



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 6 December 2016



SHEEP TO SHORE

THE VIEW FROM CRT

**A BIT OF A
ROLLERCOASTER**



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Cover photo

This month's cover photo is by taken by the editor—keep warm folks.

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

Next NABO News copy date

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

Please email or post your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk by **28th January 2017**.

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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

The ghost of Christmas Yet-to-Come

Editor **Peter Fellows** asks CRT to put a penny in the CC hat.



Erratum

In the November issue's article on the Bude Canal, I reported that the only other sea lock in the country was at Tarleton. The author, Helen Hutt, has reminded me that this is incorrect and that the other lock is Heybridge at the end of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation at Maldon. She writes: "Tarleton is definitely not a 'sea lock which opens directly to the sea'. It gives onto the River Douglas, which flows into the Ribble, down the estuary and then out to sea. It is tidal, but not a sea lock in the sense I defined. There are several others like this: Sharpness, Portishead, Denver, and those leading to the Wash, for example." My apologies for the mistake, Helen.

Another successful AGM at Wolverhampton Boat Club (many thanks for the excellent food and hospitality), with Stella taking over the reins from Mike and farewells to longstanding Council members Geoffrey Rogerson and Stephen Peters and London rep, Simon Robbins. It was good to meet Ken Hylins, who has a special interest in assisting boaters with disabilities.

I also had a conversation with a continuous cruising member, who, when she stops at different places, helps ring the bells at the local church. She'd been moored up for a week or so at Brewood when the vicar asked if she could ring the bells at a wedding three weeks later. She replied that she would love to, but didn't think that CRT would allow it. "I potter slowly around the system, doing no-one any harm and obeying the rules, and I don't see why CRT should be allowed to dictate how I live or what I choose to do." I agree with her, and I think a lot of other boaters would also. She could ask the local waterway manager for an exception to the 14-day rule on this occasion, but she would not automatically qualify (no illness, pregnancy or breakdown). But why should she? It is not the role of a navigation authority to give permission for someone to do something. She could also go somewhere else and return to Brewood in a couple of weeks time, but she risks falling foul of the 'progressive journey' rule—and again why should she have to do this?

This small incident is an example of a wider malaise: I totally sup-

port CRT's efforts to get continuous moorers to move, but there is a climate of uncertainty, fear even, developing among some boaters without a home mooring: that they will break some rule or other and have their licence restricted, or even taken away. This may not be the reality, and I am sure it is not CRT's intention, but it is the perception among many continuous cruisers. Hence the appalling level of support for CRT by boaters, as shown in the boaters' survey results this year.

It is, of course, up to CRT to decide how, on behalf of the nation, it wants to manage the use of its waterways, and most boaters have nothing but kind words about local waterway managers and their staff on the bank. But policy decisions, especially on continuous cruising, need to be much more closely focussed on the (relatively few) boaters who abuse the rules, allowing the rest to pursue their lifestyle in the knowledge that they will be left alone—or even supported by CRT if they need help.

By way of balance, I've included an article extracted from CRT Trustee, John Dodwell's recent speech to a canal society, setting out the Trust's views. Reports on the AGM and the first Council meeting with Stella at the helm, and Mike Rodd looks back over his three years in the chair. John and Debbie Skinner describe the high points (and delays) in starting a new marina from scratch. Finally, in the boating section, I have included something a little different from boat dog, Bella.

Enjoy your Xmas and New Year celebrations, whether you're afloat or dreaming about your next cruise.

We're all 'customers' now

NABO Chair **Stella Ridgway** looks forward to a better service



As this is my first column as Chair of NABO, I'll begin with a short background: I live on a narrowboat on the Upper Peak Forest Canal with my husband Chris and two Labradors. My disability prevents us moving at present and we are now on a home mooring. I may not have lived on a boat all my life, but my family spent six weeks on one after they emigrated to New Zealand in the early 1960s, and I spent my teens crewing for friends who had yachts. I didn't know about my great grandfather until after we had moved aboard, when my Mum told me that he was born on a narrowboat in Middlewich and was a flyboatman with his brothers and father. So, in a sense I have come home to my roots and, even with my illness, we have never once thought about moving back into bricks and mortar. We love this life and the strong community we have among boaters; something that escapes you outside of the towpath and certainly one that CRT still struggles to understand.

Life with CRT

After moving aboard, it became apparent that there was a general discontent with CRT among boaters and that the Trust managers weren't helping themselves. CRT then compounded it by issuing new terms and conditions with little consultation. It was then that we decided we needed to do a bit more and joined NABO. The enforcement actions, particularly against boats without a home mooring, were haphazard across the country. To compound this, the terms and conditions also addressed

boats with a home mooring, saying that in the future, you had to maintain the same boating pattern as boats without a home mooring (moving every 14 days etc.).

This is completely against the 1995 Act of Parliament and a condition that NABO is still opposed to. In fact, even the Trust seems a little confused, judging by the recent Boaters' Updates, in which the Trust contradicted itself.

Joining the NABO Council

I decided to stand as a private boaters' rep on the CRT Council and was elected in December 2015. As I approach the end of the first year, I have attended two council meetings (held every six months) and two meetings with the Boating Team. So, as you can see, we don't get to have a huge influence. But they are interesting, particularly as we boaters are now 'customers' and should benefit from a better customer service from the Trust. I often feel like a lone voice, being the only northern boater, and one of only two liveaboards, but if I can change perceptions, it will be a positive outcome.

Vegetation cutback, mowing and dredging near designated visitor moorings are at the top of CRT's priorities, although it remains to be seen whether this translates to action on the waterways. However, CRT is now listening to boaters, with an extended National Advisory Group, and it appears to accept feedback from the various user groups. Death by PowerPoint is still prevalent, but it is getting better. They do at least provide time for discussion—most of the time.

As Chair of NABO, I will continue the work done by my predecessors and will be representing your views in the meetings NABO has with the various navigation authorities. NABO's Council also has a presence on the BSS Panel, but we do need your help.

If you have concerns, or issues with vegetation, dredging, or maintenance, you can now complete a new form online. As 'customers' we have the right to expect better cus-

tomers service and NABO will ensure that the Trust act on this, on our members' behalf.

The last year has been interesting and 2017 will likely see more changes. Again, we will need our members' help in presenting your views to the various navigation authorities. So please get in touch and come along to a council meeting. Finally, wherever you spend Christmas, have a lovely time. Merry Christmas and happy New Year.



NABO's new Assistant for the Disabled

Ken Hylins writes: "I have lived on a narrowboat some five years as a continual cruiser ... five minutes as some would say. Then two years ago my partner became very ill and was in hospital for

a total of three months, which, when living on a narrowboat, is a major issue.

The end result was she lost a great deal of mobility and I would have to be her carer. The occupational health people wanted us to come off the boat and live on land, not easy when we both wanted to carry on with our lifestyle. That then needed a rethink: planning medical appointments; not moving the boat long distances, also being single-handed; safety aspects; and working with CRT with regards to my partner's disability. There were many other tasks that were simple before, but not now. Time also became a problem: with not enough hours in a day, we had to prioritise tasks.

I was asked: 'How do you see the role of Assistant for the Disabled developing?' In all honesty, I do not know, but I can help or advise on each enquiry according to its merits."

