



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 5 October 2017



SPEEDING ON THE TOWPATH

INSTALLING SOLAR POWER

**ADVENTURES ON THE
HUDDERSFIELD NARROW**

**LICENSING CONSULTATION
UPDATE**



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Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images in JPEG format please. Please email or post your contributions by **October 21st 2017**. Our email address is nabonews@nabo.org.uk.



Cover photo

This month's cover photo is from CRT, abseiling on the Anderton Lift during recent maintenance.

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

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



NABO Council held its first teleconference meeting in September and deemed it sufficiently successful to be worth repeating next year. These meetings will be listed in NABO News and if you would like to join in, please let the Hon. Sec. know in good time and he will send you the access telephone number. Staying

Consultations, towpath cycling, veg management

Editor Peter Fellows has much for members to comment on



"Doctor Livingstone I presume?" Your intrepid editor explores the jungle that is the Trent and Mersey near Middlewich

with NABO business, I have included in this issue nomination papers for the 2018 Council to be elected at the AGM in November, which will be at the Wolverhampton Boat Club (WV8 1RS). The AGM will follow the same format as last year, with Council reports and elections in the morning and an open meeting after lunch. Please let the Hon. Sec. have any topics that you would like to discuss and I hope we will see you there.

There has been a lot happening on the waterways since the last issue in the summer, with the CRT licensing consultation still in progress, reviewed by Mark Tizard, and about to reach Stage 3. CRT will contact all licence holders for their views, so please make sure to have your say. David Fletcher reports on his enjoyable first visit to the Huddersfield Narrow Canal in convoy as part of a 'Roving Rally'. The technical article in this issue is on installing solar panels, with contributions from four of the council members.

After another 'accident' involving speeding towpath cyclists, I'm putting out a call to gather evidence that can be used to actually do something about this menace. And for the first time, I've written a letter to myself, as Editor, on the varying standards to which vegetation is managed by the different CRT waterway areas. Mike Rodd reports on developments on the Mon & Brec and K&A in his regional rep's report.

We also have a heartening account of a quick-thinking boater who prevented a tragedy in a lock on the Leeds & Liverpool Bank Newton flight. Finally, NABO News has been taken by the British Library as reference material for several years, and it is pleasing to hear that the National Library of France also now wants to hold it as source material for researchers.



In the July issue, I expressed a desire that the sun we had in June would be extended, but we have had one of the worst Augusts on record for cloud, rain and cold weather. We have had our stove lit and we are still awaiting the chance of an Indian summer. I have been envious of those able to travel, as there seems to have been plenty of sunshine elsewhere. It's been so bad that we have had to run the engine instead of using our solar panel to charge the batteries sufficiently.

The Partnerships have, or are having, their AGMs and I managed to get to the Manchester, Pennine and Potteries one, which they call a 'Shout Out'. It was Death by Power Point, but there were a couple of interesting presentations: one from a Stoke Councillor about Stoke-on-Trent's bid to be City of Culture in 2021. Apparently, it is to be short-listed and they have the canals as a central theme. As was pointed out though, and this applies to most city canals, there is a need to address the disconnect between boaters and the local population—and here I feel CRT is missing a trick. It wants local communities to get involved in maintaining canals etc. but frequently forgets the floating community. It is willing to use us for free advice and consultation to tick boxes but ignores us when planning local events. One instance, not far from me in Whaley Bridge, is the Transshipment Shed. Here is a unique opportunity to combine boat- and land-traders, boaters and the local community, but the consultation, held three years ago, was shelved and ignored—although I believe it might have made a reappearance. They had not even thought about the unique selling point that they have. There should also be a central point on the CRT website where all the volunteering opportunities for

towpath tidy-ups etc. are listed, so you can check if you are travelling to an area and want to join in. This could also be used by the different groups on separate lengths of the same canal to coordinate work, pool resources and experience, for work such as fence repairs and hedge-laying. We talked about such a resource in the Manchester, Pennine and Potteries AGM, but it remains to be seen whether the will is there nationally to make it work.

Getting to know you

Stella Ridgway is concerned about the disconnect between boaters and local communities.

To return to the disconnect between boaters and the local community, you may have seen the recent video, picked up in the national tabloids, of Lock 66 at Failsworth on the Rochdale Canal. Local youths seemed to think it would be funny to jump on boat gunwales, throw stones and generally make nuisances of themselves. While this is the exception rather than the rule, I am sure there are many of us who have had similar experiences on most city canals. Again it is about getting CRT and local councils to address the disconnect, where those who see people on boats as having something they cannot even aspire to.

We have noticed that hire-boats often have two families on board, because the cost of hiring in peak season is so high, and therefore out

of reach for most people. We have also noticed the local day-boat has been out every day in the holidays with families on board—perhaps this is the way that boating will go in the future, with more day hire-boats or short-stay cruises.

The age profile of boaters is something that CRT and boating organisations are concerned about. If you look at the average age of the London boating community, compared with boaters in the rest of the country, it must be at least 15 to 20 years younger—and the way that they organise their community via social media is wondrous and a credit to them.

The London Mooring Strategy has also been a good example of the way boating organisations can work with CRT to find solutions, and it would be nice if this was reciprocated with CRT employees getting more involved with boating and boaters.

I noticed that CRT is finally dredging on the Macclesfield Canal summit pound. This is the new policy of looking to see where the largest

volume of complaints over lack of dredging arises and then addressing them. So please do not hesitate to phone, tweet or message CRT about high levels of mud, or where a line of sight at bridges or bends is poor, as it appears they might respond. CRT is also contacting all boaters over the licence consultation and I encourage all members to take part.

From October, our moorings on the Upper Peak Forest are to be managed by the local marina, and I know of one other on the Leeds & Liverpool that CRT has outsourced. I don't get any sense of the advantages that this has for CRT or for the marina, other than if boats are away for extended periods, will there be a charge for overnight stays? Watch this space and let us know if you come across any other outsourcing.

Finally, did you know that for some years this magazine has been kept as a reference source by the British, Scottish, Irish and Welsh National Libraries and it is now being taken by the French National Library? A true accolade to NABO and our members.



This man is ready to dredge your favourite canal
Photo: CRT

Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at September's Council meeting

I'd already set my coordinates for Wolverhampton Boat Club to attend the September meeting, when, at the last minute, not enough members could attend and NABO decided to have its first teleconference Council meeting. A small panic as I reset the Fly-Nav for the nearest member to listen in on his speaker-phone.

Seven Council members started off by revisiting the potential for trouble from canoeists in locks and tunnels. Short tunnels with a clear line of sight are not a problem, but others, like Chirk, and a recent incident at Foulridge, where a hire-boat dawdled through and emerged after the entrance traffic light had changed to green, need better organisation and control if canoeists use them. Boaters beware: it is your responsibility not to squash canoeists; so report any incidents to CRT and let NABO know so it can see the extent of the problem.

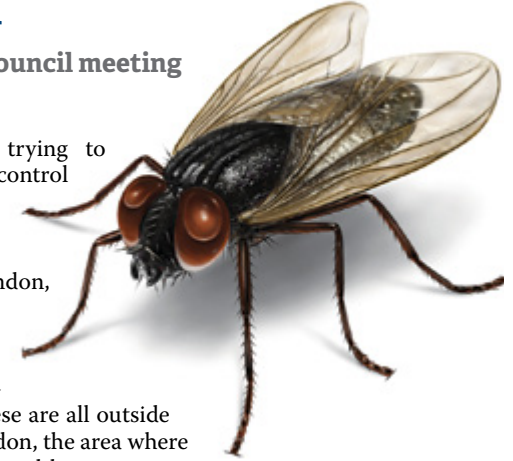
The third stage of CRT's licence review is about to happen, with boaters getting an email asking for their views on recommendations from the first two stages. There seems to be little consensus so far, except for licensing boats by their area rather than length, as the EA does on the Thames (but not its other rivers). Council members noted the increase in numbers of 13-foot wide-beams, especially on the Southern Grand Union, which is causing problems for boats to pass and bank damage as they do not fit the profile of the canal.

