



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 1 February 2017



WHAT DOES NABO DO FOR YOU?

**PEER-TO-PEER BOAT RENTALS –
DO WE NEED A NEW LICENCE?**

**BRIDGEWATER BLUES – ARE PEEL
HOLDINGS ACTING FAIR WITH
VISITORS?**



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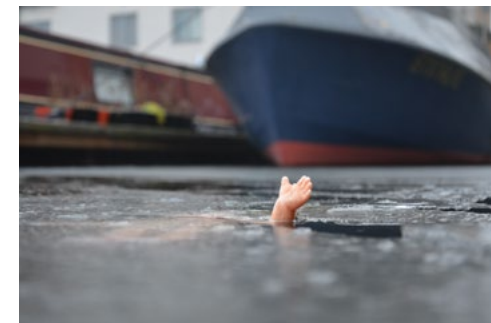
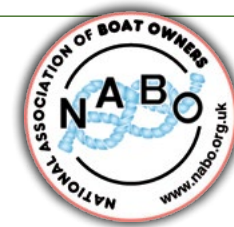
NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

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Cover photo

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Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images and photos in JPEG format please. Please email or post your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk by **18th March 2017**

NABO News is published by the **National Association of Boat Owners**
 PO Box 104, Leyland PR25 9AN Editor: Peter Fellows Production: Chris Pink

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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



Consultation and funding – a lack of both for some

Editor **Peter Fellows** compares navigation authorities

Following the complaints throughout last year over lack of vegetation management on the South Oxford Canal, it is good to see that CRT is spending the winter putting the situation right. And it is also good that CRT is consulting widely on a proposal by Birmingham City Council to pay for widening of the towpath through Edgbaston Tunnel. This would reduce the width of the canal, enforcing one-way passage of boats through the tunnel. In NABO's view, it is totally unacceptable to compromise the navigation in this way and disadvantage boaters (who pay for the waterways' upkeep) for the benefit of speeding cyclists (who pay nothing) and who could simply be told to dismount and walk through the tunnel.

If CRT is working well to consult its users, unfortunately the same cannot be said of another navigation authority, the Bridgewater Canal Co., owned by Peel Holdings. Last year, without any consultation with users, the company changed the reciprocal agreement with CRT and started charging CRT licence holders £40 if they tried to return along the canal within 28 days. Member, Brian Johnson, has had endless difficulties trying to clarify how the new regulation applies to shared ownership boats, as reported in this issue. But this is not the end of it with Peel Holdings: the company wants to work on a bridge over the canal where a new housing development is planned. But instead of consulting boating organisations about offering 'windows' when passage will be

possible, it is intending to close the canal entirely from February to May. This is simply not acceptable.

Other less-than-welcome news from navigation authorities includes a breakdown in talks over funding to secure the future of the Basingstoke Canal and possible navigation closures in the Anglian Region because of under-funding of the EA by the Government. Staying with the EA, discussions of a takeover of its navigations by CRT are still progressing, but again Government funding appears to be the sticking point, as reported by Mike Rodd, who attended a recent user forum.

Elsewhere in this issue, Mark Tizard reports on a possible new CRT 'peer-to-peer' licence for rented boats and he also summarises NABO's position on changes to CRT boat licences. The roving trader this month is Brian McGuigan, who runs coal and fuel boats at Four Counties Fuels. Finally, NABO needs to recruit more members and in this issue I have included a pullout section that has some of the events that NABO has influenced over the last year or so. This is intended to show non-member boaters some of the reasons why they should give us their £25. Additional copies of the newsletter will be given out by coal boats as a trial, to see whether this is an effective way to reach potential new members. If you meet non-members in your travels, please give them the pullout with its membership application form—and feel free to tell them what a wonderful job NABO is doing!

Home comforts

NABO Chair **Stella Ridgway** offers some tips for liveaboards



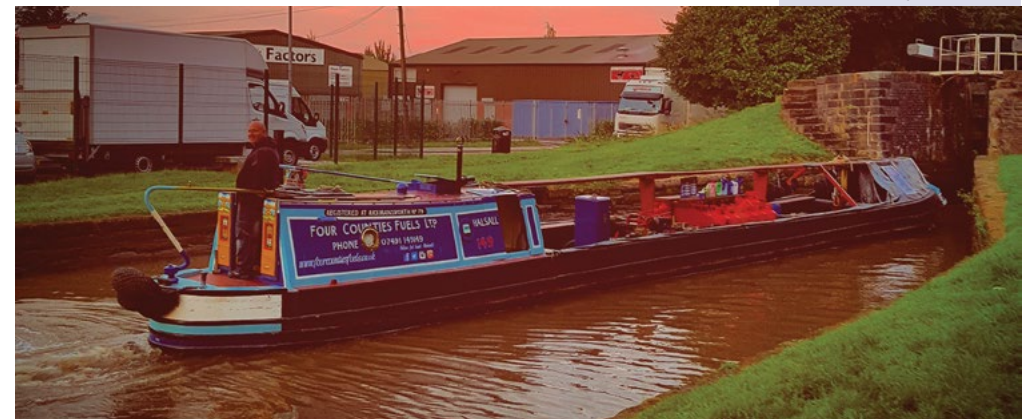
I hope everyone had a lovely Christmas. We certainly did, as my eldest daughter surprised me by arriving from New Zealand for an extended visit on Christmas Eve. As you can imagine when you are surprised like that, there were many tears, hugs and laughter plus lots of catching up; online is good, but nothing like physically seeing someone.

The awesome coal boats

Winter is a fabulous time on the cut and winter cruising has a magic all its own; little moves other than boaters going to empty the toilet and rubbish, and get water. It's cold on the stern, but there's nothing nicer than the stove going and getting back into a warm boat – and, of course, for those with trad sterns, boaters on the tiller stand next to a stove. Which brings me to traders on and off the cut: we took a conscious decision when we moved aboard to use local traders to buy groceries, meat etc. (as we had always done where possible), rather

than just relying on supermarkets. We find it cheaper as you only buy exactly what you need and waste little, and so the first time we met the 'Coal-boat' we thought that this was the future. We didn't realise then that this coal-boat was the famous 'Alton', which did three-quarters of the Cheshire Ring and back within a day, once a fortnight. Now, due to 'Halsall' doing the Four Counties Ring monthly, Alton just does the summit pound from Fools Nook to Whaley Bridge and Bugsworth Basin fortnightly, without fail—a godsend to liveaboards and canal-side properties. They are awesome and deliver everything from parcels to diesel, flowers to coal, and are one of the reasons we love living up here. So, for those who boat in summer, when you are out and about and see a coal-boat, you know the diesel is fresh, you can have a pumpout and you can get most chandlery needs from them, thus supporting these canal traders who make a living on the canal.

You need a stove or something



Coal boat Halsall being awesome
Photo: Brian McGuigan

similar to keep you warm on your boat in winter, and so a fortnightly coal-boat helps us, as we predominantly burn coal on our boat (other fuels are available!) and we wouldn't be without our Squirrel and Ecofan. I can now hear boaters up and down the country saying either: "What a waste of Money" or "A brilliant idea", and it does seem to be a bit like Marmite, you either love or hate them. All I can say is that we have our stove in the middle of the boat, we don't have central heating and the fan certainly assists in pushing warm air around the boat.

Shopping online

Another basic requirement is food. While we shop locally for fresh fruit and vegetables, groceries need to be purchased from a supermarket and we have discovered the usefulness of online shopping and home delivery. We use a major supermarket chain, giving them the postcode of the nearest building to us, where the van can get near to the towpath ... and voila ... they turn up at the boat in the required time-slot and we take it in through the side hatch. No carrying from car to boat, which is a godsend. If you can give them a postcode and instructions, they will find you. A fine service.

The other main thing, especially for those mooring online or those who cruise continuously, is mud. In the winter, with two dogs, our floor is swept twice daily, I have coir mats on the steps, but it still feels like you are pushing the mud around when you mop the floor. This year I bought some carpet runners which have helped, but any tips you can provide would be wonderful.