CRT Statement on the Equality Act

1. We are updating our published policies to reflect our obligations and current practices under the Equality Act. This will include how we assess and implement reasonable adjustments for disabled people and how we assess impacts and avoid unlawful discrimination against all protected characteristics, including in respect of pregnant boaters.
2. We will be happy to make this document accessible on our website and refer to it in other related documents, so that boaters who are not already aware of our current practices are aware of the updated published policy.
3. Enforcement Officers already receive training in equality and will continue to do so.
4. We will continue to consider equality adjustments where appropriate in line with our obligations under the Equality Act.
5. We are currently seeking to assist boaters with school-aged children establish compliant patterns of movement. Any request to relax our requirements for this group we will balance against a number of other legitimate aims, including our duties to manage the waterways, the need to mitigate congestion around certain parts of the network and fairness to other boaters.

NABO Council 2016-17



Stella Ridgway Chair

I live on a narrowboat on the Upper Peak Forest Canal with my husband, Chris, and two Labradors. My great grandfather was a flyboatman out of Middlewich and I am proud to continue my family's legacy in making a difference to NABO members.



Mark Tizard Vice Chair

I have been associated with boats all my life, from dingy sailing as a teenager, through a traditional Broads' sailing boat, and now we are on our second narrowboat, Aber, a converted working boat, currently based near Foxton.



Helen Hutt Treasurer

After buying my narrowboat, Pipistrelle, I set off cruising single-handed in February 2006. I retired five years later and have covered the entire network except the North East and Medway. I've taken part in restoration camps on the Cromford, Chesterfield and Cotswold Canals and help with IWA clean-up operations whenever possible.



Mike Rodd Legal Affairs

Following an academic career in electrical engineering, I became Chairman and General Manager of the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust. I live with vicar Sue, near Marlborough. After many years hiring, we have our boat on the Mon & Brec Canal. As an MCA Boatmaster, I skipper public trip boats for the K&A Canal Trust.



Peter Fellows NABO Nabo Editor

I've been boating since the late 1970s, first on a GRP cruiser, and then on our narrowboat, Fellowship. In 2003, I helped set up a group of ten families, mostly from our village in Derbyshire, with a shared narrowboat, Burland, that continuously cruises from March to November each year.



David Fletcher Webmaster

I have been boating since the 60s, first on the Broads, then on sailing on the River Blackwater, and onto narrowboats. We have owned our current boat, Water Avens, for 15 years and keep her on the Shroppie. I am currently involved with CRT's Navigation Advisory Group and BSS committees.



Phil Goulding BSS Representative

I have been a narrowboater for ten years, the last five as a continuous cruiser. Retired, I travel extensively for leisure and pleasure. I am aware of the difficulties facing boaters, especially trying to find safe and secure moorings in many places on the network.



Paul Howland Floating Traders

From hire-boating in the 80's we then decided to buy our own boat, but not finding one that we were happy with, we decided to buy a sail-away to finish ourselves. We took possession of our shell in 2007 and started work to make it into our home. We set sail and have never looked back, becoming roving traders in 2010.

Fly's AGM



NABO calendar 2017

Council Meetings in 2017:
January 21st, March 11th,
April 22nd, June 10th,
July 22nd (if required),
September 2nd, October
14th, November 11th
(includes AGM).

Wolverhampton Boat Club hosted again and I was able to sample the leftovers from a superb stew (for the carnivores) and apple strudel between the AGM and afternoon Council meeting. A later start than usual, with some people delayed by road and rail chaos in Birmingham (not a problem for me!), but chairman Mike got proceedings underway with a roundup of the past year: progress (or lack of) in relations with CRT management. It's been a good year for communication with members via NABO News, Facebook, the monthly bulletins and the website. Other topics were variation in vegetation control by contractors in different areas, CRT's takeover of EA waters, which seems to be a done deal (but NABO still wants to see CRT demonstrate it has the resources to sustainably improve its own waterways before taking on new commitments).

Despite the popularity of NABO's Facebook site, non-members are not

...and observing November's Council meeting

Stella was unanimously elected as the new Chair and Mark agreed to continue as Vice-Chair for the next year. Council members were pleased to welcome Ken Hylins, who has represented disabled boaters on a number of occasions when problems have arisen with CRT, and David Williams, who will be NABO's new London rep. Most of the meeting was then taken up with discussions on ways to promote NABO to boaters and to increase the numbers of

becoming members but static membership is a problem shared with other boating organisations. Mike concluded with a very big 'thank you' to Geoffrey Rogerson, Stephen Peters and Simon Robbins, all long-standing Council members who, between them, have put in more than 50 years on the Council.

Vice-Chair, Mark Tizard, then described some of the issues around lack of engagement by CRT with some of the NAG (licensing and mooring) members and the new London mooring strategy, which may get replicated elsewhere. Following a brief résumé of admin issues by Gen. Sec., Richard Carpenter, and a finance report from Helen Hutt, with thanks to James Steckerl for his final audit of the accounts, there was an open discussion by members. Topics of concern included dangers to the waterway buildings' heritage from CRT Estates and how to increase membership numbers. In his final contribution, Geoffrey thought that NABO needs a new crisis to increase membership—and the overcrowding on London's waterways might just provide one...

paying members, now that almost anything boaters want to know can be found for free on the internet. This is not just a NABO problem and all boating organisations are feeling the effects. The vast majority of owners of the 32,000 or so boats, especially those who only use their boat for a couple of weeks each year, do not recognise that there are problems, or that NABO is addressing issues that affect their boating. So, the aims are to raise greater awareness of what NABO is (uniquely) doing and to convert interested non-

members into paying members.

Ideas that Council members will look at in more detail over the coming months include: working with canal traders, such as fuel boats, to promote NABO and give out membership forms in return for a free advert or a fee; raising awareness of what NABO has done/can do for boaters in a monthly column in Towpath Talk and a special issue of NABO News; using back issues of NABO News to promote the association in selected boaters' pubs; and using social media to raise boaters' awareness of the issues that face them—and how NABO is working to minimise the negative effects of any proposed changes on their boating.

The aging membership is gradually giving up boating for a variety of reasons and these members need to be replaced by younger boaters, but many Council members have little experience or expertise in how social media and the internet can be used to attract young boaters to join the Association. The Council will explore the possibility of working with one or more university Masters students on projects to develop NABO's effectiveness in marketing itself, using social media and the internet.

So, a very good first meeting for Stella's new reign, with everyone fired up to get going in the New Year.

Happy Christmas and Bye until February.

Anyone know what this means?

And the response of the NABO Facebook Group

Service Mission

To facilitate, direct and guide the Trust on creating a customer-centric business, building on and improving the Trust's service proposition into a cohesive approach. To provide direct service operations; innovate process improvements to provide a basis for better service to our customers whilst creating efficiency within the Trust; to improve service delivery skills within the Trust and lead by example; to use customer information to ensure our customers have a targeted, exceptional and efficient service experience at every touchpoint.

Nigel Nicholson Yes! I know what it means. It means that they have been wasting money on (a) consultant(s) again.

Gary Beresford in words of a fellow i once knew ... "if ya cant dazzle 'em with brilliance ... baffle 'em with bullshit" .. apparently works all the time

Paul Teale Multiloquent complexities of polysyllabic circumlocution...

Mick Fitzgibbons Its been interpreted by Yozzer Hughes as 'Gizza Job'.

Mark Tizard I'm liking the cohesive approach to the service proposition.

John Henry OMG. They'll give us questionnaires to fill in to make sure we've liked it. "CaRT, making Boating Great Again".

Sue Hunter Ha! I recognise that Management Speak Bol****ks! Takes me back been 11 yrs since i heard such gobbledegook on a daily basis.

Allan Richards I can translate that - Ian Rogers is saying that CaRT needs to improve its service to its customers and his department will take the lead.

The Winding Road CRT move closer to taking over EA Navigations

Mike Rodd at the recent EA National Navigation Users Forum

NABO's position remains that it is against CRT taking over the EA navigations until there is clear evidence of CRTs ability to tackle the maintenance backlog on the canal system.