CRT is trying to get more control over the mooring congestion in London, with new 14-day moorings and facilities.

But these are all outside central London, the area where most liveaboard boaters want to live, and are nowhere near enough. In fact, there will be a reduction in 14-day moorings in central London. (Lack of) consistency in vegetation management is back on the agenda: CRT wants a national policy but contract agreements with Fountains are made by the regions. Because neither the contractors nor CRT go boating, they do not know where there are line of sight problems caused by overgrown vegetation and they are totally dependent on complaints from boaters. So, if you know of places where this is creating a danger, report it.

Fewer young families are taking hire-boating holidays, the traditional route for many people into boat ownership. Facilities on hire-boats now resemble hotel rooms, but with a six-berth costing £3000 per week or more, compared to a week in, say, Portugal for less than £100 per person, the reason is not hard to see. Perhaps it's time for a return of some cheap, basic, camping boats for hire?

Byeeee—and hope to see you at the November AGM in Wolverhampton.



NABO calendar 2017
Council Meetings in 2017:
October 14th, November 11th (includes AGM).

Council meetings are held at boat clubs in the Midlands area. Both the October meeting and the AGM will be held at the Wolverhampton Boat Club, Barnhurst Lane, Bilbrook, Wolverhampton, WV8 1RS (by boat, on the Shropshire Union, about one mile up from Atherley Junction). Members are welcome to attend Council meetings; please just let the Secretary or Chairman know in advance (contact details inside cover).

Incident reporting

To report an incident to CRT, its website says: 'you can either telephone details of the incident to 0303 0404040, or email customer.services@canalrivertrust.org.uk, attaching the completed form below if possible.'

The form cannot be completed online, but must be downloaded as a PDF, the 'Fill & sign' function must be activated to fill it in, then saved and emailed to CRT as an attachment. A NABO Council member asked CRT whether it could be completed on a tablet and returned, or completed online. The reply was: "you can email the details to us and we'll put you in touch with the local team. Unfortunately, that's the only format".

The Council member commented: "This is not a customer-friendly solution. From CRT's perspective, I would assume it wants to have a standard reporting process so that all incidents can be recorded and acted upon if necessary. I would imagine incidents currently go unreported if boaters realise that they are unable to report it using the existing format. If an email is sent in, is it formally recorded as an incident? If it's not formally logged, the incident did not occur." The 'Incident Reporting Form' can be downloaded from canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/library/1180.pdf

Winter moorings

CRT's winter moorings will be available this year from 1st November to 16th March 2018, finishing in time for the Easter holiday period. Boaters will be able to book the sites in increments of one month or two weeks in March 2018.

The moorings are divided into four price bands according to each site's location and facilities, with most mooring prices held at 2016/17 levels.

Some popular sites have increased in price and less popular sites have had a price cut in response to the high or low levels of demand last year. The highest price band has increased by 50p per metre per month to £15.50 (a 3.5% rise).

Facilities have been improved at a couple of sites and this is reflected in the pricing.

Boaters have been able to view sites on the CRT website since the beginning of September and will be able to make a booking from 6 am on 2nd October through the CRT boat licensing site at licensing.canalrivertrust.org.uk/account/register.

A list of the sites and prices can be found at canalrivertrust.org.uk/winter-moorings and further information is available from CRT Customer Services on 0303 0404040 or by email at wintermoorings@canalrivertrust.org.uk.

Daventry Arm update

Despite stories last year of local demonstrations against the canal (see Issue 3 July 2016), in July this year, Daventry District Council approved funding of up to £300,000 to prepare a business plan for the first phase of the Daventry Canal Arm. The plan will then go back to the Council for final approval of the £8.71 million required for the scheme. The first phase is for a three-quarter mile canal, mooring basin and footbridge.

The proposed junction with the main line is about three quarters of a mile east of Braunston Tunnel. After half a mile from the junction, it will climb through two narrow locks and then a further four as it approaches Daventry Reservoir.

Depending on the results of a feasibility study, an inclined plane boat-lift could replace the four locks, providing a major tourist attraction for the town. The proposed inclined plane would have a longitudinal design, inline with the canal, as opposed to the sideways plane at Foxton. The canal will then skirt the east and south sides of Daventry Reservoir to a terminus basin not far from the town centre.

A possible 2nd phase is for the canal to continue through a navigable culvert under the A425, already in place, to the site of a proposed

major 'Waterspace regeneration' development with offices, health centre, hotel, restaurants and bars. The final half-mile of canal with two basins would form the centrepiece of the development.

A separate development of 4000 new houses will be built on fields to the East of Daventry Country Park. The canal arm will act as a buffer zone between the Country Park and the new housing and also become an extension to the park, providing wildlife habitats and new recreational space for residents, workers and visitors.

It is hoped that the Waterspace developers will fund the final length as part of a planning agreement. The completed arm will be just under two miles long. It is anticipated that construction of the first phase could start in April 2019 and might be completed within two years.

<http://goo.gl/8Ex8s4>

<http://goo.gl/xj9XMW>



Boater to the rescue

another incident at Bank Newton, this time with a good outcome.

Trevor and Jenny Riley-Owen had travelled down Bank Newton Locks on the Leeds & Liverpool canal and, when Trevor walked to the rubbish bin by the bottom lock, he realised that an elderly couple on a hire-boat in the lock were in serious trouble and sinking fast. They had come into the lock going up, the boat had become stuck on a lip in the back corner and, when the wife opened the paddles to let in water, only the bow came up—so the man at the stern was quickly under water. Trevor immediately closed the paddles, but the boat had taken on too much water and was starting to roll over. He roped it to try and stabilise it and phoned 999. The woman was on the bank, but her husband, who was 80 years old and completely deaf, her son and their Labrador were stuck inside, where the dog was floating around. They were too far down in the lock for bystanders to get them out, but two fire engines from Skipton arrived quickly and the firemen stabilised the boat by pumping out water. But it was ¾ hour before they were able to rescue the men and the dog. If it hadn't been for Trevor's quick thinking, the outcome could have been dreadful: the son may have been able to scramble onto the roof of the boat, but the old man and his dog couldn't. If he hadn't stopped the lock filling and roped the boat as soon as he did, they could have drowned.

From Jenny Riley-Owen on Facebook at [facebook.com/jenny.owen.52035/posts/875355742640770](https://www.facebook.com/jenny.owen.52035/posts/875355742640770)



Sir Terry Frost
Photo: Estate of Sir Terry Frost

Some of the inscriptions on the iron plaques:

Terry's life was fired in a creative furnace
This Leamington lad made street art
Art sustained him whilst a prisoner of war
The camp gave him time to observe and draw
He sought natural colours to inspire him
Combed Cornish moors, collecting yellows
Spontaneity gave his work authority
He thought creatively and painted intuitively
He harnessed the power of the familiar,
Enjoying every mark and every gesture
He sent circles spinning with spiral energy
And explored black's infinite diversity



Art sustained him whilst a prisoner of war.
The camp gave him time to observe and to draw.