Licence review and renting

It was a good January Council meeting; we discussed the proposed CRT licence review currently underway,

aimed at simplifying the types of licences issued. It has been stressed to NABO that this is to be a zero-cost restructuring and therefore I would urge you to read Mark Tizard's article and send your comments to us. We also discussed the hazards of renting your boat out privately and noted that the BSS has already introduced a scheme for hire-boats. If you are considering renting your boat, please understand that this is not like renting out a house or flat on land, as legally a boat is a chattel and currently not subject to landlord/tenancy agreements. Please also be aware that if you are considering renting a boat to live on, a rental agreement does not currently give you any rights under law.

Could you be a new member?

Also under discussion were ways to attract new members. Thus, this issue of NABO News is being delivered by coal-boats to boaters on the Four Counties Ring and summit pound. I would encourage you to join NABO if you have not yet done so—if nothing else, you can save on your boat insurance (see the 'News' section for further details). NABO was the only boater's organisation to oppose the new terms and conditions, introduced by CRT in January 2014, and the association is uniquely placed in that we have representation on all user forums in the country and on CRT's Council. We also have representatives on the BSS committees.

We assist boaters who have difficulties and have expert knowledge among our members that we share with other members. I hope you will join us in 'Making a Difference' to the waterways. There is a membership form in this issue of the magazine; please complete it and send it in. It's the best 48p per week you can spend.



Welcome to members Frank and Gillian Spragg, Sue Merritt and Peter Vickers at Wolverhampton Boat Club. The meeting kicked off with a review of enforcement: 12% of boaters have been given six-month licences for inadequate movement, but most are then given a 12-month licence if they move 20 miles. Enforcement Officers (EOs) take no notice of boaters who have a home mooring, which has led some to overstay on visitor moorings.

But there seems to be some inconsistency between regions and there currently is no national training of EOs. Several Councillors and members pointed out that EOs are usually helpful if you let them know of a problem, but always copy in CRT Customer Services.

Moving on to CRT's licensing review, it aims to simplify boat licensing without generating additional income (i.e. cost neutral). Because none of the CRT management team is a boater, it is important that NABO informs the consultation on which groups of boaters are likely to be disadvantaged by any proposed changes.

The Council discussed different aspects of licensing and agreed that: a six-month licence should not just be pro-rata, but should include the

Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at Council January 2017

extra admin costs; the EA method of charging, based on boat area, is transparent and fair and could be adopted with a few charging bands; care is needed not to increase the cost of operating trip boats by waterway charities and trusts; the idea of charging higher licence fees for congested areas (principally, but not exclusively, in London) was rejected in favour of a national licence fee; the prompt payment discount should be retained, but other discounts currently offered (e.g. for unpowered boats/butties, electric boats, historic boats) need justification and a clearer rationale—for example, do electric boats that have batteries charged by a diesel generator produce more CO2 than normal diesel engines?

Mark Tizard suggested that there should be a tick-box in licence application forms to allow boaters to contribute to a welfare fund, administered by the CRT Welfare Officer or the Waterways Chaplaincy, to support boaters in difficulty.

On other matters, problems have been reported in London with hipster boaters blocking Elsan disposal points with their composting toilets! Veg management on the South Oxford is reported to be hugely improved after problems last summer, but different waterway managers select their veg management specification according to regional budgets, so inevitably there will be variation across the system.

There is a proposal to restrict navigation at Birmingham's Edgbaston Tunnel to one-way operation by widening the towpath to accom-

NABO calendar 2017

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

Council meetings are held at boat clubs in the Midlands area, with the March meeting at Tamworth Cruising Club (B77 1BS) or see the NABO website for details. Members are welcome to attend Council meetings; please just let the Secretary or Chairman know in advance (contact details inside cover).

modate commuting cyclists. NABO is against any restrictions to navigation, but if this goes ahead (paid for by the local council), there should be dredging and bollards/rings installed for waiting boats, presumably at a cost to CRT.

CRT is set to extend the bookable, chargeable moorings in London. NABO has no problem with bookable moorings, but it seems CRT has

introduced charging because some boaters who have booked moorings do not turn up, thus wasting that mooring.

A more acceptable solution would be a refundable charge if the boater uses the mooring. The new EA 'experimental' system for online booking of Thames moorings has started without a tendering process and will be reviewed after a year. NABO will keep an eye on how well it operates.

Housing pressures in London continue to have an impact on boating, with an unknown number of boats being rented out, and often then sub-let, to people who have no knowledge or understanding of the potential dangers.

Some (most?) boats do not have the correct BSS certificate, licence or insurance to permit renting, and some boats are in a dangerous condition.

There is grave concern that a fire or an accident such as a gas explosion where boats are moored up to three abreast, may cause loss of life. There needs to be a proper handover procedure to inform tenants, but this is unlikely to be enforceable.

A BSS-specified handover when buying a boat may be more feasible, but this was blocked by the trade associations when it was proposed to introduce this with hire-boats. Many at the meeting reported problems with day-boats, including damage to moored boats and dangerous behaviour by hirers.

This will be considered by the BSS committee. Finally, the BSS review of boat electrical systems is going ahead. One aspect under consideration is how to ensure a duty of care applies on behalf of BSS inspectors, so that they cannot be injured or killed by a boater who has installed a faulty electrical installation.

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

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Several NABO members have now taken out new insurance or renewed their existing policy with CETA, including Graham Holmes who said: "I phoned for a quote and was delighted to be rewarded with a saving of nearly £100, including my NABO discount."

Graham passed the good news on to five boating friends and recommended they join NABO to get the same benefits.

Farewell to two good friends of NABO

Louis Jankel

remembered by **Mike Rodd**

I am sure all NABO members will share my sadness to hear that Louis Jankel, a long-term NABO member who represented our interests on the Thames and related waterways for many years, passed away on the 13th December 2016. With his narrowboat 'Madam' moored in Brentford, I soon came to realise how very passionate he was about our wonderful Thames and its associated waterways. Not only always willing to challenge EA and BW/CRT, but actually rolling up his sleeves and getting stuck in—in endless meetings and on the river as a volunteer lock keeper. Undoubtedly a great character with an unbounded passion for the Thames, at times a well-placed thorn facing every side, but a lot of what he said was pure gold to benefit the Thames. I was so delighted when he invited me to join him on Madam last year, when he helped

manage the 'Source to Sea' River Thames relay. The relay was a two-week journey taken by a small bottle of water from the source of the Thames in Gloucestershire, carried downstream by different river organisations, clubs and individuals including walkers, rowers, swimmers, kayakers, traditional vessels and even a gondola. On behalf of NABO, we took the bottle between Bell Weir Lock and Shepperton—Louis seemed to know every boat and every boater! A deeply committed and religious man, he set the highest of standards and was always true to himself and those he represented. He will be so missed.



Fiona Slee

Remembered by **Howard and Hilary Anguish**

Hilary and I were saddened to hear the news that Fi is no longer with us. I last met up with her and John when they visited the Pocklington Canal in 'Epiphany' and Fiona went on to write a useful and definitive section about the canal in her Book 'North Yorkshire Waterways', published by Richlow in 2011, which is a valuable addition to my bookshelf.

I remember her enthusiasm for everything around her, and have enjoyed reading her daily writings, accompanied by her many photographs, in the daily blog about their many years of cruising the inland waterways. Fiona was a shining example of how to overcome adversity caused by ill health and she set a marvellous example to everyone who may be fighting a similar battle. It is a sad loss and our thoughts go out to John, Craig, Lucie, David and Lois at this difficult time.



A narrow escape

Following the article on carbon monoxide in the November issue of NABO News, there was a post on the public group of the Canal Market Place website in December. This is likely to become a significant issue on overcrowded moorings in London, especially where access by fire and rescue crews is more difficult—see also Fly's report on the last Council meeting—but everyone needs to be aware.