Photo: The River Nene at Fotheringay
Peter Fellows

Well attended by most of the boating organisations which cover the EA navigations, the NNUF meeting had been delayed in the unrealised hope that there might be some progress on the EA/CRT negotiations. As is usual with these EA User Forums, the preparatory work was excellent, CRT take note.

Sadly, there was nothing really new to report, except a deeper insight into the key issues. EA's Mark Ormond, and CRT's Peter Walker, gave presentations and from these it's clear that the main sticking point is, as we all realise, money. Much joint work has been done in assessing EA's assets—somewhat surprisingly, EA's own data is not as good as it should be. What is clear is that it's not so much the locks, overall in reasonable condition, as the more than 500 weirs and sluices, generally very large and ageing structures. Serious funding of many tens of £millions is required to bring them to a sustainable state.

Both EA and CRT are keen to go ahead with CRT taking responsibility for all of EA's major waterways. Various options are being explored and proposals will then be put to the Minister. The major financial

gap has to be addressed, and given the current climate, the immediate prognosis is not good. Even when a solution to the funding is found, it will take at least two years to unravel the legal complexity of EA's waterways. We were assured that when there is real progress, users will be consulted.

A very explicit rundown of EA's financial situation made clear that their waterways are being managed as well as possible within the funding constraints. We heard that the EA is commencing a strategic charging review. It's intriguing that the words used in the objectives of this include "to ensure charges are able to provide an efficient and economically sustainable service for our customers". Much like the forthcoming CRT licensing review—as suggested by NABO maybe the two could be done together. It is planned that proposals will be available for user consultation by autumn 2017.

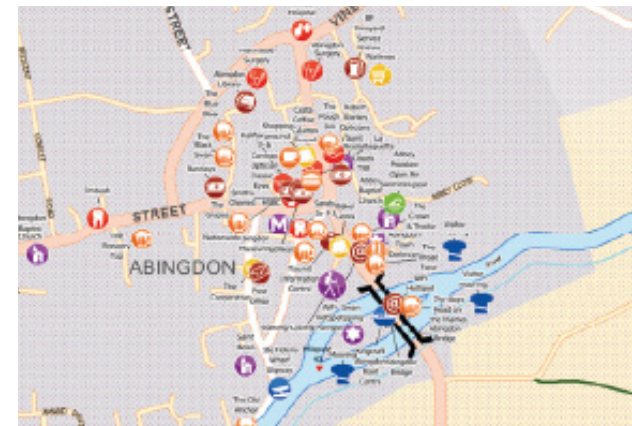
As a result of the recent consultation held by the Middle Level Commissioners it was announced they intend to approach the government to amend the navigation legislation so as to charge for licensing and seek reciprocal licensing agreements with the EA.

WaterNav

Never get lost again...

For eight years, River Canal Rescue (RCR) has been using a customised version of waterway software to locate stricken boaters. The team was so impressed with its functionality and future possibilities that it has taken over Eurekaweb's inland waterway navigation products, the waterway software system and e-canalmap apps, and rebranded them as WaterNav.

It is compatible with all Windows desktops, laptops and netbooks, iphones, ipads and android smartphones. WaterNav apps cover the whole of Britain: England (in eight regions), Wales and Scotland. Once downloaded, access to the maps does not depend on a permanent internet connection, enabling users to plan and track routes and, using GPS, to pinpoint their exact locations and distance from over 60,000 points of interest. These include mooring locations, potential hazards (e.g. weirs), bridges, locks, pump-outs, diesel and gas supplies, boatyards, internet access points, pubs, restaurants, doctors, dentists, vets, shops, laundrettes, bus stops, train stations, B&Bs and hotels, campsites and tourist attractions. All can be filtered by waterway, town, place name or postcode. A trip-tracking function allows boaters to record distance and travel times, a log-book facility automatically enters the date, time and location, and users can then add their own narrative and photos. RCR Managing director, Stephanie Horton, comments: "This is only the start. We are planning to modify the existing notification functions so people can feed back any changes, report their own boat problems and



notify RCR and CRT of any damage such as canal breaches or accidents. Other enhancements include features to simplify claims and accident assessments, and adding a panic button, so RCR engineers can respond immediately to an emergency."

WaterNav is available from RCR at rivercanalrescue.co.uk. The software is £49 and the apps are £5.99 per region.

FakeTV

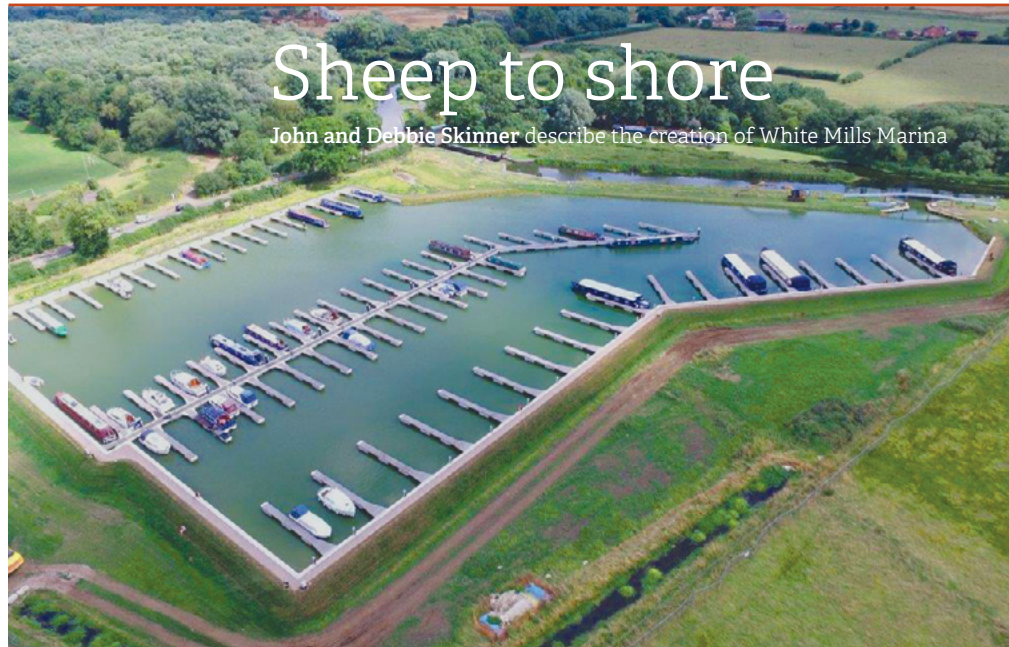
If you leave your boat unattended, especially on long winter nights, it may be worth considering a new burglar deterrent that makes it look like someone is aboard watching television. FakeTV does this by recreating the sort of light produced by a real TV which, when viewed from outside, makes it look like you are watching television. Most burglars will not risk breaking into an occupied boat, so when they see a flickering glow they are more likely to move on to an easier target. The unit has the following features:

- Simulates scene and colour changes, fades and on-screen motion
- Small—about the size of a coffee cup
- Bright light output equivalent to a 27" HDTV
- Built in light sensor and timer
- Low energy consumption

In use, place the FakeTV unit where it will light up a cabin, but cannot be seen from outside. At dusk, a built-in light sensor turns the unit on and then it turns off automatically after a selectable time.



FakeTV is £24.99 and available from Immobilise Crime Reduction and Security Products at shop.immobilise.com/fake-tv-burglar-deterrent



Sheep to shore

John and Debbie Skinner describe the creation of White Mills Marina

It is hard to believe that it is just over 12 months since we first cut through the banks of the River Nene and the field at White Mills Lock was transformed into a marina within just three days!