A touch of Frost

Helen Hutt spots a new addition to the waterfront in Leamington Spa

The Grand Union runs through the unglamorous 'bottom end' of Leamington Spa but old industrial buildings are gradually being replaced by—you guessed it—blocks of student apartments. Alongside the latest, on the other side of Bridge 40 from the main visitor moorings, is a small open space dedicated to an artistic son of the town. So new is it that the protective fencing panels had been taken down but not taken away when I spotted it in early September.

The Terry Frost space has a couple of benches, a little garden, a water point (hooray! a first for Leamington) and large iron plaques set into the pavement commemorating one of Britain's foremost abstract artists.

Born in the town in 1915, young Terence was put to work in a bicycle repair shop, aged 14, and then moved to the Armstrong Whitworth factory in Coventry, where he painted the roundels on RAF planes. A few years later he became a prisoner of war in Stalag383 and it was here that he started to create art. After the war he attended art school, taught in a variety of colleges and universities and finally settled in Newlyn, Cornwall, where his most famous artworks were produced. Knighted in 1998 ("not bad for someone who had started out fixing punctures" said the Guardian's obituary), Sir Terry died in 2003. And now Leamington has reclaimed him as one of their own.

North East Waterways

Howard Anguish

I have booked in to attend the September NE Waterway forum and I have also attended a couple of local waterway events—a summer fête at the Driffield Canal and the opening of a renovated lock on the Pocklington Canal, which is part of a project to extend the navigable section by two miles, and which should be completed next year.



Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

Kennet and Avon

Mike Rodd

On the Kennet and Avon, we have continued to have a series of lock closures, especially on the Crofton flight. But to those who bother to understand the problem, this it is not actually CRT's fault for a change! Wilton Waters, an artificial lake just across from the Crofton pumping station, feeds (via the pumping station) water to the summit, and this then goes in both directions, as the K&A's primary source of water. On the Eastern side, this is then supplemented essentially by the River Kennet at Newbury



Wilton Water: Reservoir for the K and A
Photo: Christine Johnstone

(and by a few other minor streams) and at the Western end, at Claverton, additional water is pumped up from the Avon. Of course, the canal's water levels are also greatly assisted by the various back-pumping schemes—although the one at Bradford-on-Avon does continue to have its own problems. But the real issue presently is that Wilton Water is almost completely dependent on water from the underground aquifers, which are now lower than in many years.

Otherwise, the number of wide-beams on the K&A continues to increase at an alarming level. However, CRT's CC enforcement is seemingly having good effects and most boats are regularly moving. On a personal note, being responsible for the K&A Canal Trust's trip boat at Hungerford, I have to say that the support we get from CRT is exemplary. For example, a recent evening lock failure was sorted out early the very next morning, and a request to change proposed winter works was met without any problem. Thank you Mark Evans and his great team!

K&A closed for five months

The EA will carry out restoration work to Blakes Lock from 30th October to 23rd March 2018, repairing lock gates and chamber walls. Blakes Lock is located beyond the eastern end of the K&A, where the River Kennet flows into the Thames. It will not be possible to join or leave the River Thames while the work is underway. For further information, see www.gov.uk/river-thames-conditions-closures-restrictions-and-lock-closures or write to riverthames@environment-agency.gov.uk

Bike-watch

Let's actually do something about speeding towpath cyclists, says Peter Fellows



Despite CRT's 'sleeping policeman' campaign to slow down speeding cyclists in London (did anyone really believe that they would take any notice?), there continue to be reports of injuries to people, pets and wildlife—not just in conurbations, but anywhere where some cyclists regard the towpath as a racetrack or, at least, a fast route to work. To be clear, NABO has no problem with people cycling on towpaths; many members have a bike on board for shopping or lock-wheeling. The problem is the attitude of some (mainly lycra-clad men and women in their 20s and 30s), who have no regard for other towpath users, or for any unfortunate animal who happens to find itself in their path. The latest in a long litany of injuries and deaths to pets on towpaths this time concerns a family of swans, as reported by Shane Finney on the London Boaters Group Facebook page:

"The swans by Sainsbury's at

*Kensall: First, sorry for the rant and secondly, to my fellow boaters, sorry for the bout of shouting and swearing around 6.50pm today. I was walking along the towpath from Sainsbury's just after the humpback bridge and, as I passed the swans, I was overtaken by a cyclist coming from behind me, and two cyclists were coming towards me, at speed, on the blind bend. As the first of the two put on his brakes to prevent a collision with the cyclist behind me, the second cyclist decided to swerve into the family of swans, clipping a cygnet before actually running over the male swan. Forgive the language, but my bellows of "you f***** idiot" were not addressed at fellow boaters, but to the cyclist, who stated it wasn't his fault because, when cycling at high speed on the towpath, he wasn't watching where he was going; he was watching the cyclist in front.*

The male swan is currently dazed and confused and I've been on the phone to the RSPCA to report the incident and check to see if someone can come and take a look at him, as he has a family of seven cygnets. I fear, even without any physical damage to the male swan, damage may have been done, as pedestrians and cyclists are now being rounded on and hissed at by the whole family.

The cyclist stuck around for all of five minutes but, unsurprisingly, refused to give his name or contact details. He was genuinely shocked that he was on a towpath and seemed under the impression that the new surfacing was there to allow for faster cycling. He denied all knowledge of knowing the swans rest here

day and night and seemed under the impression that general cycling proficiency does not apply on a towpath. He said he felt terrible, but not terrible enough to do anything about the situation, or to hang around. As he cycled off, at speed again, he said he was on the phone to the RSPCA, but when I spoke to them, the incident had not been reported.

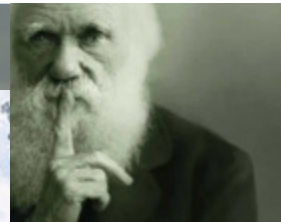
To the London Mooring Ranger and the other CRT staff: it would appear that your recent 'Share the Space, Drop your Pace' activity in this location has not worked. How do I ensure that this incident can be properly recorded as a collision, to go into your statistics AND what can the Trust actually do to prevent incidents like this happening more and more? Last year my dog was hit on the hip by a speeding cyclist at Clapton. When I first arrived in this area, you guys were doing the campaign outside Sainsbury's. I offered to

volunteer the following week, but was not asked for any details, or actively encouraged to sign up anywhere or to donate time. So what is the Trust actively doing to engage boaters on the towpath near cycling hotspots to get them involved in activities to raise awareness?"

If NABO members let me, as Editor, know of all such incidents, whether they involve people, pets or wildlife, I will collate them for CRT (or the EA if the incidents took place on its waterways). I need the date, precise location and a summary of what happened. With many members owning smartphones, a photo may also help.

We can then press for a greater physical presence at known hotspots to slow these cyclists down and, although I am not a lawyer, I would have thought that these 'accidents' are in fact crimes that ought to be prosecuted if people are injured.

What could possibly go wrong?



The Darwin Awards salute the improvement of the human gene pool by honouring those who accidentally remove themselves from it. www.darwinawards.com

From moored like a tw@t

STAIRWAY TO THE STARS



Cruising through Slaithwaite. Photo Val Fletcher

David Fletcher takes a trip along the Huddersfield Narrow Canal

Our narrowboat has been almost everywhere a 70-footer can go, but one place she had never been to was Huddersfield. We put that right this year. Val and I visited Marsden and Huddersfield by road in the spring, liked what we saw, and when we heard about an organised event this summer it became a must do.

There are only about 500 passages a year on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal (HNC)—a lot of them from Shires Cruisers doing a ring—and the Huddersfield Canal Society invited visiting boaters to join the first ‘Pennine Explorer Cruise’ for seven days in June and July. They wanted to run an event to encourage use by those who have yet to visit this waterway—that’s us! With the support of CRT and the Calder Navigation Society, the cruise was set up for 12 boats, including two NABO families, to make the passage in convoy. This ‘Roving Rally’ was intended to encourage boat crews from elsewhere to enjoy the magnificent scenery with help from volunteer lock-winders. A programme of organised evening events added to the fun.