“Please be careful and check your boat alarms. Two hours of oxygen blood tests and meds Ambulance, fire brigade and National Grid Scary when your alarm goes off in the middle of the night and you're sick. Very lucky. I check my CO alarm every day and replaced the batteries only two days ago. Boat is safe (but) it turns out the sources were a neighbour's flue and a cracked propane bottle. I can't praise them all enough. Two other engineers visited today and they have also replaced my smoke alarm.”

And some responses from boaters:

- This is a lesson for all of us; keep flues clear and have ventilation open. CO alarms are a must.
- I had a similar thing: I had replaced the glass in my fire and used the rope that they sent

Bridgwater blues

Peel Holdings, owners of the Bridgewater Canal, have revised the timing of a proposed stoppage at Vicars Hall Bridge, near Boothstow, which was originally scheduled for four months from December to March 2017. The stoppage is now scheduled to run from mid-February to 24th May. This will affect many boaters who wish to use the canal. Some boats can take the long way round via the Pennines and Yorkshire, but for boats over around 60-feet this will not be possible and, if these boats are north of the stoppage, they will effectively be trapped there. It will also affect boaters elsewhere who wish to visit Liverpool, Wigan and Lancashire. The company should at least provide some advertised dates during the stoppage period, when the canal can be opened to enable boats to pass through in each direction—but at present there are no plans to do so.

with the glass. I started with headaches and feeling sick and then the alarm started going off. They had sent the wrong size rope (too thin) and CO was leaking through it. It took two days and a smoke bomb in the fire to find out what it was. So check your rope is correct thickness.

- Coincidentally our CO alarm was set off yesterday by the next door boat's ash pan on their deck. All ash needs to be dropped on wet ground or in the cut and never kept indoors no matter how cold it is outside.
- Quite often we have had to squeeze into the only mooring spot, only to find the boat in front has a side exhaust at the rear and have had our saloon filled with exhaust fumes—pointed out to one boater who argued it was not him so invited him in—he apologised especially as it was 10pm, but you do have to be very careful.
- Only had to use a marina twice in emergencies and boats were moored so very close to each other. This is why it's even more imperative to make sure your boat is safe, not just for yourself, but others in the immediate vicinity.

From [facebook.com/groups/CanalMarketPlace/permalink/1810342675912546/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/CanalMarketPlace/permalink/1810342675912546/)



Photo: Peter Stockdale at Canal Plan

Bad news for the Basingstoke

Discussions between Surrey and Hampshire County Councils and CRT about securing a sustainable future for the Basingstoke Canal by transferring it to the Trust appear to have ended without agreement on the funding required.

The Basingstoke Canal Authority and volunteers have been carrying out regular maintenance work on the canal and the Authority is concerned that inadequate expenditure will affect flood management and the long-term condition of the waterway.

hants.gov.uk/basingstoke-canal

A threat to Anglian waterways?

The EA is reported to be prepared to close some navigations in its Anglian Region on health and safety grounds, saying that, as a consequence of its underfunding, it is unable to keep assets in a safe condition. Navigations that could be affected include the River Great Ouse and the River Nene. Three locks in the region are already closed and the EA has stated that it is unable to



Guillotine lock on the River Nene
Photo: Peter Fellows

reopen them due to funding constraints. It may be only a matter of time before other locks are closed, thus stopping navigation. The EA has a legal duty to provide a right of navigation on most of these waterways under the Anglian Water Act 1977. NABO suggests that all boaters who use these waterways should write to their MPs, stating their objections. Politicians need to understand that waterway users are not prepared to allow navigations to close.

Oxford City Council drops PSPO

A report in the September 2016 NABO News described proposals by Oxford City Council to introduce a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to ban people from mooring boats at riverbanks without the landowner's permission, obstructing paths and putting up structures.

During a public consultation on the draft order, boaters argued that the proposed restrictions on smoke emissions and noise would also criminalise 'normal and necessary' activities, such as running engines, generators and stoves. In the face of strong public opposition, the council dropped the plans in early February, commenting that the consultation had enabled conversations with the boating community to get their views and experiences, which are reflected in changes to its proposals.

Plan ahead for the summer: BCN explorer cruises



The planned routes

May cruise stops for the night:

Saturday 13th May,

Pelsall Junction;

Sunday 14th, Longwood Boat Club;

Monday 15th, Moorcroft Junction;

Tuesday 16th, Walsall town basin;

Wednesday 17th, Wednesfield;

Thursday 18th, Tipton;

Friday 19th, Titford.

June cruise stops for the night:

Saturday 10th June,

Pelsall;

Sunday 11th, Anglesey Basin;

Monday 12th, Longwood Boat Club;

Tuesday 13th, Moorcroft Junction;

Wednesday 14th, Walsall town basin;

Thursday 15th, Wednesfield;

Friday 16th, Tipton;

Saturday 17th, Titford.

Applications forms from: Stuart & Marie Sherratt,

Email:

bcns.explorercruise@gmail.com

Phone:

Marie on 07709 165073 or Stuart on 07510 167288.

The BCNS is organising two cruises this year on 12th–19th May and 9th–17th June to encourage boaters to explore the BCN.

A gentle, fun cruise, exploring the northern reaches of the Birmingham Canal Navigation system with fellow boaters organised by the Birmingham Canal Navigations Society (BCNS)

Visit CRT lock gate manufacturing workshops at Bradley, (and also see where full length boats could be turned over to work on the under

side) and learn about the fascinating history of the BCN from an entertaining local historian.

Both cruises will end at the BCNS headquarters at Titford Pumphouse, with the May cruise including the BCNS Summer Rally.

Priority will be given to boaters who have not been on a BCNS Explorer Cruise before.

The Bradley workshops will be visited on both cruises, along with other guided walks, talks and social evenings.



Arwork at Titford PumpHouse
Photo: Peter Fellows

EA's national navigation user's forum

Attending for NABO **Mike Rodd** looks for progress on the EA/ CRT negotiations

Well attended by most of the boating organisations that cover the EA navigations, the preparatory work for this meeting was, as usual, excellent and very well chaired by EA Board member, Peter Ainsworth, his focus on making sure all delegates had the opportunity to express their views.

The meeting had been delayed in the hope there might be progress to report on the EA/CRT negotiations. Sadly, there was nothing really new, other than a deeper insight into the key issues. EA's Mark Ormond, and CRT's Peter Walker, gave presentations and from these it was clear that the main sticking point is, as we all realise, money. Much joint work has been invested in assessing EA's assets. Somewhat surprisingly, EA's own data on these is not as good as it should be and the investigations have had to accumulate much more meaningful data. What is clear is that the issue is not so much the locks, overall in reasonable condition, but the 500+ weirs and sluices, generally very large and ageing structures and serious funding (many tens of £millions) will be required urgently to bring them to a sustainable state.

Both the EA and CRT are keen to go ahead with CRT taking responsibility for all EA's major waterways. Options are being explored and proposals then put to the Minister. But this major financial gap has to be addressed and given the current climate the immediate prognosis is not good. Important to note is that, even if a solution can be found, it is

estimated that at least two years will be needed to sort out the legal complexity of EA's waterways. We were assured that when there is real progress, users will be consulted.

A very explicit exposition on EA's financial situation made clear that staff are doing their best to ensure their waterways are managed as well as possible, even though funding is insufficient. We heard that the EA is commencing a 'strategic charging review', Intriguingly words used include 'to ensure charges are able to provide an efficient and economically sustainable service for our customers' sounding very much like the forthcoming CRT licensing review —indeed it was suggested by NABO that the two reviews could be done together. Proposals will be available by autumn 2017.

The issues resulting from one recent key court case, in which some 'houseboats' were found not liable to pay EA's registration fees, are very serious, even worse when this ruling is applied to other waterways, especially the Thames. Not only can fees not be recovered, but those paid in the past have to be repaid. EA is thus working hard to redefine what a 'houseboat' is! In another case, the 20+ boaters at Penton Hook Marina on the Thames won their magistrate's court case, because 'as they do not navigate' they should not have to pay the registration fee. EA's High Court appeal against this ruling was heard on the 13th December. Losing this will have enormous impacts on EA's funding.