It was around 15 years ago when the idea of creating a riverside marina was first mooted. Not too much of a ridiculous idea at the time, being a riverside meadow it was prone to flooding, so why not fill it with more water? Being a mixed farm, the field had been used for grazing sheep. Following the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001, lamb prices plunged and some other grazing land was lost, so we decided to call it a day and sell our flock. For John, this was a real end of an era, as he had been lambing sheep since he was a boy.

Putting the idea to the back of our minds, about ten years later, thanks to a chance conversation, we were introduced to a marina specialist, whom we decided to engage to take us down a rather lengthy five-year route of acquiring planning permis-

sion to develop a 141-berth marina, which was finally gained, much to our relief, in September 2014. After such a long haul, we should have taken a breather, but circumstances never really allowed for that to happen! We were faced with three options: to 'crack on'; to leave it for our sons to run with in years to come; or to sell the field with planning permission. Needless to say, we chose the first and in July 2015 the construction team moved in to create the marina. The development was projected to take a little over 18 weeks, with an original opening date of November 2015. Unfortunately, the weather was far from kind, a very wet September and October delaying the whole project by several months. Watching it take shape was both fascinating and frustrating, especially with the relentless rain. Passers-by, who watched the marina develop, were intrigued to see the perimeter of the marina created using concrete blocks, similar to large Lego blocks, and how quickly it

took shape. Once the ground-works around the basin were completed and it was fit to flood, we broke through the river bank on 26th October 2015. Immediately, the marina began looking like a marina should, especially when the floating pontoons, which were individually lowered into the marina by crane, were carefully guided by a small boat to their final destinations. Finally we officially opened for business in time for Easter 2016. Throughout the development, we held several open weekends on site and 15+ deposits were secured before we opened. People's enthusiasm for the project from the very start was infectious, so we were feeling really rather buoyed up by the time Easter came.

With John still working on the farm, the original plan was to engage a manager, but in the end we decided to give it a go ourselves; nobody else would feel quite as passionately about our new family venture as we did. We knew so very little, but what we did know was that we needed some insider knowledge, so we sought the expertise of a former marina manager whose experience proved invaluable. She taught us about pumpouts and selling diesel, explained where boats of differing sizes and widths would be best moored, how to get our heads around the service bollards at the end of each berth, and over a period of several days chatted through everything marina-related which helped no end. Thanks to her patience, she successfully managed to teach these old dogs some new tricks!

A watery learning curve

Our first season in the boating world has been a real awakening and given us both a new lease of life. There has been a series of milestones: the first narrowboat to come in; the first

Boating—White Mills Marina



White Mills Marina is located on the River Nene at Earls Barton in Northamptonshire. John and Debbie can be contacted on 01604 812057 or 07802 890874, or by email at info@whitemillsmarina.co.uk, or visit their website at www.whitemillsmarina.co.uk

overnight visitor; first pumpout; first diesel sale; first widebeam—each one prompting us to grab a camera to snap this special marina moment. But what has struck us most, and what we have been overwhelmed by, is everyone's generosity of spir-



it. Visitors cruising the River Nene have been so encouraging, not just staying with us on their outward-bound journey but on their return too. They have given us great reviews, posted information on social media and distributed brochures as they cruise the network. Increasing numbers of regular moorers have become more than acquaintances, now developing a wonderful, friendly community. When you have spent the majority of your lives on a relatively isolated farm, meeting such a cross-section of delightful people makes this whole new venture so incredibly rewarding and worthwhile.

Marketing has played an important role in spreading the word, and at times it has been hugely time consuming. One highlight was exhibiting at Crick Boat Show for the first time. Our exhibition space could not have been smaller, but it worked perfectly for us. Our sons manned the stand for the three days and generated some first-class interest, with many visitors reserving moorings. So next year we are looking forward to meeting up with some of the visitors who have stayed with us and catching up with fellow exhibitors.

The Nene
Photo Debbie Skinner



Looking ahead

As we approach the winter months with still more to learn, the topics of conversation are likely to progress from WiFi and onboard toilet facilities (to compost or not to compost; that is the question!) to the benefits of different types of coal. The next stage is to build a facilities building to incorporate showers, toilets and disabled facilities. We also want the building to be used as a meeting place, not just by boaters, but by folks wanting to get out and about in the Nene Valley, whether by bike, on foot or by canoe. We are trying to secure grant-funding for this and hopefully, if everything stacks up, we will have it fully operational by Easter 2017.

The marina is progressing well and going according to plan considering the delay in opening. Everyone we meet says exactly the same—that we cannot expect the marina to fill overnight, and that it will be a steady process to achieve the occupancy levels that other marinas are enjoying. In the meantime with spring to look forward to, we intend to take a leaf out of our boaters' books and begin to take life a little more at 4mph and go with the flow!

What sort of car fleet would you run?

David Fletcher uses his engineering experience to look at asset management.

Imagine, we are running a limousine hire with a handful of cars—smartness and reliability are important, we need to get the best value for money. What are the alternatives?

We have decided to buy not lease, the margin's not great, we're not going to give the cream of the income to finance companies. These cars are our principle assets. We worry a lot about breakdowns and the cash-flow of unexpected bills.

Buying new. Smart car, the latest models, high reliability, the risk of early breakdown under warranty. We won't have to think about inspection, just routine maintenance. The cars are all the same, helps with spares, and any driver can use any car. We'll change them after a few years, while they still have some resale value, before wear and tear becomes an issue. We sell the reliability problem to someone else. For us, not technically minded, not involved in asset management, this strategy seems a balance between cost and reliability. The cost is high, and our rates will have to reflect the high loss in value of our principle assets. Perhaps buying new every two years is only for those who don't pay the bills!

The alternative? Today's quality cars are well-built and can be expected to run in service for at least 2-300,000 miles, when properly maintained. Maybe buying cars two or three years old that have just come off a lease would be a good alternative? Not so smart and clean, we'll have to spend money on valeting. We may have different models, different heritage, the reliability not so good. We'll need knowledgeable technical expertise to carry out regular inspections. We must accept that,



Photo: limosnorthwest.uk

from time to time, cars will be off the road. We will buy in help for serious repairs like gearboxes and engines. We'll be exposed to interruption of service and the cost of breakdown.

We'll have to manage customer complaints carefully and explain that new cars would come at a higher cost than our competitive rates. With older cars, not all the same model, we could put the same staff in the same car as far as possible. With more pride in their own vehicle, they be more aware of any developing local issues, and—oh yes—customer relations. Replacement of consumables is an issue. We have to budget to replace some tyres every year on a rota. We have to run the tread down to near the legal minimum to get the value out of these expensive items, so at any one time a number of tyres will be approaching their end of life. But if they meet standards and are safe, they will have to wait for renewal.

We will have to change for this to work. Managing and driving principal assets are the core skills for this service business and we will need to retain specialist skills. And we will have to work hard at customer relations or those who can pay will go elsewhere.

So... which way do we go?

The view from the bridge

Steering the CRT ship

An extract from a speech by **John Dodwell**, a CRT Trustee, in October to the Macclesfield Canal Society.



The Trust is a charity and is not part of Defra, so hasn't been facing the sweeping cuts still affecting government departments. Another big advantage is having the 15-year grant contract with Government; it can plan ahead in a way BW simply couldn't. Unlike the BW days, every pound the Trust earns, or every pound saved, is kept by the Trust.

