



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 2 April 2018

**CRT LICENCE CHANGES;
A DAMP SQUIB**

MIDDLE LEVEL BILL

CRIME PREVENTION



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NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

Issue 1 February 2018

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Cover photo

This month's cover photo, taken by the Editor, shows the grooves worn by the ropes of horse-drawn boats on a bridge on the Trent and Mersey canal. Win a year's free membership by having your photo selected for the front cover of NABO News. Please email photos as JPEG attachments, ideally portrait format with a file size of 2MB or larger.

Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images in JPEG format please. Please email or post your contributions by **April 28th 2018**. Our email address is nabonews@nabo.org.uk

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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



Though pleased to see that CRT has suspended the sale of the freehold to Blowers Green Pumphouse (see January's NABO News) I wish that the relevant advisory groups could review such proposals before they go ahead. Unfortunately, the proposals to develop Marple Wharf have been re-submitted virtually unchanged and I urge everyone to object (reference DC/67001, at planning.stockport.gov.uk/PlanningData-live) CRT has published the results of its licensing consultation, reviewed by Mark

From the Middle Level to the high seas

Editor **Peter Fellows** delivers a cornucopic diversity to welcome the Spring.

Tizard. Most narrowboaters will have to pay about 5% more for their licences year-on-year, so the exercise was not exactly 'revenue-neutral'—at least not for boaters. Widebeam owners will have to pay more, but not as much as many feared. During the review, many boaters didn't see the need for any changes, so with no majority agreement to change anything much, CRT can claim to have listened to its 'customers.' However, it is difficult to see how the outcome will reduce CRT's licensing costs, as the system now seems to be more complicated, rather than the intended simplification.

The Middle Level Bill is making its way through Parliament and, at

the time of writing, it is with The Lords for further discussion. NABO was the only boating organisation to make objections to the Bill, as described by Mike Rodd, which has raised the Association's profile. Mike also reports on discussions of the failure of CRT to take over EA waters at a recent National Inland Navigation Forum meeting, where again NABO was alone in not supporting the takeover.

I have introduced a new feature in Techies' Corner, in which Tony Brooks has offered to answer members' technical queries. Of course, this will only work if members send him questions, so please let me have them—on any problem—and I will forward them onto Tony. Stella Ridgway has followed up her article on Bugsworth (NABO News, Winter 2017) with a look at nearby New Mills. There are two reports from NABO regional reps. in this issue: Howard Anguish reports on a North East forum and David Fletcher summarises the goings-on in the North West and Borders. Howard has also reviewed NABO's concerns in 2003 for the Rewind column. David questions whether a lock cottage rebuild is conservation or vandalism, and he also shares his recent experience of sailing the high seas on the Queen Mary 2. I have included some tips on crime prevention that members may not have considered before and Alison Tuck looks at the increasing numbers of rented boats and concerns about the safety of tenants. Finally, as we went to press, there has been a major breach on the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union, which, together with the continued closure of the Marple Flight until early May at the earliest and work continuing on the Bosley Flight, will seriously affect boating in that area for months to come.

Well, Winter seems like it is really cross, it keeps storming out and then storming back in shouting "and another thing". We have six inches of snow again, although we are not iced in this time. Last week was fun going for water, with frozen snow on top of ice. Our poor engine did not like it at all; she overheated twice. Who said boating life was boring?

We are still waiting to meet Jon Horsfall, the Interim Head of Boating; having had to cancel our meeting. However, there is a Council meeting on March 21st and I am hoping that there will be further clarity on the reorganisation. We can then rearrange the meeting and get quarterly meetings in the diary.

CRT Licence Review

Both the previous Head of Boating and Head of Customer Service have left the Trust and one wonders why, given that they were instrumental in organising the survey. The major changes are the removal of the 10% reduction for prompt payment, although they have introduced a 2.5% discount for all those who pay by Direct Debit, to help those boaters on limited incomes who maybe can only pay monthly—this is possibly a fairer outcome. Just as we were digesting that, the breach happened on the Middlewich Arm. This will cost thousands to repair and the contingency fund will probably be used.

Reasonable Adjustment

Another item that has been introduced on a trial basis is a 'reasonable adjustment' form to complete when asking for changes to your cruising pattern. It has been designed to comply with the Equality Act 2010.

I am now working with the Trust to ensure that it complies as, in its

current form, it appears intrusive and does not explain the need for some of the questions. The draft form is available at canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnaill/35483-capability-to-cruise-questionnaire.pdf. If you have any comments, please email me and I can compile them for the Trust.



Beasts and Breaches

Stella Ridgway crashes through the late winter ice

With the breach at Stanthorne closing the Middlewich Arm and the Marple Flight now being out of action until the May Bank Holiday at the earliest, Bosley Flight is passable with care and by liaising with the contractors on site. But the capacity to cruise the northern canals is severely limited. So take care over Easter; if you are cruising enjoy yourselves and hopefully the weather will be a bit better.