We started at Portland Basin at the junction of the Ashton and Peak Forest canals, and cruised through the major towns of Stalybridge, Mossley, Diggle, Marsden, Slaithwaite, Milnsbridge and Huddersfield, before the shorter boats finished at Mirfield. The full-length boats had to turn around and come back as the Huddersfield Broad and the Aire and Calder locks are not long enough. The HNC is only about 20 miles long, the rub being the 74 narrow locks which can take 70’ craft with a maximum width of 6’10”. It is really two 10-mile flights of locks, up to the summit and tunnel and then down to Huddersfield. Most of the pounds are short and traditional lock-winding skills are really needed to conserve water and keep the mud wet. With the convoy

Restoration

After 27 years of campaigning and restoration, the canal reopened in 2001 when it again became one of three Pennine crossings; the others being the Rochdale and the Leeds and Liverpool. During the period when the canal was closed, several lengths were culverted and infilled, and in some cases built over. Over the course of the restoration project, the vast majority of the obliterated line became available to be opened out again and the canal remains substantially on the old alignment. The sections through Stalybridge and Slaithwaite are really though the centres of the towns. The canal truly scales the Pennines and its summit pound is the highest stretch of canal in Britain.

of 12, this really tested the water supply, but we all got through once we followed instructions to keep two locks apart so that water was used again and not wasted. The transit of Standedge Tunnel is a special 5 km/two-hour challenge and a passage that many boats cannot make because of the tumblehome of the cabin and air draft on pigeon boxes and the like. CRT gauges boats before entry to make sure that they have a chance, but a lot is down to a steady hand on the tiller and patience. CRT provides a knowledgeable pilot who is very useful to anticipate the many twists and turns and changes to the tunnel profile. For our convoy of 12 boats, passing in one day is thought to be an all-time record. And there was no significant damage to the boats, only a few rubs here and there.

So what is all the fuss about? The canal is hard work—12ft deep locks are the norm—and shallow, but perfectly do-able even in a deep draughted boat, taking time if the crew is limited. Once away from the Manchester sprawl the countryside is spectacular. No peering over hedges to see what is beyond, the hills are just there and all around. The valleys are full of heritage from the mill and mining days, with many of the mills now renovated and in use again for factory, retail and residential use. The canal structures are heavily built of local stone with quirky features and interesting steps. The locals are all friendly; many said how pleased they were to see so many boats moving, and the pubs and local beers are excellent. The only real moorings are in or near to the towns, mainly because most of the pounds are too short to consider stopping. This is not a canal to try and moor up in the countryside for a few days. The valley is well served with buses and trains running between the cities and beyond. The towpath is heavily used by walkers; much more than many canals. The 74 locks fall neatly into about 10 per day, which is what we did on both passages, but for the hard core with energetic crews, it can all be done in a couple of days, plus one for the booked tunnel passage. The shore crew will mostly be walking the 20 miles from Manchester to Huddersfield, it’s hardly worth getting back on board. The boat traffic is very light. There is no point in waiting before turning a lock, most likely nobody is coming.

So the Explorer cruise was a great trip, well organised with the HNC well worth a visit. The plan is to do it again, but maybe not every year. If you are considering taking your boat there, have a look at the HCS website as there is lots of information, and if you are curious about Standedge tunnel, there are videos of the passage on Youtube. Don’t be put off, it’s a great trip. And it needs to be used!



Gathering at Marsden after a record passage in a day



In Standedge Tunnel



Diggle Locks West side. All photos Val Fletcher

Come and join us ...

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

Nominations must reach us by
4th October 2017

Please send the General Secretary
any **Resolutions** you wish put
before the AGM meeting with the
names of proposer and seconder
by September 28th.

Please send to:
gen.sec@nabo.org.uk
or by post to;
RICHARD CARPENTER,
PO Box 104, Leyland
PR25 9AN

The NABO AGM is on Saturday
November 11th at the
Wolverhampton Boat Club,
Barnhurst Lane, Bilbrook,
Wolverhampton, WV8 1RS (by boat
it is on the Shropshire Union Canal,
about one mile up from Autherley
Junction). We will start at 10.30
am with the AGM formal business,
followed by a presentation and dis-
cussion. After a light lunch, there
will be a meeting of the new Council,
to which NABO members are wel-
come.

Call for new blood

This is a golden opportunity to in-
troduce new ideas, expertise and
thinking to NABO. Please consider
putting yourself up for election at
the November AGM; we would par-
ticularly like to find someone who
can offer ideas and advice on recruit-
ing new (and younger) members, so

if this is you, don't be shy—let us
know. The Council meets around seven
times per year and the work is re-
warding and interesting, giving an
in-depth insight into what is really
happening on (and to) our water-
ways. There are few formalities and
you can choose how much or little
you are able to contribute—either
from the comfort of your home or
out and about at meetings.

Please complete the nomination
form in this issue, photocopy it if you
would rather keep your NABO News
intact, and then return it to Richard
Carpenter, General Secretary, by 4th
October. If you don't have anyone to
propose and second you, just phone
one of the Council members and
we can sort that out. Please use the
space on the nomination form for
necessary declarations or include
them on an attached sheet.

In relation to nominations, the NABO Constitution states:-

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

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

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

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

Nomination form for the Nabo Council

Nominee

Name

Address:

Tel:

Email:

Boat name:

Signature and Date:

Proposer*

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Secunder

Name:

Address:

Tel:

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

Any declarations required by the Constitution:

Send to: RICHARD CARPENTER, PO Box 104, Leyland, PR25 9AN to arrive by October 4th 2017

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

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

TECHIE'S



CORNER

Aspects of boat design, construction, equipment, facilities or maintenance



Solar solutions

Peter Fellows takes a look at the equipment on offer and Stella Ridgway, Mike Rodd and Helen Hutt recount their experiences of using solar panels.

free energy from sunlight. Their use for charging domestic batteries without using the main engine means we now see many boats with the familiar panels on their roofs.

Deciding what you need

The use of solar power has become more and more popular over recent years, driven by a wider choice of cheaper and more efficient solar panels and, of course, a desire to make use of the

There are three components to a solar power system: the panel(s), a controller and your batteries. To select the most appropriate components from the wide range of equipment on offer, it is important

POWER AUDIT : SAMPLE CALCULATION

Usage: You have a 12V fridge running permanently, use LED lighting for five hours per day, and watch TV or DVDs via an inverter for four hours per day. Other equipment, such as lights and pumps, are used intermittently. The energy audit shows the total electricity consumption is 90Ah per 24 hours.

Batteries: You have four 110Ah domestic batteries—with separate starter and bow-thruster batteries that are not used while moored and are recharged by the engine. The domestic batteries have a usable capacity of about a half of their rated capacity, so they will provide (4 x 110/2 =) 220Ah.

Calculation: This means that, after a day, only (220 – 90 =) 130Ah would be available to use, so the batteries are likely to become flat approximately half way through the second day that you are moored. To fully recharge the batteries during the day using only solar panels, a system that delivers ~100Ah per day is needed, although a smaller output, perhaps 60Ah, would partially recharge the batteries and extend the time that you can moor by an extra day. Remember though, that the solar panel output varies considerably according to the amount of sunlight, with winter rates as much as ten times lower than summer rates—e.g. a panel rated as 100W will typically give an output of up to 20Ah a day in summer but only 2Ah a day in winter.