So gone are the dispiriting days when staff efforts to increase income or save costs just meant a reduced government grant. An example of the benefits of this independence is the HS2 railway story: the government-controlled BW could never have opposed the proposals in the way that the Trust did. The Trust not only fought to protect its own waterways but also helped restoration organisations on waterways the Trust doesn't own.

I am one of the CRT national trustees, accountable to the national Council. This is made up partly of elected members from various groups (such as boat owners, volunteers, Friends, staff) and nominated members (such as anglers, ramblers, etc.) and the chairs of the regional waterways partnerships. These partnerships are part of the future: they comprise local people with a great interest in the waterways, who

can bring their connections to the Trust. The partnerships help the Trust spread its tentacles into the community and local government. With increasing devolution from Whitehall, good local contacts with the larger authorities in Manchester, Leeds etc. will matter more. This can enable the Trust to influence both long-term and short-term planning matters, and also holds out the possibility of getting money.

The various events that the partnerships organise help to widen the appeal of the waterways to the general public—and that support may be vital when the time comes to renew the Government contract.

The money

The Trust is quite a sizeable charity; well within the UK's top 20. There are about 1,600 staff and net assets of over £700m, mainly the Endowment Fund which produces investment income. You can see the spread of income, about 25% is from property rents etc., 19% from boats etc., and 26% from the Government.

Please note the £2.5m donations; although small, this would not have happened in the BW days and it's indicative of the future. A word about the voluntary income and the costs of earning it, as there's been some misunderstanding in some circles; over the last three years, the income has risen from £1.2m to £2.5m. The direct costs involved have gone from £1.5m to £2.6m. That means the net cost of £300k in the first two years was reduced to £100k last

year. However, that's before allowing for an allocation of about £1m for central costs. Now, this is not sustainable; so why does the Trust do it? First, let me try to explain an accounting quirk: in some cases, the Trust has been awarded a grant over

would that be sensible? In the early years of the Trust, we didn't know if the Friends idea would work. Now we know it does, and it makes sense to increase the numbers of staff on the recruitment side—that's one reason for the costs going up.

GROSS INCOME (£M)	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Investment income	42	49	47
Boat licences and moorings	33	34	36
Cable companies and other utility income	25	26	26
Third parties' contributions for repairs & maintenance	14	18	20
BW Marinas gross sales	6	7	7
Donations	1.2	1.6	2.5
Miscellaneous	3	9	2
Government contract	39	39	50
Total	163	183	190
SPENDING (£M)	2013-4	2014-5	2015-6
General waterways maintenance	111	118	128
Repairs and maintenance funded by third parties (e.g. towpaths)	10	15	17
Cost of earning the gross income	31	38	39
Pension fund payments	7	7	7
Miscellaneous	5	4	4
Total	164	182	195

a period of three years. This means the income is only put in the accounts when it is received. Yet the staff costs of generating that income appear in the first year. So there's a mismatch. Secondly, a fair bit of the income comes from Friends' monthly donations. The costs of recruiting them fall in the first year, but, hopefully, they go on paying for many years to come.

Again, there's a mismatch. We could easily change the accounting picture by stopping the recruitment costs—we'd still get the income, but

I say we know the Friends idea works because we now have over 18,500 Friends. The retention rate is a lot better than many charities. That is not particularly surprising as Friends are recruited largely on the towpath; where they come back to time and again. Our statistics indicate over 4m people visit the waterways in a typical two-week period and we need to get more of them as Friends, so that when the time comes to renew the Government contract, there's overwhelming public support.



Dredging on the Staffs & Worcs Canal

Photo: Paul Fox

Maintenance

The Trust has a considerable array of different structures: 336 aqueducts; nearly 3,000 bridges; 1,583 locks; 1,900 culverts; about 750 major embankments; about 850 major cuttings; 74 pumping stations; 129 river weirs and 73 reservoirs. There is a regular inspection programme of all the major infrastructure, which grades the structures A to E. They are also graded 1 to 5 according to risk of failure, with 1 being not very important to 5 being serious; so A1 is good and E5 is awful. The Trust

Trust staff can't see what's under the water. If you find a shallow section, let the waterways' manager know about it.

doesn't have any E5s. Over the last two years or so, the maintenance staff have been re-organised. There used to be 11 regions, each with their own construction team (concentrating on stoppages and other significant works) and their own customer services team (e.g. looking after water levels and lock equipment). Each more or less did things their own way and certainly never moved outside their own area. Now, we have one national construction team, grouped into four areas, and ten customer service groups. The construction team consists of highly-skilled heritage craftsmen, who are, in effect, the Trust's directly employed team that 'competes' against

outside contractors. Best and more consistent practice is being followed, which is helping to get more work done. This winter we should see 288 stoppages, compared with 170 last winter.

One of the key challenges in 2016 has been dealing with the effects of the Boxing Day floods in the Calder Valley and the enormous damage done to part of the Rochdale and the Calder & Hebble. You may not realise just how destructive the force of the water was. For example, the side of a cutting just collapsed right into the Canal—trees and all! The works involved stabilising the hillside, made more important by the fact there was a house at the top and their garden had slid into our canal! But steel piling has been driven in and I'm pleased to say the canal was reopened earlier this month.

Dredging

Dredging is something close to my heart; my boat draws three feet. First, some background:

- Every waterway is surveyed by Trust staff for depth every eight years, to see if it complies with a minimum operating channel standard.
- Complaints from users play a large part when specific dredging is planned (e.g. there are about 120 places in the Manchester & Pennines area which are known about as a result of users' reports). Please bear in mind how important this is: the staff can't see what's under the water; they need your help. If you find a shallow section, let the local waterways' manager know about it and it can be added to the list. These lists do influence where dredging is done.
- Dredging spending is going up: £4m spent in 2013-14; over £6m the next year, and about £7m last

year. This is part of a commitment CRT gave to spend £80m in its first ten years, knowing there was a backlog to catch up.

- It's also a question of value for money: generally speaking, it is 25 years before a rural canal needs dredging again and 40 years for an urban canal as they have better banks.
- One of the big costs of dredging is getting rid of the stuff and three methods are used:
- to build up the offside bank;
 - to build up the towpath;
 - as a last resort, the mud is taken away by road.

The first two are the most favoured; saving expensive road haulage and tip charges as well as a reduction in CO₂ emissions. Because the Trust can now plan over longer horizons, it has a long-term contract with the dredging contractors, which encourages them to bring in new equipment. It's also resulted in a joint investment in a site near Coventry, where, instead of taking dredgings to tips, they are now left to dry out. The metals etc. can be sold for scrap and the rest may become topsoil which can also be sold. It's reckoned there can be a 10% saving on dredging costs.

I wouldn't want you to think I reckon everything in the garden is rosy; it's not. We can all see extra things that could be done. Some are not essential structurally but are visually important. Some are waiting their turn. For example, the Trust is well aware that it needs to do more about tree and sapling growth.

Reorganisation

There have been changes in the role of the Waterway Managers, with each now having four key staff:

- 1 Customer Operations Manager, dealing with the day-to-day stuff, the paid customer support team,

and the organisation of volunteers' work;

- 2 Volunteer Development Co-ordinator, finding and setting up new volunteer groups, such as adoption schemes;
- 3 Development and Engagement Manager. This is a relatively new post to increase contact with organisations and people new to the waterways;
- 4 Customer Support Co-ordinator, providing the admin backup.

All this fits in with what Richard Parry has said about the structure needing change to unlock capacity to do more and to do it more efficiently; to change how things are done; to improve how the Trust interacts with customers, users and the



A collapsed embankment on the Rochdale Canal

Photo: CRT

outside world. One of the changes brought in is to measure the number of days lost due to unplanned stoppages. Last year there were 630 unplanned stoppages, down from nearly 930.

