleet, Black

on the K&A Canal and works for Julian House, a charity offering direct support to the socially excluded, as gypsy, traveller and boater outreach and engagement officer.

Gren Messham has been a boat owner for more than 30 years and has previously been involved in waterways restoration. He is currently a trustee of the IWA. Dave Williams is a liveaboard boater, who has extensive experience as a finance director and currently runs an internet payroll bureau. Mark Tizard is currently vice-chair of NABO, and with over 35 years' boating experience, he spends three or four months a year cruising away from his home mooring. Lee Wilshire is a planner and urban designer, lives on his boat. He is a member of London's Better Relationships Group and is working on a number of projects on the canal network, from affordable moorings to a recycling barge. Alison Tuck has been living aboard for 11 years, has been a continuous cruiser, and now runs a business from her two boats. A former chair of the Roving Canal Traders' Association, she was one of the first CRT volunteer lock-keepers.

The groups typically meet every three to four months and meetings last four to five hours.

Prince Holidays Ltd., where he was managing director. Beryl McDowall has lived on boats since the late 1960s and has worked on commercial craft for many years, particularly on the Grand Union Canal south and River Soar. She has been an officer of the Residential Boat Owners' Association since 1999. She owns a small-scale mooring site on the River Soar, as well as leading a small CRT volunteer group. Diane Warner has been boating for over 10 years on both wide- and narrow-beam boats, living aboard and continuously cruising. She has regularly volunteered with the Trust and the WRG, and administers two waterways-related Facebook groups. Samantha Worrall lives on her boat

Terms of reference

The terms of reference for both NAG sub-groups are similar and I have highlighted below those that relate to NAG (L&M).

NAG (L&M) plays a key role in helping the Trust's management understand the implications of policy and other management actions relevant to boating in the area of licensing and mooring, especially those that may be innovative or controversial, as well as relevant boating-related aspects of the Trust's ten-year strategy. The group typically meets every three to four months and meetings last four to five hours. Matters considered by the group

If you have a specific area of concern that you feel NAG should be discussing, contact mark.tizard@nabo.org.uk for licensing and mooring or david.fletcher@nabo.org.uk for operations. Agendas and minutes can be found on the CRT's website at canalrivertrust.org.uk/search?q=nag

are jointly agreed with CRT's Head of Boating and the group regularly reports its advice and recommendations to the Chief Executive. The remit of the group is as follows:

- Provide the Trust's management with expert advice on matters relating to strategic navigation issues that have been brought to the group's attention by CRT management or others;
- Provide the Trust's management with practical advice on boat licensing and moorings policies;
- Advise the Trust on its boating management and other policies as they impact on boat licensing and mooring;
- Be a sounding-board for matters that affect boating;
- Act as an advocate for the waterways in England and Wales.

Typical agendas

So, what do we talk about? Below are the key points from the agendas of the last two NAG meetings, which show a broad range of discussion points.

NAG (L&M) agenda

- Boat owners survey results and actions
- License evasion rates

- London mooring strategy
- Winter moorings
- Enforcement team name change to 'Licensing Boat Support Team' and communications
- Peer-to-peer boating proposals
- Licensing review and pricing strategy
- Bridgewater Canal charges
- Media coverage
- Winter mooring accessibility
- Engagement issues—NAG & CRT

NAG (Operations) agenda

- Pawls and spindles
- Lock ladder programme
- Facilities update
- Vegetation management
- Dredging
- Handrails
- Flood warning system

As you can see, both the groups cover a wide subject matter in meetings. NAG groups are just one of the growing number of groups and communities that CRT consults, and there is sometimes a danger that the agendas get too large to devote adequate time to the subjects.

However, on balance, meetings are a good sounding-board for CRT management to gauge boaters' views on a wide variety of subjects.

I name this boat ...

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



Letters to the Editor

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

A Happy Boater

This month's NABO News proved very beneficial to me, particularly the mention on page 9 about insurance, as mine is due for renewal on 1st November. I phoned for a quote and was delighted to be rewarded with a saving of £98.74, including my NABO discount! So delighted in fact, that I contacted five boat friends telling them the good news—with the result that four of them have asked me for NABO membership application forms. I now have the satisfaction of saving a significant amount of money; getting better coverage with my solar panels now covered for both theft and damage; and I've also persuaded four friends to become NABO members. If you would care to share my experience with others please feel free to do so, as I would like everyone to benefit from reduced expenses and, hopefully, gain more members as a result. Regards,

Graham Holmes

Bridgewater charges

I see that NABO want thoughts on the Bridgewater situation. I'm part-owner of a boat currently based at Bartington Wharf (at the top end of the T&M). Before the changes this year, I know that the boat's been twice to Liverpool and back in a fortnight (transiting the Bridgewater more than a week apart each way). Since the changes, I've heard from other owners that 1) someone has knocked on the boat at 6.30 pm on a Saturday in Runcorn telling them that their presence on the Bridgewater has been noted, and 2) another owner has transited the Bridgewater en route to the L&L and returned over a week later (both at weekends) with no problems. Since the change, most of the owners don't venture onto the Bridgewater, so businesses along the canal are losing out.

Before moving to Bartington, we were on the North Stratford and several owners wanted to take the boat onto the Avon (£50 or so for a

week's licence). ANT also offered a year's licence for boats based on CRT waters (£200ish for a 47' boat) so we bought one of these each year. To me it would make sense for the Bridgewater to offer a similar sort of licence—and maybe CRT should be offering something similar for boats based outside their waters.