CRT survey of London boaters

The 57% increase in boat numbers in London since 2012 prompted CRT to carry out a survey of the boating community to better understand and meet boaters' needs. The results show that living afloat is increasingly seen as a viable alternative lifestyle by many younger people.

58% of boaters, 769 of 1326 respondents, describe their boat as their primary home, with a further **12%** saying the boat is either a second or temporary home.

69% are currently living on a boat on a London waterway and **50%** have been living on boats for three years or less.

50% said affordability/financial reasons were the motivation for living on a boat; but **82%** are attracted by the waterway environment (boats, wildlife, tranquillity etc.).

34% of those living on boats are under the age of 35 and only **5%** are over 65.

88% do not have children attending school, but **63%** children under the age of 16 are living on boats.

43% live alone and **42%** live as cohabiting couples.

59% do not pay local authority council tax.

9% are not registered to vote. **21%** are not registered with a doctor.

70% own their boats outright and a further **11%** own their boat with a loan or mortgage.



Full survey: canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnaill/30901-whos-on-londons-boats-survey-summary-report.pdf.

Photo: Stephen McKay, Wikimedia Commons

558 boats had a home mooring and **486** boats were without a home mooring, of which **45%** would be interested in having a permanent mooring if available. The most important qualities in a permanent mooring, other than price, are somewhere people feel personally safe, good sewage and rubbish services nearby, and convenient public transport.

33% said that their boat had experienced mechanical issues in the past 12 months that had prevented them from moving it.

77% said they are white (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British), which rises to **89%** when 'white other' is included.

The **five main improvements** people want to see are more mooring places, mooring rings, water points, Elsan facilities and dredging. The results will help inform the development of the London Mooring Strategy, which aims to address the challenges and opportunities of boating in the Capital.



What can NABO do for me?

NABO is dedicated to promoting the interests of private boaters on the waterways, so that their voices can be heard when decisions which might affect their boating are being made.

NABO will always challenge injustice, where necessary at the highest level, taking a stand on boating issues, including:

- unnecessary boat safety requirements
- excessive licence and mooring fees
- poor dredging or vegetation management, and
- any loss of freedom to navigate or moor on the waterways.

NABO will support individual members with problems, as well as taking up local issues and matters of national concern. We aim to represent all boaters regardless of how you use your boat. We are not for or against any type of boater and the diversity of the boating community is something we aim to defend.

NABO has gained recognition from all the major navigational authorities, other waterway organisations and government bodies. Its arguments are listened to with respect, and it is frequently consulted on important waterway issues. Much of what NABO achieves is almost invisible and goes on behind the scenes, unseen by the waterways community, even by boaters. However, it has been instrumental in improving the waterways in many ways:

- It recommended that CRT should appoint a Welfare Officer, which was taken up by CRT in 2014.
- It has been a leading influence in securing a commitment to minimise the mandatory requirements of the Boat Safety Scheme and in securing changes to the appeals procedure. It is one of few boating groups with representation at both technical and advisory levels within the BSS scheme.
- It is working with CRT to find a legally-sound means of combating abuse and overstaying on public moorings that has minimum impact on the freedom of movement of conscientious boaters.

- It has brought to CRT's attention inadequacies in its licence and mooring permit conditions, some of which were consequently corrected.
- It secured 28 amendments to the 1995 BW Act and concessions on the way it would be applied before it was passed. This Act affects all boaters on waterways controlled by CRT and the amendments brought valuable safeguards for boaters.
- It took BW to the Waterways Ombudsman over the lack of consultation on boat licence fee increases and the Ombudsman ruled in NABO's favour.

NABO is unashamedly a pressure group at times, but it argues for a middle way. Our prime concerns are that navigation authorities should be fair and transparent and use resources most effectively for the common good.

The articles on the following pages describe some areas of influence that NABO has brought to bear over the last few years on changes proposed by navigation authorities that affect boaters. These include changes to visitor moorings in the South East and changes to CRT's licence terms and conditions, some of which NABO continues to oppose. It was not just CRT in NABO's sights: the Environment Agency's proposal to remove portable lock ladders and fire extinguishers from Thames locks prompted a response from NABO, among others, which quickly saw the proposals dropped.

Finally, a short article describes how your membership subscription is used to run NABO. Other issues that are being addressed by NABO can be found on the website at nabo.org.uk (select 'Issues') or in back-issues of NABO News, available to read or download from the website.

If you received this magazine from a coal-boat or marina, please write the name on the back of your membership application form.



What can NABO do for me?

A selection of the recent issues we've tackled on your behalf

Mooring consultations

First published in NABO News, Issue 3, July 2016

In 2015, CRT worked with its Navigation Advisory Group (NAG) to agree a short-term mooring framework that sets out a process to be followed before any changes were made to visitor moorings, describing how evidence should be gathered and a clear case made to support any changes to moorings, the decision ultimately with the relevant waterway manager.

Berkhamsted and Marsworth

CRT began collecting sighting data at these sites to understand how the moorings were being used. CRT's proposals to introduce two-day moorings at Marsworth and two- and seven-day moorings at Berkhamsted were approved by the SE Boaters' Sub-group of the SE Waterways Partnership. At the end of 2015, CRT consulted on the proposals. The high level of response reflected strong feelings, the large majority objecting to the proposals.

NABO's Vice-Chair, Mark Tizard, asked CRT what evidence was available to show that there was insufficient mooring availability. After much prevarication it was discovered that this information was not collated or made available to either the Sub-Group or boaters generally. In February 2016, CRT agreed that a NAG representative would review the boat sighting data collected during May to August 2015. At Berkhamsted, the analysis found that the moorings utilisation varied between 12.8% and 68.7%. At Marsworth, it concluded that there was not a mooring problem. The proposed changes were stopped.

Mark Tizard commented: "Common sense has prevailed. I hope the outcome is that CRT will, in future, follow its own guidelines. If NABO had not challenged CRT's assumptions and asked for the evidence then reduced stay times would have been introduced. It's concerning that this was passed by the Sub-Group, meant to be representing boaters' interests. I have proposed that CRT uses this framework to investigate whether all visitor moorings meet the needs of boaters and adjust stay times, but there appears to be little appetite for this"

Mooring charges

Another consultation covered potential changes to moorings in London, with the likelihood of chargeable visitor moorings being established. NABO commented: "We note that CRT is spreading the £25 overstay charge to more visitor moorings. As a principle, NABO is against charging, but it appreciates that overstaying remains a problem in a few areas. But is this an appropriate method of control or could other methods be used? The visitor mooring guidelines should be used to see if visitor moorings are fit for purpose and justify any changes. NABO would also like to see some dredging and towpath management near to visitor moorings, so that boaters can stay longer nearby should they wish to."

EA lock ladders and fire extinguishers

First published in NABO News,??

NABO's Louis Jankel was not impressed with recent developments in his open letter to EA.

As a mere customer of the EA and not subject to any specific health and safety considerations, when I am next locking up and the boat next to me bursts into flames, as I immolate, I shall die in the knowledge that lock-side staff have fulfilled some obtuse H&S ordinance and I have saved them from back-strain. Of course, if you spent a bit of money and bought carbon fibre ladders, you could have removed the problem and kept this matter away from public scrutiny, but non-confrontation would appear not to be the EA way.

Concerning the use of fire extinguishers, it is a legal and moral duty of any employee to help a customer on the premises. Are you sufficiently deluded to think your lock-side staff will stand about watching your customers burn in their lock while waiting for the emergency services to arrive? You are placing your staff in much greater danger by withdrawing the few tools they have, because you cannot instruct your staff to turn off their natural inclination to aid anyone in peril.

New licence terms and conditions

First published in NABO News, Issue 2, April 2015

NABO's legal rep, Geoffrey Rogerson, explains what's going on.