TYPE OF PANEL	ADVANTAGES	LIMITATIONS
Monocrystalline	High efficiency, higher voltage, require less space, longest lasting, up to 25 year warranties* available as rigid or flexible panels.	Most expensive, a cell failure can substantially reduce output, partial shading more likely to cause drop in output.
Polycrystalline	Moderate cost, lower heat tolerance, available as rigid or flexible panels.	Lower efficiency means larger panels are needed for a given output.
Amorphous	Flexible, can be self-adhesive, lower cost, will continue to work if part is damaged, can produce electricity in low-light conditions.	Lowest efficiency, generally lower voltage output, less effective in direct sunlight

that you first assess how much power you use, the Power Audit. This depends in part on what you want the electricity for: if you only want to keep the batteries topped up when the boat is not in use, a single small panel and a simple controller will be adequate; whereas if you want to spend long periods moored up off-grid without running the engine, an array of panels and a more sophisticated controller will be needed possibly supplemented by wind-generated power in suitable areas.

For most boaters, equipment that uses power includes lights, pumps, device charging, fridge, computer or TV, washing machines. Solar is most applicable to long-term medium consumers, for example, the fridge in summer, lighting, pumps, TV and phone charging. High power devices like washing machines, tumble dryers and tools are still best served by generators or high-output engine alternators with a powerful inverter. There are also enormous benefits to keeping a trickle charge into your batteries when you are not on the boat.

Typically, over a 24 hour period the low power devices on a boat will use 20-30 Amp hours (Ah). A 12V fridge will use 20-40Ah, a TV or computer for 4 hours 20Ah. If you keep your inverter permanently on,

it may use 10Ah over the course of a day.

So it is important to do a power audit of the power that you use (or may use in future), using one of the audit tools that are available online, e.g. www.waterwaysworld.com/advice/audit.cgi or the back of an envelope.

Once you know how much power you are likely to use each day, a second question concerns your cruising pattern. If you move the boat each day, for say three or four hours, the batteries are likely to be recharged without any input from solar panels. However, if you want to moor up for a few days and not use the engine, the amount of time before your batteries become discharged depends on their capacity, the amount of power you use and the amount of power supplied by the panels, see the panel for an example. The question of 'how much' solar is one that attracts much discussion and is a trade-off between budget, roof space, intended usage and desired 'payback' times. Typical figures for liveaboards are between 250-500W and a simple 50-80W panel will be sufficient to condition the batteries of a leisure boat.

Types of solar panels

There are three main types of solar panel consisting of monocrystalline

Types of solar panels, their advantages and limitations

*warranties are typically given as when the panel drops to 80% of its rated output.

Further information on selection and installation of solar panels

www.leadingedgepower.com/shop/help-advice-faq/help-with-solar-panels/solar-panel-installation-guide.html

www.thefitoutpontoon.co.uk/batteries/power-audits

livingonanarrowboat.co.uk/living-on-a-narrowboat-articles/narrowboat-solar-power

www.canalnarrowboat.co.uk/solar-power

www.runbythesun.co.uk

www.bimblesolar.co.uk

www.onboardsolar.co.uk

cells, polycrystalline cells or amorphous panels—which embrace a number of different technologies. A summary of their relative advantages and limitations is shown in the table above. Monocrystalline can be identified by a regular darker appearance whereas polycrystalline have a characteristic mottled blue appearance. The panels are available in different sizes, with correspondingly different outputs, from, for example, a 337 x 205mm polycrystalline panel with a 10W output, to a 1580 x 810mm monocrystalline panel with a 200W output. The cost varies widely, from \approx £20 for a small battery conditioning panel to \approx £2-300 for larger flexible ones. It is worth investigating second hand panels from major solar installations such as those offered by Bimble Solar where you can get a 200W panel for £90. The set of panels on your roof is referred to as an 'array'.



An array of monocrystalline panels
Photo: www.onboardsolar.co.uk



Flexible amorphous panels
Photo: www.runbythesun.co.uk

Mounting the panels

There are two ways in which panels can be mounted on the roof of the boat (or any other suitable surface): either directly or in a frame. Flexible and semi-flexible panels can be mounted directly on the roof. As these panels are \approx 2.5–4mm thick, they do not protrude and cannot catch on overhanging branches or snag ropes. They may be walked on, but they can be damaged if a heavy object, such as a mooring hammer or windlass, is dropped on them. Rigid panels are \approx 18–35mm thick and much heavier than (semi) flexible types and generally framed in aluminium which is an ideal place to mount fixings. The frames can be either permanently fixed or adjustable to face the sun. Some frames are mounted directly on the roof surface, whereas others are raised on mounts to allow free flow of air underneath them.

The advantage of the latter is that heat generated by the solar array is removed more readily, keeping the panel cool and increasing its efficiency. The power output from the panel falls as it gets hotter. Heat can be conducted away through the metal boat roof or into the air from the upper surface of direct-mounted panels, but heat is lost more quickly if air is allowed to flow

over both sides of raised framed panels. Depending on the height above the roof, the disadvantages of raised panels are snagging ropes and branches, and reduced clearance for low bridges and some tunnels.

If you don't want to drill into your roof neodymium magnetic feet are available or ABS corners you can glue.

Positioning panels

The position of panels on the roof should be carefully chosen so that they receive the maximum sunlight, without shadows cast by a chimney, mushroom vent, gangplank etc. and in a place where ropes are not left on them—all of which will significantly reduce their output.

Flexible panels are the simplest to fix, being glued in place on a clean roof using an marine sealant that is designed for outdoor use and retains some flexibility but not silicone sealant. When gluing the panel, apply adhesive to the roof to give full coverage of the panel area and then position it and weigh it down around the edges to prevent them lifting until the adhesive has set. Then remove any excess adhesive from around the panel and apply a sealant bead to prevent any water getting underneath.

When positioning raised framed panels, ensure that the fixing points are located away from roof bearers if possible. The panel mounts should be fixed to the roof by drilling and tapping for fixing with machine screws. Use M6 screws with a taper tap in a 5mm hole using lots of oil. Framed panels are substantial and require solid fixing.

After drilling through the roof, apply anti-rust treatment to the holes and then fix the mounts. If the metal used for the mount is dissimilar to steel, insert a small plastic block, such as nylon or high density poly-

ethylene, between the roof and the mount to reduce the risk of future corrosion problems. Alternatively use a quality marine glue or magnetic mounts with threaded inserts in conjunction with M6 screws.

Controllers

There are two types of charge controllers that are connected between the solar panels and the battery bank: Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) and Maximum Power Point Tracking (MPPT) controllers.

The simple PWM controller applies full current from the panels to charge the batteries and then reduces the current as the batteries approach full charge by switching the supply on and off at high speed, the 'pulse'. The panels need to be matched to the batteries, e.g. 'suitable for 12V' or 'suitable for 24V'. They range from the most simple units with no meter to programmable four-stage controllers with settings for different types of battery.

MPPT controllers are more sophisticated. The controller monitors the voltage, the maximum power point, at which the panel gives its highest power output, which varies according to the sun and the panel temperature. This is not the same voltage as the battery requires. The controller then converts the panel voltage to the required battery voltage enabling solar panel and battery voltages to be independent. This allows higher solar panel voltages such as used in cheaper, domestic panels that are then stepped down to the correct charging voltage for the batteries. It also enables panels to be connected in series to create arrays with voltages up to 150V so you can use thinner or longer cables to connect the panels to the controller.