Peter Gregory

Crying wolf

Sent to Tony Stammers at CRT

Dear Mr Stammers,

Working on the assumption that you are still head of safety, I would like to bring this potentially dangerous notice to your attention and suggest that one of your team have a word with whichever department is responsible for a) wasting money on them and b) putting them up around the system. They are obviously too young to have ever heard the story of the boy who cried wolf.

As more of these notices appear people will just ignore them, then one day there will be something that deserves a CAUTION notice and people will just ignore that as well.

Safety information notices should never be used in this way and for a company that has such a safety ethos (i.e. a plumber has to wear a life jacket while he mends a tap) I am somewhat surprised that this has been allowed.

Brian Holt



Veg pledge

Correspondence between Nigel Nicholson and CRT Waterway Manager, Vicky Martin, with permission

Dear CRT,

I have just cruised the South Oxford Canal from Dukes Cut to Braunston. I am alarmed, or at least very disappointed, with the level of neglect and the air of abandonment that distinguishes this waterway.

The lack of attention to vegetation management is becoming a real problem. I was going to say a joke, but it just isn't funny.

For large stretches the waterway is much reduced in width by overhanging trees and bushes and sight lines to bridges and other obstructions are non-existent because of unmanaged shrubs and scrub trees such as willow and alder.

I would particularly draw your attention to the summit line, where even walking the towpath is, in parts, very difficult because of the overgrown hedges. The towpath side of the canal is marked by many, many large shrubs and small trees and when combined with the overgrowth from the offside bank, the width of the canal is greatly reduced, making the passing of other boats more difficult than it should be and the joy of travelling such as beautiful canal is vanishing.

As well as the neglect of the vegetation, three locks, the one above Cropredy (24, I believe) the one above that (23) and one near the bottom of the Napton flight have paddles out of order and taped up by yourselves.

The paddle on lock 23 is out of action because the balance beam has rotted through. This is again surprising, because in the past yearly inspections of assets were carried out to allow for proactive maintenance. Has this stopped?

Of some concern is that I have examined all your public documents on the forthcoming stoppages, both emergency and planned (winter) and can find no mention of these defects anywhere. I cruise the Oxford regularly and I can never recall it looking so derelict. This surprises me as I would have thought that this canal was one of your most prized assets. Is this situation likely to change and if so, what timescale do you have for the remedial works?

Nigel Nicholson

Dear Nigel,

Thank you for your email about your recent cruise on the South Oxford Canal from Dukes Cut to Braunston.

Vegetation: As Waterway Manager, I fully agree with your comments regarding vegetation. Vegetation management is the responsibility of our national Asset Management & Delivery teams, who control the budgets, determine priorities and manage the Fountains contract. Offside works are planned to start in October from Newbold to Wormleighton—the works will take us into January 2017. Hedge cutting will commence following the full edge to hedge grass cut Nov/Dec in this area. Your email is very timely as there will be a high level meeting chaired by our CEO, Richard Parry, on Friday, to discuss the way forward. Additional funding will be required for an enhanced programme of works to bring the situation back under control, so customer feedback such as yours is very helpful in building a case.

Lock 23: This balance beam broke recently due to being hit by a boat, we are aware there is some rot in it and it has been identified for replacement. The timber has been ordered for this along with two other beams identified at Elkington Lock and Banbury Lock. As these repairs are carried out without the closure of the locks they will not appear on any publication. There are still monthly inspections through by the Length Inspector (part of Asset Management) and the Waterway is responsible for Lock PPM.

Lock 15 Napton: This paddle is damaged below the water and will require a full stoppage in the winter to dewater the lock chamber and enable its repair. This has yet to be put in the programme by our Asset Management team.

I hope that I have covered all the points raised in your email and that you have some assurance that we are aware of the issues and that matters are in hand.

Kind regards,

Vicky Martin
Waterways Manager South East

Dear Vicky,

Thank you very much for your considered and courteous reply; I appreciate you taking the time to do so. One point you may wish to raise with

the national asset management & delivery teams, is why remedial works are required at all. It is very surprising that they have allowed to canal to degenerate to this extent. They need to re-think their work prioritising processes; if they don't, we will be back in this situation in three or four year's time. Once again, thank you for the reply.

Nigel

Hi Nigel

An ongoing challenge is insufficient funding to do all that is required. However it does appear to me that in terms of budget allocation, hard assets are prioritised over soft. With the spotlight focused on veg management at present there is an opportunity to revisit specs.

I am also personally keen that we publicise maintenance schedules and use our volunteer networks to help monitor contract delivery on the ground.

Vicky

Never mind the depth, feel the width

I travelled down the Oxford Canal from Cropredy to Banbury and back during July and August. Due to the many moored boats I was obliged to get too close to the offside vegetation as a moving boat came towards me. Unfortunately a hard branch conspired to scratch the boat's paintwork. There seems to be too much vegetation that desperately needs cutting back. It not only causes damage to boat paint but blocks the view at corners and bridges. Whatever happened to the Veg Pledge?

Chas Moore, NB. Moore to Life

I am currently on the South Oxford Canal and if any of you were worried about meeting a horse-drawn boat, fear not! Thanks to a total lack of maintenance, the towpath edge is now populated by tallish trees and shrubs that would stop the progress of any towrope. The hedges are bulging out onto the towpath and making even walking difficult. On top of that, trees on the offside have overgrown the canal and the combined effect is that of boating through a dense wood. Have Fountains been sacked or something?

From NABO Facebook page

Nigel Nicholson



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