CRT introduced new licence terms and conditions without full consultation, as it considered them to contain only minor alterations. David Fletcher examined them in detail and decided that, far from being minor, some of these changes were far-reaching. He duly sent a detailed letter drawing attention to the aggressive nature of some wording and the illegality of some new requirements. Though never acknowledged, CRT did remove some of the offending paragraphs but there remain others (e.g. CRT claims that boats with a permanent mooring are required to 'cruise', but this is not a requirement within the 1995 Act). NABO's legal advisors have recommended that boaters may add the following caveat to their licence application: "Agreement to the licence terms and conditions does not absolve either party from complying with any relevant law or Act of Parliament governing the canals and rivers administered by the Trust". fines the word 'cruising' as equalling bona fide navigation. NABO Counsel's opinion is quite clear that boats with a permanent mooring are not required to bona fide navigate.

Our legal advisors accordingly have recommended that boaters may wish to add the following caveat to their licence application: "Agreement to the licence terms and conditions does not absolve either party from complying with any relevant law or Act of Parliament governing the canals and rivers administered by the Trust".

David Fletcher wrote:

These proposals seem to adopt an unnecessarily aggressive tone; not the way in which you might expect an organisation to welcome new, and retain existing, customers. CRT is seemingly trying to bolster the 'contract'—not as it states 'to make it clear to boaters', most of whom will never read it. A new customer should not have to get legal advice before applying for a licence. If CRT says it needs these changes to manage current boaters' misbehaviour, it is a sad reflection on our waterways. It shows how the misbehaviour of a few has resulted in significant changes in regulations for everyone.



Members' benefits

NABO Treasurer, Helen Hutt, outlines where your subscription money goes

First published in NABO News, Issue 2, April 2015

If you pay a subscription, you want to know where your hard-earned money goes. Roughly half goes into the production of NABO News, the cost of which is also partially offset by a small amount of advertising. NABO News is our largest cost but it is also our greatest asset and you tell us you want us to keep on printing it rather than having it available solely online.

A sixth goes on the cost of meetings – AGM, Council Meetings and meetings with other waterways organisations. This can include travel expenses (at a very reasonable 20p per mile!), catering and any necessary paperwork. This is very important work: if we are not there, then we have no influence.

Another sixth goes on administration in its various guises: website maintenance, accounting software, stationery, postage, audit honorarium, etc. In future we are hoping to reduce some of these costs by, for example, sending out membership renewal notices by email. We do not currently pay for administration as this is done by members who give their time.

From time to time we seek legal advice to be able to challenge navigation authorities against the imposition of unlawful or unnecessary regulations. We budget for an expenditure of around £2,000 per annum and currently have reserves to fund further legal bills. Added to this are other costs, including insurance and depreciation, making up the final sixth.

At the beginning of each financial year we set a budget and this is reviewed by the Council on a quarterly basis to ensure that we remain in the black, make any necessary adjustments to our expenditure, and maintain our reserves. Annual accounts are audited and presented at the AGM.

What can you do to help? At least half of our costs are fixed regardless of membership, so it's easy—recruit more members! Then we can hold subscriptions at the current level (last increased in 2013) and we carry more influence, which is the whole point of NABO.

NABO Membership Application

You can help us reduce admin costs by joining online at www.nabo.org.uk or via the pinned post on our Facebook group

Title: Preferred Forename:
Surname:
Address:
Post Code: Telephone: (Home)
Age* (Work)
Optional (Mobile)
Email Address: @
Profession/Expertise:

Additional (Family) Members at same address

1. M
2. M

BOAT DETAILS

Type: Barge Cruiser Narrowboat Commercial Sail Other

Name of Craft:

Other details eg length, make, style:

Home Navigation:

Mooring:

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (online by Paypal or by cheque payable to 'NABO')

One FULL MEMBER: Annual at £25	£	<input type="text" value="25"/>
Additional (Family) Members: Annual at £5	£	<input type="text"/>
Donation to NABO Funds	£	<input type="text" value="."/>
TOTAL enclosed	£	<input type="text" value="."/>

Please indicate your preferences:-

I would like to pay future annual subscriptions by bank standing order YES NO
(if Yes, we will send you the necessary form with your welcome letter)

Signed: Date of Application:

How/where did you learn about NABO?
If from another member please give their name

Send to: NABO, PO Box 104, Leyland PR25 9AN



UPDATE

The Shropshire Union Fly-boat Restoration Society operates an educational and campaigning programme with its unique, historic fly-boat, Saturn. In 2016, education events for schoolchildren were organised at Trefor, Middlewich, Lymm and Grappenhall. The fly-boat is currently at Alvecote where Adrian Polglase of AP Boatbuilding is undertaking the winter's maintenance work.

In 2017, Saturn is booked to attend the National Waterways Museum's Easter Gathering at Ellesmere Port from 14th-17th April, where the society also hosts its AGM, and the Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival from 16th-18th June. It will also attend the Lymm Historic Transport Day on 25th June, the Audlem Festival of Transport on 30th July and the Whitchurch Boat Rally on 2nd and 3rd September. A fly-run from Whitchurch to Manchester is planned for May 2018.



Saturn at Lymme Festival 2016
Photo: Shropshire Union Fly-boat Restoration Society (SUFBRSS)

Saturn on the dock at Alvecote
Photo: Waterway Images



If you wish to donate, volunteer, join the society, or suggest an event that Saturn might attend, contact the society at saturnflyboat.org.uk

Licensed to thrill

Mark Tizard explains NABO's thoughts on the upcoming CRT licensing review.

CRT has initiated a review of licensing for all craft on its waterways. The aim is for the review to be a cost-neutral simplification of the existing rules to reflect current boating trends. At the last meeting of the Navigation Advisory Group (Licensing and Mooring) (NAG), we were told it would be wide-ranging with nothing ruled out of its scope. A sub-group would be set up, involving members to help this review, but to date CRT has yet to take further action on this.

With this in mind, NABO Council decided it would be sensible to debate a wide range of options and let both CRT and NAG know our preferred options. The Council, reflected by its membership, is evenly split between those with a home mooring and those who continuously cruise. Options debated included:

Home mooring or not, should there be a pricing difference? It was agreed that there should be a single price for the licence.

Licence duration—there should be only three options: twelve, six and one month licences. As with car licences, shorter term licences should attract a pricing premium to reflect the additional administration costs involved.

Discounts—after some discussion, the majority felt that the prompt payment discount should be retained as it is good for CRT and encourages compliance (as well as focussing the mind to ensure that insurance and a BSS certificate are in place). Online or bank transfer payments should be encouraged and the prompt payment discount could

be linked to this. All other discounts should be reviewed and either continued or not, based on their merits.

Licence calculation—it was agreed that licensing should be reviewed to take account of the increase in widebeam boat numbers and that charging by area (i.e. length x breadth) should be introduced. This should be kept simple, with 4 to 6 charging bands.

For example: four licence bands:

- **Band A**—Length 0—14m, max beam 2.25m;
- **Band B**—Length in excess of 14m, max beam 2.25m;
- **Band C**—Length 0—14m, beam in excess of 2.25m;
- **Band D**—Length in excess of 14m, beam in excess of 2.25m.

Band C and D charged at a 50% premium compared to rates in Bands A and B.

Zonal pricing—while it might be attractive to CRT to try to limit the number of boats in a certain area, the Council agreed that doing this by increasing licence prices was both unfair and almost impossible to police effectively, and went against the desire to simplify the licensing process.

Additional options—an option should be introduced on the licence application for a voluntary donation of £10 or £20 (supported by gift aid) to a boaters' welfare fund, jointly controlled by the CRT Welfare Officer and the Waterways Chaplaincy, to support boaters in need (e.g. for boaters who fall into the enforcement procedure because they are unable to afford a BSS examination or insurance).

Welfare Officer Update

CRT's Sean Williams demonstrates exactly why his appointment was needed.

More people are choosing to make their homes on water according to our latest boaters' survey, with 39% of respondents describing their boat as their primary or secondary home, up from just under a third in 2014. We want to make sure that boaters who are in need of support are able to get the help they need to enable them to stay on the water. I started as CRT's first Welfare Officer in 2014 to help staff work with boaters in need of support as well as linking with the organisations that can provide practical help—like the Citizens Advice Bureau, mental health charities and the waterway chaplains.