Happy Boating

The breach on the Middlewich branch
Photo Harry Arnold, Waterway Images



Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at the March Council meeting

The Council had its first Sunday meeting and its second phone conference meeting in March, and I was able to listen in, once I'd found a member with a speakerphone. NABO has had some good publicity and influence since the last meeting: it was named in Hansard in relation to its objections to the Middle Level Bill that is passing through Parliament (NABO wants protection of boaters' services enshrined in the legislation); and its objections to CRT's proposed sale of Blowers Green Pumphouse (currently on hold), which were picked up by the waterways press and social media.

The results of CRT's licensing consultation are out and, despite the original intention to create a simplified system, two extra licence bands of boat width have been added, while retaining all the other features of a system that was supposed to be too complicated. Licence fees will increase by 5% because of a reduction in the prompt-payment discount. But widebeam owners feel that they have escaped with only a moderate increase in their licence fees and a lot of boaters said they saw no need for the changes proposed during the consultation—so a result of sorts. But Councillors are concerned that they haven't heard the end of congestion charging via licence fees, and they will monitor any proposed charges for the 'added benefit' of mooring in popular areas.

There is an increasing number of new-build widebeam boats, but some owners are craning them onto narrow canals, such as the North

Oxford and the Leicester Arm, causing complaints to CRT that passing them is causing problems. There are also issues of damage to the waterway infrastructure and increased siltation due to widebeams sucking mud from the edge to the central channel. CRT is likely to issue guidance on which canals are suitable for wider boats.

Council members applauded CRT for its efforts to develop a 'capability to cruise' questionnaire, after meetings with the Equalities Commissioner. This can be used by boaters with difficulties to request an adjustment to their cruising patterns. However, they questioned the need for some of the questions and will follow this up with CRT management. The CRT management reorganisation is still underway, but Councillors expect greater devolution to the new waterway regions rather than more centralisation. This will be good for boaters if the new waterway directors understand their needs. There are also likely to be changes to the roles of both Waterway Partnerships and the Navigation Advisory Groups: if the NAGs can be more fully integrated in management decision making, this would improve the quality and communication of decisions and also make NAG members feel more valued. Finally, there is a rumour that CRT wants to change its logo to reflect its 'wellbeing' agenda—so plenty of work ahead for volunteers to cover over thousands of reflected swan images. Councillors hope that the waterway maintenance budgets are not raided to meet the expense.

NABO calendar 2018

Council meetings will now be held on Sundays and the dates are amended as follows: 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. Members are welcome to attend Council meetings; please just let the Secretary or Chairman know in advance (contact details inside cover).

Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

North West and Borders David Fletcher



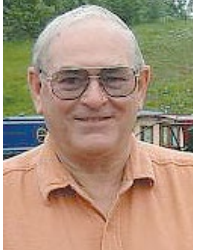
The old Chester Canal, from Chester to Nantwich, has been recognised as a conservation area by the two authorities in Cheshire.

The Shropshire Union towpath is closed again at Chester by the castle walls, being declared unsafe due to falling debris. There is a long-standing dispute between the Chester Town Council and CRT over maintenance responsibilities on the cutting walls.

I've heard nothing more about the hunt at Aqueduct Marina on the Middlewich Branch in February. A boater is trying to make a passage through the River Dee lock onto the Shroppie, but although CRT is supportive, EA is the problem—it has a dam in place and doesn't respond to communications. Hurlston bottom lock (# 4) was examined over the winter and is expected to require repairs next winter.

A mass litter pick was planned by the Shropshire Union Canal Society for 3rd March, but they were unable to proceed because CRT refused permission, citing insurance reasons. The aqueduct over the River Wheelock on the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union canal collapsed overnight. This will have serious effects on the Four Counties Ring and other cruising routes for many months.

North East Howard Anguish



Local waterway forum Castleford 13th March

Although well attended, I have noticed over the last couple of meetings that numbers have reduced.

I wonder if the 17:30 start may act as a barrier against better attendance for those who may still be working.

Acting Local Manager, Mike Marshall, opened with a review of highlights of the past year, including an outline of what goes on behind the scenes—an illuminating description of the day and night routine needed to keep some of our more challenging waterways functioning, especially at times of strong stream flow. There was an update on the work going on to introduce an online 'Strong Stream Warning' notification, available in real time in conjunction with the present Scada system. This would cover all river-fed navigations nationwide and is scheduled to be introduced in April this year.

Over the winter, Leeds Lock, a major structure adjacent to the Royal Armouries, had been drained and was opened to the public with an audio-visual presentation on local waterways, led by an actor dressed as a navvy, which attracted over 2000 visitors. The meeting was shown the video, which was excellent.

One particular point arose about HS2: CRT managers had recently taken HS2 engineers afloat on sections of South Yorkshire waterways, which would be affected by bridge building, to demonstrate the impact on local navigations. Discussion arose about the transportation of bulk materials—particularly bulk rail ballast and similar materials, together with heavy equipment like tunnel boring machines. The HS2 team had not been aware that barges were available locally that could transport 600 tons or more by water, meaning cheaper transport costs and a reduction of disruption to road traffic. This enlightenment may lead to increased carriage of such materials by water—a similar consideration could be given in other major engineering schemes, although the North East does differ from other regions with its concentration of commercial waterways.