MPPT controllers are more expensive than PWM controllers and are more suited to larger installations,



Cheap and simple PWM controller (top) and more sophisticated, expensive MPPT (below)



Typical installation with MPPT controller
Photo: narrowboatsolarsystems.co.uk

VOLTAGE DROP : SAMPLE CALCULATION

A 90W panel operates at $V_{max} = 17V$ and $I_{max} = 5.29A$. If the cable length (there and back) = 20m and the resistance of 6mm² cable = 0.00314 Ohms/m, the voltage drop = $5.29 \times 20 \times 0.00314 = 0.33V$. This is acceptable when running at 17V because the 3% limit is $(17 \times 0.03) = 0.51V$



*cable is specified by cross-sectional area eg 6mm² and not diameter

where solar power is needed for extended periods while moored up. If the requirement is to just keep batteries topped up when the boat is not being used, a cheaper PWM controller with one or two panels is more suitable. MPPT controllers claim to increase solar yield by up to 30% though it might be cheaper to buy another panel than a more expensive controller.

Both types of controller typically have a 'load' output. This is not used in boat situations being more applicable to, for instance, automatic street lighting.

Cabling

Multi-strand weather-proof copper cable connects the solar panels to the

controller generally 6mm² though 4mm² can be used for higher voltage arrays. A cable gland is used to pass the cable from the panel through the boat roof, made waterproof with adhesive and sealant, with a grommet in the roof hole to prevent the cable chafing. Ideally, create access to the cable inside the boat. If possible, use a single length of cable to the controller; but if joins are needed, these should be crimped. The cable should be contained in a conduit or supported every 25cm or so, and should not run near to 240V cabling.

The controller should be located as close to the battery bank as possible. The connection to the batteries need not pass through the battery master switch, but can be connected through a fuse to the positive terminal or bus bar. The size of fuse should match the output from the solar panel and the size of the cable. Thicker cables* have lower resistance than thinner cables which leads to a smaller voltage drop along the cable and subsequent loss of power. An installation should aim to limit the voltage drop to 3% of the initial voltage.

To calculate the voltage drop, you need to know:

- 1 The maximum current that the cable is likely to carry. This is displayed on the back of solar panels as 'I_{max}' in Amps and the voltage as 'V_{max}' in Volts.
- 2 The total length of cable between the panels and the batteries, there and back in metres;
- 3 The resistance of the wire in Ohms per metre, displayed on the cable packaging.

The order in which the components are connected is important; always connect the controller to the batteries first and then the panels. This is because the controller needs to detect the battery voltage before the panels are connected.

Experiences of using solar panels

Mike Rodd

My small solar panel is 1m². I put it in two years ago to keep my batteries charged although I have a mains feed now and so don't really need it I installed it myself with the most efficient MPPT controller I could buy and the total cost was about £300.

On the best days, with about eight hours sunshine, the maximum power produced is around 56 Watts, despite being rated at 100 Watts. But you will never get that, given where our sun is in the sky, and there are very few of these sunny days in South Wales—on our last two-week run, we had only one day when we had reasonable sunshine.

So that means about 37 AH per day, which just about powers my fridge—when the sun shines! My alternator produces about 100 AH on about half a litre of diesel, thus costing ~60p. So, three good days' sun saves ~60p (3 x 37) and the break-even is ~500 days (£300/0.6), but only if they all have good sunshine. I reckoned in South Wales, my payback is about five years as a result.

Stella Ridgway

I think solar panels are essential for anyone on boats; they help with battery life and save running the engine. Costs vary and depend on the amount of electricity you need, but my experience is that solar panels certainly pay for themselves within a few months of fitting. I recommend getting the best quality MPPT controller that you can afford, as this helps protect your batteries and prevents overcharging.

We bought our panel, box and wiring separately and had an elec-

trician fit it for us, but you can buy kits and fit the panels yourself. Personally, I think they are invaluable. Well worth the investment and they enable your emissions to be lessened hugely.

Helen Hutt

About five years ago, I spent £169 on a folding, two-panel (total 160W) portable model, with a controller fitted on the back of one panel and clamps to connect to the battery posts. It has been most useful in providing enough power to keep the fridge on, and for topping up the batteries, whenever I left the boat for a few days.

I have met other boaters who seem to survive on solar alone but I can only assume they don't have TVs, hairdryers, food processors or laptops to charge up! I no longer bother to erect the panels to face the sun, they just lie flat on the roof and seem to perform just as well.

Off grid liveaboard.

I have a 250W solar panel connected to a 20A Tracer MPPT controller that I installed myself, total cost, with installation parts was around £300.

This provides all my power needs (I have no engine) from March to October; lights, pumps, fridge and computer, an estimated 50Ah per day. Given that solar provides 10 times more power in the height or summer to the depths of winter I need to supplement my power needs with a generator during the winter but even then, on sunny days, I gain a significant part of my power though a week of leaden skies and rain (this is England!) even in the summer can see the batteries looking sad. Solar power has revolutionised my life and, like all these technological advances, it's difficult to remember what life was like before it.

Licensing consultation update

Mark Tizard has read the 44-page report... so you don't have to!

The Stage 1 Report
canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/original/32167-licensing-consultation-phase-1-report-2017.pdf

The Stage 2 Report
canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnaill/33550-licensing-futures-stage-2.pdf

CRT is investing a considerable amount of time and expense in reviewing boat licensing. At the outset, it said it wanted the review to cover all aspects of licensing and that the outcome was intended to be revenue neutral and to simplify the current process.

CRT has just published the Stage 2 report from the recent workshops, which is the main focus of this article. To recap, using an external consultancy, Involve, the review is a three-stage process that is intended to operate as follows:

Stage 1: Interviews to get the views of boating organisations, who will understand the views of many of their constituent members. Following Stage 1, the Trust will develop a set of scenarios based on the views that have come out of the interviews.

Stage 2: Nine regional workshops with boat owners, which will look at the scenarios, develop them further and, across the nine workshops, develop a set of draft options (probably three) to take to a full consultation. Workshops to take place in mid-late April and early May.

Following Stage 2, CRT will work up the options further, drawing on the views of people in Stages 1 and 2.

Stage 3: An online consultation, open to all boat owners, will seek their views on the options presented—for example, their strengths and weaknesses, how they might be further improved and which option they prefer and why.

This will take place over the summer and into late September. Between each stage, Involve will draft a summary report of the findings and, at the end of the project, it will draft a full report that draws everything together.

Results of Stage 1

In summary, 988 people applied for 135 places in nine workshops at Leeds, Newark, Hatton, Northwich, Gloucester, London, Birmingham, Milton Keynes and Devizes. 186 boaters confirmed their intention to attend a workshop, but in all workshops, except Milton Keynes, many did not attend on the day and the number of people was considerably lower than aimed for (e.g. Leeds, 6 people from 15 invited; Newark, 6 from 20; Northwich, 8 from 25; London, 8 from 15; and Devizes 9 from 14 invited). In all, 81 people attended.

The workshops lasted for three hours and were guided by a semi-structured process plan, designed to ensure a focus on the issues of importance to CRT and informed by views expressed in Stage 1, while also allowing time for participants to raise other topics. The three main themes for discussion were:

- Size: licensing by length; length x breadth; single flat fee; or other options suggested by participants.
- Other factors relevant to licens-

From the Stage 1 report, it would appear that there was broad agreement in four areas:

1. There should be a single licence, as exists currently.
2. There was wide support for licensing by boat area.
3. Congestion or lack of movement should be best dealt with by enforcement and mooring charges.
4. Discounts should be retained where justified.

NABO Council agrees with all four of the areas above and advanced these views during our interview in the Stage 1 part of the process.

ing; for example, extent of access to the network; zoning; regional pricing.