In the last 18 months, I've supported over 189 cases of boaters in need of specialist help, and the team has made over 1,000 adjustments to help people who have run into short-term trouble. I've recently blogged about my role and you can read some anonymised case studies at canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/blogs/boating-team/how-we-can-help-you. If you are a boater in need, or know someone who you



feel may need help, please get in touch with us either via local contacts at canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/library/8515-enforcement-officer-regions-and-contact-details.pdf, or via customer services on 0303 0404040. We welcome any ideas about organisations we should be speaking to, or suggestions on how we can work better to support boaters, by email to sean.williams@canalrivertrust.org.uk.



Photo: Brian McGuigan

Not waving but drowning

Rob McLean and Graham Watts examine waterways accidents last year

The report was compiled by from investigative work by Dave Washer, published on 3rd November 2016.

www.boatsafetyScheme.org/about-us/governing-the-bss/planned-activity-incident-data/

A BSS Advisory Committee report of incidents and accidents from January to October 2016, is used to help address the risks presented by boats that have been inadequately constructed or maintained, or inappropriately used. Incident reports are used to help identify patterns of risk and any new risks not previously envisaged. This review is based on 149 reports of 154 incidents (including further affected boats) on inland and coastal waters.

Fatalities

■ The inquest into the death in a fire of a liveaboard narrow-boater found that the likely ignition source was a hob ring left switched on but unattended. The man died from inhalation of smoke and carbon monoxide.

The result of a boat fire on the Grand Union
Photo: Cath Fincher



■ A man, woman and a dog died from CO poisoning on a moored petrol-engined sports cruiser. The engine may have been running to charge batteries, with the occupants in the cabin space. Initial findings suggest that the cabin could have filled rapidly with high concentrations of CO through gaps in the rear deck awning.

■ A man and his mother were using a lock on their narrowboat, with the mother and dog on board as the man worked the lock. The boat was caught and held and started to flood.

The woman and dog were rescued, but the man returned to the sinking craft, reportedly to retrieve cash and valuables. He did not emerge, despite rescue attempts by the volunteer lock-keeper, and was later found by the emergency services, who were unable to resuscitate him.

■ An elderly woman fell from the back of a narrowboat while trying to take off her coat that had become entangled in the tiller. Her loose clothing then caught in the propeller and she was trapped under the boat. Eventually, she was pulled from the canal but died in hospital the next day.

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Solid fuel stoves

Twelve incidents linked to the use of solid fuel stoves have been reported so far this year, with an equal split between causes associated with installation, maintenance and use. Pyrolysis, caused by radiance of heat from the stove body to nearby combustible surfaces, can cause gradual charring, eventually leading to ignition. In one case, firebricks in a stove were replaced and the bolts securing the new firebricks protruded out of the back of the stove, 50mm away from a combustible bulkhead surface, causing ignition in those areas due to pyrolysis.

Electrical installations

Electrical issues feature among the main reasons for incidents, with 11 being identified so far on inland boats and a further three on coastal boats. Three involved inverters and two involved domestic appliances (a tumble drier and dehumidifier). Three had wiring issues, with two having shorts caused by poor wiring work and the other due to poor wiring condition. One of the wiring issues had created a short between the positive and negative pillars on a battery. The wires and battery were both extremely hot, but the circuit was cut before any explosion or ignition occurred.

In another battery-related event, one cell of a starter-motor battery overheated, which caused insulation on a plastic cable to melt and the heat then caused a fuel filter to melt and discharge its contents. A fire on a liveaboard cruiser in a Midlands marina spread to three adjacent cruisers.

Inland waterway incidents: January to October 2016

Incident	BSS waters	Non-BSS waters
Fire/explosion (including immediate risk of)	55	3
Sinking (including lock hang-up)	35	1
Man Overboard	10	
Collision	10	
Personal Injury	9	
Stranding	9	
CO poisoning (including near incidents)	3	
Pollution	2	
Grounding	1	
Total	133	4

Systems & causes: fire, pollution and CO incidents

Incident	BSS waters	Non-BSS waters
Solid fuel stoves	12	
Electrical	11	
No information (not investigated & inconclusive)	9	1
Engine/engine room/exhaust/leaking fuel oil	6	1
Flammable vapour	5	
Conflagration	5	
Galley accidents/smoking/candles/unspecified appliance	4	
Gas escape/installed gas appliance	3	
Deliberate fire setting	3	1
Petrol installed (leak, refuelling, detonation, etc.)	2	
Portable items (lamps/heaters/stoves)	1	
Total	61	3

Serious incidents

Incident	Fatalities	Major injuries*
Man overboard/capsize/collision	3	5
Explosion/fire, petrol, gas, fume ignition	1	6
Other personal injuries		6
Carbon Monoxide	2	
Total	6	17

*Major injury = person treated in hospital

'Peer-to-peer' boat rentals

Mark Tizard examines some of the implications of CRT's proposed new licence category currently under review.

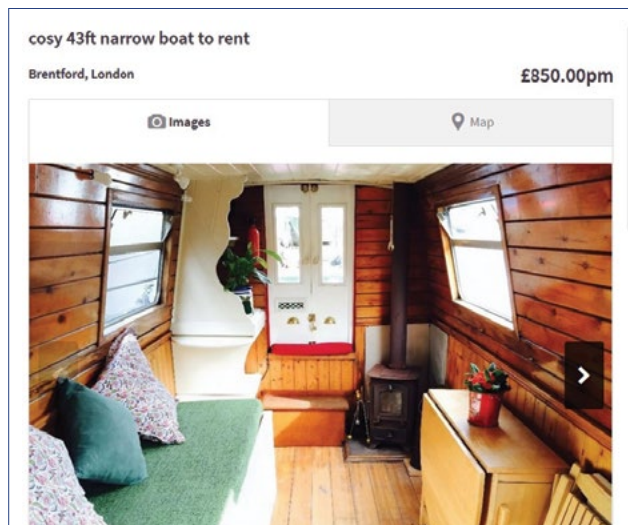
In recent years, it has become common to read of boats available to rent in Central London and the Kennet and Avon. Now the practice is spreading to other areas. To obtain a licence to rent a boat out to others, you currently need a hire-boat licence and a hire-boat level boat

safety certificate. It is also a stipulation that the boat must have a home mooring.

The current situation is a cause for concern in that either boats are being rented in ignorance of the requirements or owners are choosing to ignore them. Either way, renters are at risk from unscrupulous 'boatlords' who may not have the appropriate insurance, and, in many cases, have not made the renter aware of general boat safety. Given that in congested areas, boats can be double- or triple-moored, this puts other boaters at risk too. Rooms on boats are being advertised via Airbnb and similar websites like bedsonboard.com, especially in London. Most of these do not to allow navigation by guests, but it is still unclear whether they are appropriately licensed, although this would be easy for CRT to check.

CRT is considering introducing a new licence category for boats for hire, which would not require a home mooring but would cost the same as a hire-boat licence and have to meet the trade BSS requirements. In addition, to protect the renter, this may require a hire-boat style handover checklist to ensure that the renter is aware of all the issues around being on the boat.

There are currently three types of boat rental: short-term holidays on hire-boats; Airbnb-style overnight stays; and longer-term residential. Hire-boats carry the appropriate levels of insurance and BSS certification, so are not of concern. It is the Airbnb-style renting and longer-term residential letting that will fall



under this new licence.

Long-term residential rentals is the area of most concern to NABO; as soon as money changes hands, it becomes a business and this is currently in contravention of CRT licence conditions, the domestic insurance and the BSS certificate become void. Not only that, but we have heard of cases where the renter is blissfully unaware of the basics of boat safety or maintenance—and some boats are in a very poor condition. Unlike a property, there is no security of tenure; landlord and tenant law does not apply to these rented boats, leaving the occupants with little or no security or protection. As a result, unsuspecting renters may be living in potentially dangerous and illegal conditions.