Public engagement

There's been some good TV coverage: the BBC 4 series 'Canals: The Making of a Nation' has had very high viewing figures. Then we've had the Wests and John Sergeant—not everyone's cup of tea, but just think of the waterways coverage it

gave to people who don't know the details—one major boat hire firm told me of a 20% increase in bookings. There's been more filming and it warms my wallet to hear that the Trust has charged over £200,000 for filming permissions. The Trust got great coverage for its 'How to feed ducks' campaigns. This wasn't just altruism about ducks being fed healthier food; it was also about recruiting more Friends. Last year the Trust received 14,000 requests for a free 'where-to-go' guide and 'quack snacks feeding pouch'. This gave



A spider crane at Bingley three-rise locks on the Leeds & Liverpool canal.
Photo: CRT

the Friends' recruiters the details of 14,000 people who were agreeable to being asked if they'd like to become a Friend. If that sounds like the Trust is being opportunistic and commercial, well, it is. We gained another 1,400 regular donors.

Restoration

The Trust has to fit in its restoration hopes alongside its basic job of keeping the existing system open. That means the Trust doesn't have shedloads to spend on restoration, but it does have a small team encouraging restoration and fundraising. Examples are on the Trust-owned Grantham Canal, the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded a c£800k grant towards the cost of restoring another two locks.

Another HLF grant is helping to restore Carpenter's Road Lock on the Bow Back Rivers in London. On the Pocklington Canal in Yorkshire, in addition to a £500k HLF grant for dredging and nature and heritage improvements, the Canal Society is seeking £250,000 to restore the next two locks. This has been made possible through a £500k donation from the People's Postcode Lottery, which will also help with work on the K&A, the Wilts and Berks and Cotswolds Canals. On the Wendover Arm, steady progress is being made in relining the dry section and they re-watered a section last year, with the Wendover Arm Trust and CRT being successful in the first stage of an HLF grant towards the £1.9m cost. On the Montgomery, a £2.5m grant has been awarded towards a £4m works programme, with practically all the rest of the funds raised, including £60k from the local society.

Volunteers

Over the CRT network, more than 2,600 volunteers gave over 480,000 hours of their time in 2015-16; 17% up on the previous year and estimated to be worth the equivalent of £7.6m. The range of work includes:

- Volunteer lock keepers. There are now over 800 in 100 places.
- Adoption schemes where groups look after a length of canal: we now have over 150 groups.
- 150 or so Explorer volunteers who go into schools and spread the waterways' message. In the year to last March, they spoke to about 64,000 children.
- Towpath Task Forces.
- Manning Welcome Stations to talk to the passing public.
- Small Tasks Teams who carry out small but important maintenance works.
- Technical help in offices.

As the number of volunteers grows,

so does the need to manage them, and we now have over 150 trained volunteer managers; a clear sign that the Trust is willing to empower volunteers and to 'let go' of decision making, where risk is low and managed. For example, the Macclesfield Canal Society and its supporters cut saplings in towpath walls and off-side growth over a 14-mile length, working with the Trust who provided boats and chippers. One of the CRT staff then used a sprayer to prevent re-growth. The Society reckons their work was worth £40,000 at contractors' rates, which is not a saving that can be spent elsewhere, but extra work that wasn't getting done. A group of over 40, based at Stewponney, started by painting all 45 locks on the Staffs & Worcs) and have now moved onto larger projects, such as installing mooring rings near Stafford and repairing broken towpath walls in Stourport.

The future

Under Richard Parry, the Trust has been developing a ten-year plan under the heading 'Living waterways transform places and enrich lives.'

The Trust's ambitions for the waterways over the next ten years include the following:

- Being popular places to visit, with 500m visits a year, up from last year's 400m (if that doesn't sound very demanding, it's because last year was better than expected);
- Host to a thriving boating community with the vast majority (at least 85%) of boaters and waterway-related users being satisfied with the service they get from the Trust;
- Becoming a well-known charity with 75% of the population being aware of the Trust (it's about 30% now), and 50% being willing to support the Trust and the waterways' cause;



Macclesfield Canal Society volunteers working with CRT staff
Photo: Bob Luscombe

- Being a better-supported charity, with 100,000 regular individual donors (there are about 18,500 now);
- Volunteering in all aspects of the Trust's work, contributing 1m hours of work a year (up from a little under 500,000 hours now);
- Local communities caring from their local waterways. We want to see adoption schemes increase to 500;

Partnership events widen the appeal of waterways to the public ...

... support that may be vital when the time comes to renew the Government contract.

- Involving the future generations of waterway supporters, with about 1m children and young people each year engaged in volunteering, arts, education, sport and social action;
- A growing network, with many more miles of waterways restored or new ones built. Much of this will be outside the Trust's ownership, but remember that our charitable remit covers all waterways in England and Wales.

I don't deny this is ambitious and may not be achieved. The world will not fall apart if they are missed, but isn't it better to have targets than not?

A bit of a rollercoaster ride

Three years in the hot seat

Mike Rodd looks back



During the past three years, I have chaired over twenty regular NABO Council meetings, attended numerous meetings with various CRT and EA officials, and represented NABO at dozens of other meetings and gatherings. Rightly, the key question has to be: “What have we achieved for our members?”, always remembering that the Council are ‘members’ too—after all, a prime reason for someone to stand for election to our Council has to be their personal concern for boating on the waterways that they so enjoy.

When Mark Tizard and I came onto the Council the year before taking up our positions as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively, we were both very concerned about

the apparent breakdown in relationships between NABO and the BW staff who were then responsible for enforcement. In the face of some cynicism from our colleagues, we sought meetings with the then head of boating and we were truly horrified by the attitude that confronted us—to the extent that, at one point, we had to stop the meeting and say that, unless they were at least willing to stop preaching at us and to listen for a while, we would simply walk away. Then, and only then, did we fully understand the frustrations being expressed by our new-found Council colleagues!

Optimism as CRT is formed

Of course, this was all taking place when BW was becoming CRT. Our deep concern was that a far-reaching cultural change would have to happen—and this had to start right at the top. From our viewpoint, nothing really changed until Richard Parry came into power and we welcomed his appointment as a breath of fresh air. And, indeed, change was soon starting to take place in many of CRT’s operational structures and (of even more importance) in senior personnel. Equally important, Parry was speaking to us and saying how much he valued our input (and that of other boating organisations). Newly-appointed directors and other senior managers also initially reflected this position and I really felt things were changing. At last (we thought) they were beginning to understand why there was so much concern from boaters, not only about the way we were being treat-

ed, but also, as active users of CRT’s waterways, the way we were ignored as a unique source of information. NABO’s Council comprised a dozen very different, active, boaters (users)—all coming from professional backgrounds in relevant areas, and offering their input for free!

Back to the bad old BW days?

I really started to believe that a new era for our waterways had arrived. Is this still true? Sadly, my initial optimism has been tempered, and it is disappointing to note that CRT still does not proactively engage with NABO, or seek our views in advance of any public declarations, beyond any general public consultations (where we do, of course, normally make a point of submitting our views). The harsh reality appears to be that unless we request a meeting, there is little interest in seeking our input on a regular basis.

What, then, have we achieved over the last three years? Of key importance to NABO’s members, CRT, under its new leadership, soon embarked on a revision of the boating licence terms and conditions. Given the many costly enforcement legal battles they were engaged in, this was not inappropriate. Indeed, had we been aware of this initiative, we would have been happy to get involved right from the start. But no—in a typical BW-like way—CRT (almost) launched them without any real consultation. The first we knew of the proposals was when CRT tabled them at a meeting in Milton Keynes! We had to ask for an extension in the time available for a response so that we could comment properly. We quickly got our legal team involved, including consultations with our lawyers. Yes, as a result, CRT made some changes, for which we were very pleased, but to this day we are still at odds with

[With CRT] I really started to believe that a new era for our waterways had arrived. Is this still true?

other key aspects of the terms and conditions. An example is CRT’s claim that because its own Council has agreed to the introduction of the new terms and conditions, it is then empowered to apply them.