I have summarised the main findings as follows:

- Boaters were adamant that the licensing system should not be used to penalise specific types of boating or set different types of boater against each other.
- Any changes to the system should be transitional (3-5 years was suggested) and not retrospective.
- Participants identified a number of principles they felt should underpin any licensing system. These include fairness, intelligibility, simplicity and ease of enforcement.
- There was broad support for licensing by area of boat (length x width), although this view was not unanimous—a substantial proportion of participants argued for retention of the current system.
- In addition to the size of a vessel, participants discussed three main factors that they felt had relevance to the licensing system. These were regional pricing or zoning, the use of technology and the level of use of a boat. There was no widespread support for

these options.

- With the exception of the prompt payment discount, responses to the different discounts were affected by the small numbers of boaters claiming each one. Most discounts received some support, although the rationale for some was questioned. The charity boat discount was widely supported and participants felt it should be increased. The electric boat discount was discussed at most length and many participants felt it should be removed.

There are mixed views on whether the current licensing system is fit for purpose or needs changing.

- Congestion on the waterways was raised frequently during workshops and participants defined it as a problem for both mooring and navigation, as well as a safety concern. Congestion is seen as localised but spreading.
- There was a strongly and widely held view that congestion is a problem of mooring and enforcement, and not something for the licensing system to resolve, al-

BASIS FOR LICENCE FEE	PROS	CONS
Length alone	The current system is 'not broken', simple and fair. Changes are likely to increase, rather than reduce, complexity. It provides a low-cost entry point for new boaters with shorter boats. The width of a boat does not bear any relation to its cost to CRT.	Even if larger boats cause more damage on certain canals, this should not be addressed through the licensing system. Instead, CRT should impose maximum dimensions for vessels using canals. The underlying logic of the current system is unclear. Length-based licensing does not reflect what each boat costs the Trust and an area-based system is fairer.
Length x beam	Wide-beam boats occupy more space, use more water and cause more damage, adding to the cost of waterway upkeep. This type of licence has the potential to discourage purchase of wide-beam boats, which some felt add to congestion and impact on other boaters (they can require tunnels to be closed; cannot share a lock and they can be harder to pass). EA licences are already area-based (on the Thames—see Table 2). Arguing against the point that wide-beams can access only part of the network, participants noted buying a 70-foot boat also limits the cruising range.	Wide-beams are not able to access the entire network and should not have to pay for a system that they cannot use in its entirety. They have value to people who otherwise could not access the canals (e.g. people with some disabilities). Problems perceived as associated with wide-beam boats are better addressed through the mooring system, rather than through licensing. Wide-beams do not cause more damage than narrowboats: it is the boater, not the boat that is the problem.

Table 1
Pros and cons of length- and area-based licensing

though there were a few voices who did see a role for licensing in managing capacity. Enforcement is seen as important but poorly managed. Some participants feel it is applied unfairly or aggressively.

- The quality of the Trust's communication and information

The complexity of the current licensing process does not appear as a problem in any boaters' views.

provision was raised in a number of workshops and many participants felt there was room for improvement.

From the Stage 2 findings, you can see that the outcome is very like the Stage 1 report (an interesting conclusion which shows that the

boating organisations are broadly in tune with their members).

CRT is shortly to contact all boaters who have email for their views in Stage 3. Going back to the original aims—which were 1) a complete review of licensing, designed to be broadly revenue-neutral, and 2) simplification of the current process, and also accepting that a substantial number of attendees apparently queried the need for any change—the only broad agreement for change was that CRT should move to charging by boat area. Table 1 below, produced from information in Involve's report, highlighted the pros and cons of this change.

It is very interesting to note that the complexity of the current licensing process does not appear as a problem in any boaters' views. This would appear therefore to be a function of the internal CRT procedures.

WATERWAY	WIDE-BEAM (12')	NARROWBOAT (6'10")
Broads	860.95	488.30
CRT	991.30	991.30
EA Thames	1242.85	878.71
EA Gt. Ouse/Nene/Stour etc.	878.71	878.71
Scottish Canals*	198.12	198.12

Table 2
Licence fees for different waterway areas for 60-foot boats.

*The same fee for all powered boats, regardless of size or shape.

Current licence fees

For boats up to 5.49 m long cost £523.39 for a 12-month private leisure licence (2017-18, not discounted). Fees increase incrementally, with each additional 0.99 m raising the licence cost to £1138.08 for a 21.50–22.49 m boat.

The views on changes to licence bands and navigable area support this. There are currently 18 different price points for a 12-month private pleasure licence. Some suggested increasing the width of the bands and decreasing their number. Those who disagreed argued that wider bands would penalise people on the thresholds, or make boats just over a threshold essentially worthless. Online renewal processes mitigate any apparent complexity with the current banding, and current increments are straightforward; most boaters would lose if this idea were implemented. Another view was that charging bands no longer make sense, as electronic systems can account for the true length (and width) of a boat, so a system could be based on cost per square metre.

The idea that patterns of use could play a role in determining the licence cost was widely discussed. There were two views: some felt that those who use the waterways infrequently (e.g. for a holiday or occasional weekend) pay disproportionately. However, these boaters should still be liable for the full licence fee, as they are paying for access to a network that needs year-round maintenance. A separate or increased licence fee for continuous cruisers received very little support and was rejected as it risked creating a 'them and us' culture. People who already evade payment or do

not abide by their licence terms and conditions would find ways around such a system (e.g. by registering 'ghost' moorings).'

In conclusion, if CRT has taken on board the thoughts of the boating organisations and of the boaters who attended the workshops, the forthcoming questionnaire being sent to all boaters should be simple and clear (we live in hope!). We suggest four simple questions:

1. Do you think the existing licensing arrangements need changing?
2. Do you support a change to charging by boat area rather than length?
3. Do you support the retention of the current range of discounts? If not which would you keep from the attached list.
4. Would you support a reduction in the current 18 price points in a 12-month private leisure licence? If yes, how many price points would you suggest?

It's important that members respond to CRT's email when it is received to ensure that your voice is heard.

Boaters' views on licence discounts

Peter Fellows has also looked through the report by Involve

Many boaters in the Stage 2 consultation saw some rationale for the various discounts, but the overall view was that the financial impact of changing or removing discounts would be minimal because of the small numbers of boaters claiming each type.

DISCOUNTS	LICENCES
Disconnected waterway	401
Historic boats	266
Electric boats	88
Portable powered boats	88
Historic unpowered butties	51
River Avon	11
Witham Sailing Club	9

Number of licences to which different discounts apply

There was broad support for the prompt payment discount (applied to 22,861 licences) in every workshop, with many noting that it helps CRT to have money 'up front'. Others suggested it should also apply to direct-debit payers. However, it may disadvantage people who cannot afford to pay for their licence in a lump sum. Another view was to remove it, because its historical rationale was to encourage boaters to get a licence and most boats (96%) are now licensed. Others suggested that a late payment charge would be preferable to the discount.

The historic boat discount was

widely, but not unanimously, supported although opinions were not strong, either in support of or against it, mainly due to the small number of claimants and its relatively low cost to CRT. Its support was mostly due to it helping maintain the waterways' heritage and encourage the upkeep of historic boats in their original condition (rather than by subsidies or grants). Some noted that the administration of this discount is very poor, with unclear regulations and criteria.

The 50% unpowered butty discount, more than 50 feet long, had broad support although there were no strongly expressed views. Some participants compared a butty paired with a powered boat to a wide-beam and argued that, if width is included in the licensing system, the discount should not continue. Scrapping or keeping the discount will have little effect on CRT finances. Others suggested it should only apply to historic butties and questioned the logic of restricting the discount to butties longer than 50 feet. Participants who rejected the historic boat discount thought it should be removed. An analysis of who is claiming discounts should be part of the review to look for opportunities to simplify the system (e.g. if those claiming the butty discount were also claiming an historic boat discount, the two could be amalgamated).