Basic guidelines for cruising boats are often not explained, for example, the common courtesies like not running your engine after 8 pm, where to empty your toilet, get fuel. If there is no home mooring, the requirements to move every 14 days, not moor for extended periods at visitor moorings or sanitary stations may similarly not be explained.

CRT hopes that, by introducing this new licence, it will enable boat owners to legitimately enter the rental market. Through publicity, it is hoped that those seeking to rent will ask questions to ensure that they rent a boat that meets the correct standards. However, NABO is concerned that although introducing a 'peer-to-peer' licence might work for the upper end of the market, the introduction of additional boats will put extra pressure on moorings and facilities in London and other congested areas. It may be ignored by those who rent their boats out specifically to people who use them for long-term accommodation. For some it could be uneconomic to obtain the new licence, insurance and

NABO's concerns



- It is essential for CRT to identify boats that are being rented out.
- The BSS requirement for rented boats should be the same as for hire-boats.
- There needs to be a proper enforcement process with associated information being made widely available.
- The licence application should have a specific question, asking if the boat is to be used at any time for renting out.
- Communications need to be directed at potential renters to ensure that they ask questions about whether the boat has the correct licence, has a valid safety certificate and the correct type of insurance.

BSS certification.

The time when every boat owner has contact with CRT is when the boat is licensed. So it is at this stage that owners need to be made aware of the new licence and their obligations, should they wish to rent the boat out. In addition, CRT needs to follow through on its stated aim that it can, and will, fast-track the enforcement process for non-compliant boats, leading to the removal of the licence and, potentially, to remove the boat from its waters. The NABO Council feels that this issue is important and rentals will only keep increasing. CRT has responded to NABO's concerns with the following comment: 'All I would say is that the new licence is very much a concept we are exploring rather than something we will definitely be putting in place. As you are aware, we have been consulting widely on the issues associated with unauthorised renting and have been listening to the views of our stakeholders to help us make an informed decision as to whether introducing a new licence is the right thing to do.'

A narrow Edgbaston tunnel?

CRT has started consultations on a proposal to widen the towpath for cyclists and pedestrians, by extending it into the canal.

If you wish to comment on the proposals contact Ian Lane, Waterway Manager, West Midlands CRT at enquiries.westmidlands@canalrivertrust.org.uk.

Birmingham City Council wants to make it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to pass in the 100m long Edgbaston tunnel on the Worcester and Birmingham Canal (W&B). They propose to widen the towpath, extending it into the canal. The towpath links Birmingham University campus with the city centre and has a reputation for high-speed commuting cyclists who don't slow down when passing through the tunnel, creating a hazard for both pedestrians and other cyclists. CRT has started to consult, stating 'The continued increase in pedestrian usage has seen the tunnel become a bottleneck for towpath users. This is largely due to new users from developments in Selly Oak, the new hospital and Birmingham University. We are becoming increasingly aware

of this issue and the idea to widen the towpath through the tunnel has been a long term ambition of the City Council. Given their willingness to fund it, we feel now is the right time to consult with waterway users. The towpath has already seen significant investment either side of the tunnel and the lighting has also recently been upgraded.'

At the last Council meeting, NABO's position was stated:

- 1 NABO is against this. As a principle, existing navigation should be prioritised over towpath use.
- 2 If it does proceed, we would ask NAG to request CRT to create a waiting area at either end—it is a well used bit of canal, a main route into Birmingham that doesn't have locks, and there are trip boats from Gas Street turn-

ing at Edgbaston. CRT will need to dredge the offside approaches, cut back the vegetation and provide rings or bollards for tying up while waiting.

Adrian Stott comments: 'Although, as a whole, this is a narrow waterway, the W&B was conceived as a broad waterway. The canal company built the summit level, which includes the tunnel, to a broad gauge, but finance was insufficient so it built the locks narrow. It is possible for broad craft such as trip boats to be used on the summit. As a result, the broad gauge should be preserved.'

It is national waterways policy that no new pinch points that cause a reduction in the maximum size of craft will be created and that no reductions in waterway surface be undertaken other than in exceptional circumstance and, if a reduction does take place, new waterway surface of at least the same area should be provided nearby. This is not a sufficiently exceptional situation, moreover, the proposal includes no new surface.

It is not necessary to widen the towpath in order to relieve the bottleneck at Edgbaston, the following options are possible:

- 1 Cyclists could be required to dismount, and walk their bicycles through the tunnel. This would effectively eliminate the safety concerns of their meeting other towpath traffic in the tunnel.
- 2 The railings through the tunnel could be moved closer to the towpath edge. This might effectively widen the towpath by 40cm. There were originally no railings in this tunnel.
- 3 A footpath bypassing the tunnel at ground level, connecting by ramps to the towpath at each end. A route for the path may be available and there is already a zebra crossing on the road above the

tunnel.

It is unreasonable that boat traffic, for which the canal was built, should be inconvenienced for the benefit of other users. Navigation should have the priority. If this proposal were to go ahead, it would be a damaging precedent. It would show that the waterway must accept these consequences in favour of other users.'

Phil Prettyman, of the Historic Narrow Boat Club, commented: 'There are several arguments against this:

- CRT's primary function is as a navigation authority and other concerns should not detract from this.
 - This is an historic structure built for the purpose of navigation.
 - One-way working will be problematic on this stretch as the channel is notoriously shallow all along the pound past the University.
 - Some cyclists already cause problems through the tunnel by travelling far too fast and widening the towpath will make this situation worse.
 - There are more walkers than cyclists and walkers' safety needs to be considered. It would help matters to put half-barriers at each end of the tunnel to force cyclists to dismount.
 - If this proposal goes through, where is the next compromise to navigation going to happen?
- Other comments on waterways websites and social media were rather less restrained.
- CRT has added 'This is the very first stage of consultation to understand what the issues would be if it were to be done and it is certainly not a done deal. At present, there are no approved designs or plans on what will actually be done if it goes ahead—just general ideas on how it could look.'

Edgbaston tunnels
Photo: Roger Kidd via Wikimedia Commons



Roving traders:

Four Counties Fuels

A regular series looking at people who make a living from waterway-based trading. This time, **Brian McGuigan** of Renaissance Canal Carrying writes about deliveries by coal-boat 'Alton' and fuel-boat 'Halsall'.

Websites

www.nbalton.co.uk and
www.fourcountiesfuels.co.uk

Facebook:

Coalboat Alton, Fuel boat
Halsall, Four Counties Fuels

Twitter

@Coalboat
@fuelboathalsall

Instagram

@coalboat_alton
@fuelboat-halsall

Telephone

07791 345004 (Alton)
07491 149149 (Halsall).

As a teenager in the early 1980s, I discovered, and fell in love with, our canals and waterways, especially the old working boats. On a family boating holiday, I saw a pair of boats selling coal and others working on the gravel run. Soon a seed was set in my mind and it became my dream to one day own and work an old narrowboat.

By the 1990s, my then girlfriend, Ann Marie, and I were living aboard our first boat on the BCN. We had proper jobs, but on weekends and holidays we explored the canal system, especially all the nooks and

crannies of the Birmingham network. We gradually became more involved with old working boats, helping out with moving boats for Ellesmere Port Boat Museum and with the British Waterways 'Friends of the Working Boats' project.

We decided to try to buy our own working boats, but for ages it was a case of we couldn't afford the boats that were in good condition and those we could afford were in such poor condition that we would be unable to afford to repair or restore them. So, in the meantime, we worked with other historic narrowboat owners to get as much experience as we could.

Finally we found a butty, St Austell, which we could afford, and enlisted Roger Fuller to begin restoring the boat. Then, in 2006, we bought the big Woolwich motor, Alton, built in 1938, from George Boyle who had restored the boat and was trading on the Peak Forest and Macclesfield Canals.