This includes an insistence that a boater with home moorings has to conform to the continuous cruising requirements! That blatantly ignores our legally confirmed advice that nothing in the terms and conditions can override the legally binding Waterways Acts. We have recently warned CRT about this, yet again, and the response has been ... silence.

We supported CRT’s change in enforcement policy, but not its initial proposal for a substantial pre-determined ‘range’, as demanded by other waterway associations. Our view remains that it is up to CRT to determine what is satisfactory as regards to ‘bona fide’ navigation. Our focus is that enforcement should be clear, fair and transparent, and we continue to monitor the situation. Closely related to enforcement, and despite CRT directors initially saying that they were not in favour, NABO was successful in persuading them to appoint a Welfare Officer, both to advise enforcement staff and to support vulnerable boaters; so this is a major achievement.

The importance of NAG

I am also pleased to acknowledge that NABO is now well represented on the important Navigational Advisory Groups (NAGs). In the case of the NAG Operations sub-group, we do feel that we are being genuinely engaged in aspects relating, for example, to vegetation management,

maintenance and repairs. Thus, on the question of failing lock gates, paddles and pumps that have been reported to us over the past year, we monitor the situation closely and have had direct contact with CRT's asset management team. While we appreciate that CRT is underfunded, and that it is dealing with a fragile, 200-year-old system that will always need regular maintenance, NABO tries to ensure that CRT is aware of instances where we, as active repre-



Mike 'testing' the depth of his beloved Monmouth and Brecon canal.
Photo: Oakdale Printers

sentatives of the boating community, see problems that need addressing. It is clear to us, from feedback from many of our members, that, in many cases, the organisations that have been awarded CRT contracts are simply failing to deliver: for instance, we see different standards of vegetation control being applied across the network. Likewise, we are not convinced that the regular lock inspections are picking up all the potential problems—possibly because the inspectors don't always see the problems that boaters experience.

However, on NAG's Licensing and Mooring sub-group we are concerned that we are back to the pre-CRT situation, where policies are being formulated within the

depths of CRT and are only brought to the sub-group's attention at a late stage. Despite the group's work in helping to create the short-term mooring framework, it was disappointing that this was initially ignored by CRT when launching the south-east visitor mooring consultation. It was subsequently corrected, but only after the intervention of NABO's NAG member and colleagues to ensure that any changes were evidence-based. The talents of the broad group of active boaters, from all sectors, that form this NAG sub-group are seemingly not being used to the full. The forthcoming review of boat licensing will test this further, so we will stay with it. The work that CRT is doing regarding enforcement, and specifically in London regarding chargeable moorings and congestion, is also being monitored closely.

Other matters of concern to every boater are access to facilities, such as water points, sanitary stations and visitor moorings. NABO has always stressed that access to such essential facilities is part and parcel of the benefits that we should get in return for our licence fees. That said, we do concede that where additional facilities, such as electric charging points, are available, consideration may be given to additional charges—as long as the costs are proportionate and there is an easy way to pay! I believe that, in general, our views on facilities are being accepted. For example, on the little Mon & Brecon canal, new visitor moorings have been introduced after extensive consultation with us and other user-groups—an outcome that we are happy with and can publically support.

On the more general question of facilities, besides our work in the NAG sub-group, we are pleased to be actively involved in a working group of CRT staff and boaters to as-

sess where all the prime facilities are located and then to identify where gaps exist.

CRT meetings

In order to keep the NABO Council fully briefed, it is valuable to see so many of our regional representatives regularly attending CRT's user forums. From the start of CRT, we expressed our concern about the format that was being adopted at these meetings, which seemed to consist of lots of lovely PowerPoint slides, telling us about the wonderful things that CRT was doing, but giving little opportunity for real feedback. We are pleased to see that many of the meetings are now adopting a far more consultative format: indeed, some now give a brief overview followed by the opportunity to speak directly to the CRT folk who are associated with aspects of the waterways that are of direct interest to boaters.

NABO always tries to attend the key meetings such as CRT's Annual Public Meeting and the six-monthly Users' Forum, which are useful for meeting other groups, but they still offer too little opportunity for real contributions from active users. We are also delighted to support our new Chair, Stella Ridgway, as she takes up her other role as an elected boater representative on the CRT Council.

At every opportunity, NABO continues to express its deep concern about the value and role of the Waterways Partnerships. We appreciate that some have defined their own roles and are doing good work, but, given the substantial budget that each receives, we see little hard evidence of their value.

NABO has been meeting the Waterways Ombudsman, Andrew Walker, and has built up a good understanding of what he can and

(more importantly) cannot do. As a result, we are able to point members who have queries in the right direction.

BSS representation

Again on the positive side, the work of the Boat Safety Committees is excellent and our representatives are having a major input—indeed, the BSS Technical Committee is chaired by my predecessor, David Fletcher. The recent review of the

The talents of the NAG sub-group are seemingly not being used to the full....

.... The forthcoming review of boat licensing will test this further.

BSS requirements for hire-boats is a first-class example of how the efforts of BSS staff and volunteer representatives can be jointly utilised to the full. Here, it is crucial that the hire-boat standards are appropriate (so that we as private boaters are not impacted by unsafe hire-boats). Additionally, it is almost inevitable that any new requirements for one sector of boats will tend to migrate over to others: i.e. the new hire-boat requirements could be applied to private boats. And in some cases this is appropriate: for example, we supported the compulsory installation of smoke alarms on all hire-boats and CO alarms on boats with solid fuel stoves. This is, quite obviously, essential, given the number of boat fires and the way in which a fire on a hire-boat can affect boats moored next to it. However, this then raises the question of whether, given the number of disastrous fires on boats, this should be a requirement for our private boats too.

Of course, from NABO's point of view, it is critical that any BSS requirements that are applicable to

our members' private boats should always be both proportionate and appropriate. This is even more important as we strive to ensure that BSS requirements are updated to cover the safe use of the increasingly common AC-driven, and other potentially dangerous, high-powered electric devices on our boats; recalling that many boat fires are electrically initiated.

I do believe that we have made a difference, but it is clear that there is still much to do.

The Thames

Although much of our work concerns CRT's waterways, it is important to note that we are also active in EA-regulated waters, especially the Thames. We attend all relevant user forums and our members are active in most of the sub-groups. We are one of the very few boater representative bodies to express concern about CRT taking over EA's navigational responsibilities. This is not only because we are yet to be convinced that CRT is on top of its existing responsibilities, but also because of our concern about the impact on CRT of taking on the EA's dreadful financial situation!

We appreciate that the decision will probably be made by government without any real appreciation of the practical consequences, and we are deeply concerned about the situation.

On the Thames, we are an active member of the River Thames Alliance and have been part of its work on a five-year plan for the river. We have, however, been outspoken about aspects of RTA's governance and have recently had to request a revision of proposed changes to its memorandum and articles of association to give a far greater input from

its member organisations.