Opinions on the 25% electric boat discount were expressed more strongly. Many participants could not see the reason for the discount and felt it should be removed. Electric boats use the same facilities and displace the same volume of water and therefore should not qualify. Others queried the rationale for the discount, suggesting that boaters would need to run diesel generators even if their engines

With the exception of the prompt payment discount, other discounts have small numbers of boaters claiming them.

were fuelled sustainably. Some argued that it does not promote more environmentally friendly boats or contribute to reducing emissions, with pollution displaced elsewhere. Environmentally friendly boats should be encouraged with a 'green' discount for boats using sustainable alternatives to diesel, including wind, solar, hydrogen and improved battery technologies.

The general view was that the disconnected waterways discount of 25% discount is reasonable for boats that remain exclusively on the Bridgwater & Taunton, Monmouth & Brecon, stretches of the Montgomery Canal not connected to the main network, and the River Tees. Others suggested that boaters had made a choice to limit their travel by keeping their boat on a disconnected waterway, and that this choice did not warrant a discount. Yet others suggested that if the logic for the discount was limited access, it should also be given to wide-beam and 70-foot boats.

All participants supported the charity boat discount (60% off the business licence fee), provided that the boat met the requirements for purpose of use, users and charges. The most frequently raised question was why charity boats needed to be licensed as business boats and then discounted. Some felt it should be increased to 80% of the full business licence, or set at 60% of the leisure boat licence cost, whereas others thought it should be free, providing the boat provided a genuine charitable service.



Narrow Boats President and Kildare enjoying several licence discounts. Photo: Mick Fitzgibbons

Letters to the Editor

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

More on car insurance

Further to the letter from Sean Haacke in NABO News 4 July 2017, concerning problems getting car insurance when the car is kept at a mooring, I've recently had a dialog on this with our broker and with Janet Richardson, Editor of Towpath Talk, who subsequently published a letter from a reader and his solution. The reader, who had exactly this query, had been rejected by his existing insurers on renewal, succeeded in getting insurance with Adrian Flux.

Mark Tizard

NABO's broker commented as follows:

Boater with a home address

This shouldn't be too much of an issue with insurers, but the prudent approach may be to notify them that you intend to be away from the usual overnight parking location for a prolonged period of time. Household policies usually contain a clause that insurers must be notified if a property is to be unoccupied for 30/45/60 days but the small number of motor policies I have checked do not have a similar 'away from home' clause. There is a clause in an Allianz Motor policy, which reads as follows; 'This section also gives you and anyone entitled to drive your car under your current certificate of motor insurance, the cover shown in your schedule in any country in the territorial limits for up to 90 days in any one period of insurance.' The UK is, of course, within the 'Territorial Limits' of the policy, so could be construed as being the cover afforded for being away from the usual overnight parking location. In any event, a phone call to insurers should clarify their comfort level with this requirement.

Boater without a permanent address

This predicament is indeed an issue for car owners with no fixed address. Conventional motor insurers and brokers will not have the flexibility to cater for requirements such as these as they would be classed the same as travellers etc. I would recommend a specialist motor broker is contacted to either find a suitable solution, or

have the discussion with specialist underwriters about finding one. Adrian Flux is perhaps the most likely broker to be able to assist. Tradex are a specialist motor insurer with a network of agents around the UK, so may be worth a go too.

More problems with canoeists

From NABO's Facebook page: "We have just come through Saddington Tunnel on the way to Foxton, only to be met half-way through by two families of canoeists!, complete with kids, dogs and a couple of hand-torches. WTF..... these people should not be allowed to father offspring and further dilute the gene pool!"

Mark Tizard adds: "Re: the report of a canoeist in Foulridge tunnel, who had ignored the traffic light system and met three narrowboats in the tunnel that had luckily just entered when their light went to green. I have had a reply from Tony Stammers, the health & safety guy at CRT.

They have taken the report very seriously and are installing new signs to make it completely

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, presumably owned by a Black Country resident, which I spotted near Wolverhampton.



clear not to enter the tunnel when the lights are red. British Canoeing and the Desmond Family canoe trail are ensuring that all their members know, and understand, the rules regarding this and other tunnels (e.g. forward facing bright light). CRT is also installing a video camera at each portal for two months to monitor traffic through the tunnel. I know some will say that there will still be some canoeists who ignore the safeguards put in place for their safety, but unfortunately this is a fact of life and, in any group, there will always be those who are too stupid or pigheaded and don't think rules apply to them."

Variable 'veg-pledge'

I like to give CRT praise where it is due: during our travels on the Shroppie this summer, I didn't come across a single sight-line that was blocked by overhanging trees, or an overgrown towpath, all the way from Ellesmere Port to Barbridge and, earlier in the year, from Norbury to Wolverhampton. This was true even on the less frequented northern section from Chester to the Boat Museum. So congratulations to the North Wales and Borders Region for keeping their 'veg-pledge'.

But if they can do it, why can't the Manchester, Pennines and Potteries Region? The section of the Trent and Mersey north of Middlewich is an absolute disgrace. Overhanging trees on bends and at bridges, and extensive growth of bulrushes, both block sight-lines and in places reduce the canal to a single boat width. Travelling along this section is not 'pleasure boating' and is potentially dangerous. The towpath is no better: large sections have been made impenetrable by Himalayan Balsam, with few opportunities to mow or even to get off the boat.

This is not due to a few missed opportunities to cut back the vegetation; some of these trees and rush beds cannot have been touched for decades. There were similar problems last year on the South Oxford (although I understand these were dealt with over the winter). But the North Oxford does not seem to have improved, and lack of vegetation management is causing accidents, damage and the death of wildlife, judging by a post this summer from Graham Phillips*:

"(I'm) absolutely sick of the gross negligence of (hell in a hand) CaRT. I've complained nu-

Have Your Say

merous times over the last eighteen months regarding lack of management of the vegetation at Newbold on Avon between Bridge 50 and Newbold Tunnel, opposite the water point. Recently two cygnets were killed when a boater crushed them, unable to control his boat having slammed it into reverse to avoid a collision. And this morning I have been shouted at, as if the problem was my fault for taking on water (the water point is the one designated as the closest to our CaRT long term mooring, so we use it frequently), and the boat has been hit twice. Today I've sent them a stinking email as I've had enough!"

It would be good if CRT could be more consistent in its approach to vegetation management so that boating becomes less of a lottery and a danger. Perhaps a little more information and transparency in the planned work would also allay the feeling that some parts of the waterways are being abandoned to let nature take its course.

Peter Fellows

*The Floater at www.facebook.com/groups/921938364522405/permalink/1400830003299903

Unexpected effect of canoeists

As an addendum to the article on canoes in Issue 4 in July, I thought other boaters might wish to be alerted to a possible problem. I rarely encounter canoes on the move, but I have experienced passing canoeists when tied up. The drainage holes from my basin and sink are rather low and, when I was near the canoe club at Gaily, I encountered fast racing canoes that create a huge wash. On this occasion, I had water in the sink with the plug in. The wash forced canal water up the drainpipe, pushed out the plug and filled the sink with canal water before the whole lot drained out.

Because I was aware of what had happened I could disinfect the sink. Had the sink been empty and I had been ignorant of the incursion of canal water, I don't like to think of the consequences. Fortunately, I have sea cocks on both drainpipes, which I now close off when racing canoes are around.

Carry on the excellent work with NABO News.

Sue Merrett

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