We continued trading with Alton on four or five days per fortnight, supplying solid fuels and diesel, as well as rope fenders that I'd learned to make. At the same time we both worked at two other jobs to help pay for the boats. Gradually over the next couple of years, we expanded our fuel round to Middlewich and Nantwich. Later, when Chris Johnson of Fenny Fuels retired from carrying, we started to work the area



Roving Traders

from Middlewich to Preston Brook and down the fabulous Anderton Lift to the River Weaver. The following year we teamed up with Ellesmere Port Boat Museum to make regular deliveries of diesel for their boats, as well as solid fuels for the site - seeing a working boat still working helped bring the site alive for visitors.

By now, we worked the business full time and focused on providing a good friendly service, making reliable fuel deliveries either fortnightly or monthly throughout the year. Gradually our business grew organically, with the help of happy customers spreading the word. We also increased the range of products we supplied to include a range of toilet chemicals, fuel additives and Morris oil and greases, as well as basic chandlery such as windlasses, mooring pins and piling hooks and chains.

By 2014 we were increasingly busy and in the winter we started to struggle to meet demand, even after working long hours. So we joined forces with another canal enthusiast, Martin Catterall. After some searching, we purchased the big Northwich motor, Halsall, built in 1936, which had been restored over the previous 20 years by its owners. The first job was to fit the boat with pumps, tanks and equipment, fol-

lowed by a repaint in Grand Union colours and signwritten for our new company 'Four Counties Fuels Ltd.'

Since the summer of 2015, Halsall has traded around the Four Counties Ring, as well as up to Chester and Ellesmere Port, the Trent and Mersey from Middlewich to Preston Brook, and the gorgeous River Weaver. Halsall is mainly skippered by Martin, while Ann Marie and I mainly operate Alton on the Macclesfield and Peak Forest Canals, as well as making road deliveries into Manchester and areas that we cannot reach due to stoppages.

The business has continued to grow steadily, gradually gaining more regular customers who appreciated our reliable, year-round fortnightly or monthly service. We aim to complement and cooperate with other canal traders and canalside businesses, and we now supply fuels and fenders to many boatyards, marinas, chandleries and hire-boat companies on our routes.

We have a real passion for our work and enjoy sharing our way of life via social media including regular photos and updates on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Our latest project is a new website with maps showing our routes and schedules.



Letters to the Editor

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

Oxford improvements

Following the correspondence in NABO News 5/2016 about overgrown vegetation hindering passage on the South Oxford Canal, I can report progress! I joined friends for a New Year cruise from Napton Junction to Fenny Compton and the difference was remarkable and very visible. No more overhanging branches and nothing impeding the towpath edge. Let's hope it's kept in check from now on and not allowed to become a nuisance again. However, I did notice some alarming cracks in Bridge 118!

Helen Huff

Bridgewater problems for shared ownership boats

NABO News has previously mentioned the recent changes to the arrangements for boats visiting the Bridgewater Canal. Alerted by this, I have been attempting for the last three months to obtain information from the Bridgewater Canal Licensing Department, which appears not to be able to explain them. The following information is provided for the guidance of boaters on the licensing page on the Bridgewater Canal website says: 'CRT licence holders may remain on the Bridgewater Canal for periods not exceeding seven consecutive days. CRT craft wishing to extend beyond the 7 day reciprocal arrangement period must obtain a temporary short-term Bridgewater Canal Licence at a cost of £40 for 7 consecutive days. If you wish to obtain a temporary short-term Bridgewater Canal licence please contact the Bridgewater Canal Company on 0161 629 8266.'

But then, buried in a separate, archived 'News' page on the same website is the following news item dated 25 August 2016: 'The change we have brought in means that any return within 28 days from the date of leaving whether leaving after 3 days or 5 days or up to 7 days then a permit will now be required. A 7-day permit is availa-

ble which applies to Bridgewater craft on CRT waters and CRT craft on Bridgewater Canal or a return permit to transit through for a reduced fee of £20 (3-days) is also available and can be purchased on the Bridgewater Canal website or by telephone or from an enforcement officer.' All of this gives rise to various questions of interpretation and, while it may be workable (if expensive) for single-owner craft, it potentially makes considerable difficulties of compliance for a shared ownership boat.

On 31st October, I emailed the Licensing Department seeking some clarifications. Having received no response, I followed this up with a letter (below) to them on 19th November. This too produced nothing by way of reply so, on 12th December, I phoned and spoke with Peter Parkinson. He said they were aware of issues for shared ownership boats arising from their changed reciprocal licensing arrangements and if I would re-send my email to him (which I did that afternoon), he would reply within a few days. Having heard nothing, I phoned again on 13th, 17th and 24th January, each time being promised a call-back which still hasn't come. Finally, I received a written reply at the end of January. The canal company says on its website that 'boaters are welcome along the Bridgewater Canal'. At present, it doesn't feel that way.

Brian Johnson, nb Serenade

Extract of the letter to Bridgewater Canal Licensing Department

I am a member of a shared ownership narrowboat syndicate with 12 shares which is considering relocating our boat to Anderton for the 2017 season. We have studied your website and, I'm sorry to say, have found the licensing rules somewhat confusing and are unsure how best we can ensure compliance. I would be grateful if you could clarify for us the following queries: Is there a time-limit on when a 'return transit' permit can be purchased? For example, an own-

er on a 3-week holiday to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal from Anderton could use the 7-day free allowance outbound and would be returning perhaps 17 or 18 days later. Would that qualify? When calculating the 28 day period before which a free return visit to the Bridgewater is disallowed, in the example above is this measured from the date of leaving the Bridgewater northbound, or from the date leaving it southbound having completed the return journey using your 'return transit' facility?

What would be the situation if owner A spent five or six days on the Bridgewater and then the following week owner B chose to cruise the Cheshire ring, therefore using the Bridgewater in one direction. Would that be a 'return transit' or would this require a 'temporary short term' licence, valid for seven days but only required for a couple of them?

If the seven day free allowance has been already used up by the previous owner and the next owner taking the boat over wishes a two week cruise to the Leeds & Liverpool, clearly a 'temporary short term licence' would be required for the outward voyage. What would be the situation for the return trip? Would this qualify as a 'return transit' or would another 'temporary short term' licence be needed? In this scenario £80 seems incredibly expensive for passages of the Bridgewater that would probably take only two days in total.

It will be a challenge for us to keep track of where, and on what dates, eleven fellow-owners have been and it is conceivable someone will realise that a 'temporary short term' licence is required only when taking over the boat on a Saturday afternoon. Is it possible to obtain the permit by phone then, or on the following Sunday morning?

Unfortunately, I could find no information on your website regarding licences with longer validity as an alternative to the piecemeal approach, as above. Is there any option for a boat licensed with CRT to have a Bridgewater add-on for say, six or twelve months? If so, what would be the cost?

In addition, if I understand your website correctly a 'return transit' permit would be required for the transit back if an owner, during the course of a week's boating from Anderton went to, say Wigan having left the Bridgewater Canal af-

ter a couple of days on the outward journey. However, if the owner chose to spend the entire week on the Bridgewater going no further than Manchester Castlefield that would be covered by the reciprocal CRT agreement, (provided the boat had not been on Bridgewater waters for the previous 28 days). It does seem strange that payment would seem to be necessary in the first of these two instances, given that the time the boat would have spent on the Bridgewater Canal within the week would be less. I would be grateful for your response.

Reply from the Bridgewater Canal Company

We intend to clarify the points you have raised within a new reciprocal arrangement. However until a new arrangement is made between CRT and Bridgewater Canal Co., then all visiting boats, whether shared, hotel or trade etc. must obey the current rules. These rules are displayed on signs at the entrances to the Bridgewater Canal. These rules have also been published within the Waterways World editorial and are available on the Bridgewater Canal website. For the avoidance of doubt a summary of the rules are; a visiting CRT craft has 7 days free navigation on the Bridgewater Canal. If a visiting craft returns to the Bridgewater Canal within 28 days of leaving it, then the person in control of the craft at that time must purchase either a 7-day permit at £40 or a 3-day return permit at £20. At present, all boats, including shared ownership, should adhere to the rules.

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.



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