Providing advice

What continues to please me is the respect that NABO has achieved right across the waterways—we are so often the first port of call when statutory bodies are seeking advice, recommendations, approval, etc. Over the past three years we have submitted a range of responses on topics as diverse as:

- The Middle Level Commissioners' proposals to revise the legislation relating to the Middle Level river system;
- A DTI consultation on cycling and walking strategy;
- CRT's 'Sharing Towpaths' consultation;
- CRT's consultation on Braunston congestion;
- CRT's local mooring plans for the K&A;
- HS2 preferred routes to Leeds and Manchester;
- Land allocation affecting the restoration of the Swansea Canal;
- Aspects of the Thames Tideway Tunnels Project.

One of the roles of the chairman is to field these many incoming requests. Almost every consultation that impacts upon 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 to speak for the boating community.

Still much to do

In summary, I do believe that we have made a difference, but it is clear that there is still much work to do. I leave the role of Chairman with a sense of satisfaction at the progress we have made thus far, and I look forward, as a continuing member of the Council, to continuing the good work that NABO does in giving a voice to the boating community.

Urban Moorings

Alison Tuck, Paul Howland and Louise Moore describe their initial plans for a unique development in Birmingham

By chance we met up and started to discuss our respective plans for the future, and a site that we thought we could turn into moorings with a difference. We researched the web and drew up our plans, but when we approached CRT, we found it had other plans for the site (much the same as it did for Minerva Works in Digbeth). We then contacted Ian Lane, the West Midlands Waterways Manager, and arranged a meeting with him and Keith Johnston of CRT Estates. They suggested a few sites and we visited them all, making notes on the positives and negatives for each, choosing the one that ticked all the boxes. After many months and emails, we were given the go-ahead and obtained a licence with boat access. We are still negotiating with the local council to gain land access, but in November we moored up on our future home and project site and found out just what we have let ourselves in for.

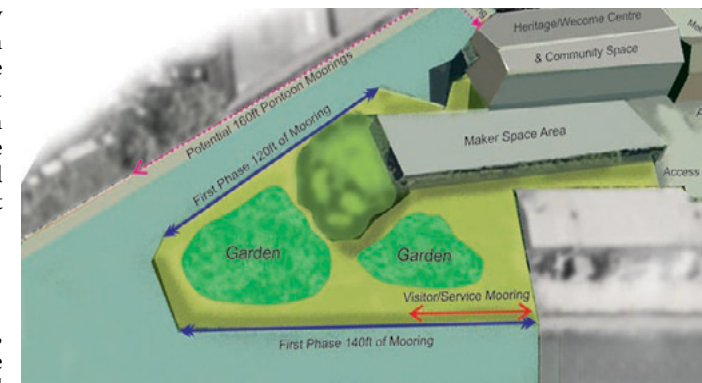
What makes this project a mooring with a difference?

We are taking on a derelict site and, through slow regeneration, we are going to turn it into a boater-led mooring site, with 'maker-spaces' where the local community, as well as boaters, can rent space to carry out building projects or small repairs to their boats without having to worry about security or obstructing the towpath. There also will be a Heritage Centre and community gardens. In the future, we would love to have some leisure moorings as well.

We have set about starting up a

Community Interest Company—a special type of limited company, which exists to benefit the community rather than private shareholders—and registering the site when we get a full lease. Any money raised is invested back into the project, so it is self-funding. The Business Boating team for the West Midlands has helped us immensely with all stages of this project (thank you, Georgina and Melanie). Below is an artist's view of what we would like it to become. This is not the absolutely final plan as it will evolve the more we do and the more we uncover.

For more information or to get involved visit urbanmoorings.co.uk



Roving traders:

The Blacksmith's Craft

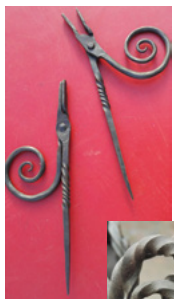
A regular series looking at people who make a living from waterway-based trading. This time, it's Brian Greaves, artist blacksmith.

See a video of Brian at work and examples of his products at [facebook.com/theblacksmithscraft](https://www.facebook.com/theblacksmithscraft), www.briangreaves.com and [fisherton-mill.myshopify.com/search?q=greaves](https://www.fisherton-mill.myshopify.com/search?q=greaves)

Alternatively ring Brian on 07968 019203.

After having served his engineering apprenticeship, specialising in machining, and studying and training in blacksmithing, Brian and wife, Jane have lived on their narrowboat, Emily, for the last 26 years. He designs and creates his unique sculptures on board his tug, Bronte, which he built in 1992. It is equipped with a blacksmith's forge and all the necessary tools for his artwork. Now that their children have left school, Brian and Jane travel the length and breadth of the inland waterways, with Brian's art inspired by the beauty of his waterway surroundings. "My customers are boaters and non-boaters, about equally split. Around 20% of my sales are commissions and 80% are ad hoc sales, with candlesticks and fire tools the best-selling products.

I attend some RCTA events, and I appreciate their negotiations with CRT. It helps a lot with trading, but mostly I set up shop wherever I am moored. The website is useful as an online catalogue, giving people a chance to browse when I'm not open. Fisherton Mill in Salisbury was looking for artists and they liked the my work so I have been supplying them with swirl and serpentine wall candlesticks for the last 12 years. I also have a Facebook page with examples of my work and post the locations and times of where and when we are opening."



Have Your Say

Letters to the Editor

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

My Floating Home

I am a researcher at Windfall Films, an award-winning TV production company based in London. The first series of one of our programmes, My Floating Home, recently aired in the UK on More4. In each episode of the programme we follow as a client designs, builds and eventually moves into their new home on water. We film the key stages of construction (building the float, building the structure, interior work, transport to final location and fully furnished 'reveal') as well as short interviews with the clients and builders as the project develops. We have been commissioned to produce a second series, and it is my job to find the projects that we will cover. Are any of your members working on building or renovating a boat of any kind that might be suitable for our programme? I can be contacted at 020 7251 7676 or via www.windfallfilms.com

Harri Davies

Am I missing something?

As a fairly recent member of NABO, I fail to understand the objection to CRT stating that all boaters should obey the same rules when cruising whether they have a home mooring or not. Am I missing something here?

Rodney Hardwick

Mark Tizard, NABO Vice Chair, replied:

The reason why NABO objects is a simple legal one and it refers to the Act of Parliament that governs CRT's management of its waterways. The Act is very clear in that to obtain a licence, it requires boaters who do not have a home mooring to satisfy CRT that they are using their boats 'bona fide' for navigation. However, there is no such requirement for boaters that declare they have a home mooring. Thus, boaters without a home mooring are required to continuously cruise in accordance with CRT's guidelines, if they do not wish to fall foul of CRT's interpre-

tation of 'bona fide' navigation and those with a legitimate home mooring are not. This is, in fact, reflected in CRT's enforcement strategy.

The way forward would be for CRT to seek parliamentary support to amend the relevant Act, should it wish to legitimise its view on this. Our view is that CRT, like any other body, should operate within the current legal framework.

We continue to remain broadly supportive of CRT's enforcement activities and their published guidelines for boats without a home mooring. All we ask is that they are used in a fair and transparent manner. We fully support the requirement for all boats to move to another place after a period of 14 days. CRT has said that this new requirement is to manage a problem with boaters on 'ghost' moorings, who do not intend to use their mooring as a home mooring.

When challenged, CRT was unable to clarify the scale and scope of the problem. Obviously, it is perfectly in order for CRT to challenge the legitimacy of a boater's home mooring when the boater applies for a licence and, if need be, change the nature of the licence subsequently offered.

I am sorry my reply is long-winded and a bit 'legal' in context; I am not a lawyer. I hope this answers your query.

I name this boat ...

Here's one from David Fletcher. I'd like to know what 'UNIS MINOR HEMMA - UNIS MAGIS NOSTRUM' means - it looks like Latin, but it's not.





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