CRT Licence changes

After 17 months and a huge expense in manpower and external consultants to consult boaters and boating organisations, with 11,000 or so responses, CRT has released details of its licensing changes, to be phased in over five years from April 2019. The result is a net 5% year-on-year increase in licence fees for the majority of boaters and a much more complex licensing process. In summary the changes are:

Three new width bands

- 1 Band 1 = 2.16m (7'1") and below;
Band 2 = over 2.16m to 3.24m (7'1" to 10' 7¼"); Band 3 = over

3.24m width (10' 7¼"). The two wider bands will attract surcharges rising to 10% and 20% respectively, phased in over four years from April 2020. Current length bands remain the same.

Reduction in the prompt payment discount

- 2 The prompt payment discount will be reduced to 5% in April 2019. From April 2020, the structure of the discount will be changed so that a 2.5% discount will be offered for prompt payment in full, and a 2.5% discount for those using automated payment methods (including monthly direct debits).

All other discounts unchanged

- 3 All other current discounts remain unchanged, with a planned review of the criteria for the electric boat discount.

No more one-day licences

- 4 One-day licences will be withdrawn, while all other short-term licences will be retained.

No additional fees for CCers

- 5 There will be no link between mooring status (whether or not you have a home mooring) and licence fees. However, a further review is planned to establish how the significant growth in boat numbers in some popular locations can be addressed.

CRT also answered some questions:

Why are you charging wide beamed boats more when they can't use most of the network?

If a boat takes up more space, there's some reflection of this in the

11,000 people responded, of whom;

- 70% aged over 55
- 97% men
- 50% are retired
- 30% in full time work
- 91% licence holders
- 62% leisure home moorings
- 12% liveaboard on home moorings
- 10% liveaboard CC'ers
- 6% leisure CC'ers
- 79% own narrowboats
- 11% own cruisers
- 6% own widebeams

licence fee. This change will be phased in gradually up to 2023 so boaters will have a chance to adjust and prepare.

Why not price licences by total boat footprint, as some other navigation authorities do?

If we were looking at space alone then width and length would be the natural measure. However adding two width bands will be easier to understand and administrate than moving to a precise area-based charge.

Why are you reducing the prompt payment discount?

Only boaters who are fortunate enough to be able to pay the entire licence fee up front can benefit from the prompt payment discount. The current level of the discount (10%) is not in line with the benefit the Trust receives by boaters paying up front. We are restructuring the discount so that boaters who manage their payments online, including monthly direct debit, will be able to receive a discount too. We think

that this is the fairest way of managing things for the benefit of more boaters.

Why aren't you charging extra for those without a home mooring as they use more of the system and facilities than those with a home mooring?

A majority of those who gave us their views indicated they would support a change to take mooring status into account as part of the licensing system. However, there were heavily polarised views, with a significant number arguing strongly against this, stating that any such distinction would be highly divisive.

This issue was also linked by respondents to the growing congestion on our busiest waterways in London and around Bath. Our intention is to take forward a further stage of work to look at options that would address the growing use of canals in London and other areas by boats without a home mooring and how to develop a fair means of reflecting the significant benefit gained by such use.

Deja Vu?

As reported in NABO News November 2001

WILL B.W. TAKE OVER E.A. RIVERS?

NEWS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY MIDLANDS RFRAC

At a recent meeting of the Regional Fisheries Ecology and Recreation Advisory Committee of the Environment Agency for the Midlands it was reported that the future of the Agency's responsibility for navigation in the Thames, Southern and Anglian regions was still undecided.

DEFRA Ministers Michael Meacher and Lord Whitty had met with the Chairmen and Chief Executives of both BW and the EA to discuss the prospects for their respective navigation functions and a decision was expected to be made by Secretary of State Mrs Margaret Beckett by the end of October 2001.

The decision will be made against the background of the House of Commons ETR Committee which recommended that the existing navigation remit of the EA should remain unchanged. There has also been a similar inference made in the consultation paper which has been produced as a result of the ongoing Financial, Management and Policy Review of the Agency.

It appears that there is some regret at EA Board level that they failed to express a desire to take control of all river navigations, notably the Trent and the Severn, in their submission to the ETR inquiry. This would have given further weight and conviction to their contention that navigation is an integral part of river basin management, the main thrust of the Agency's argument in favour of retaining its existing navigation functions on the Thames, Medway and East Anglian rivers.

Although navigation does not feature prominently in the RFRAC discussions the Midlands is ably served by NABO member and Upper Avon Navigation Trust council member, David Bolton, who speaks up for navigation interests at every opportunity. For example, by stressing the desirability of utilising the adjacent Staffs and Worcs Canal for conveying waste to the proposed refuse incinerator plant at Kidderminster. A very sensible suggestion.

Another contribution from a committee member emphasised the need for safety on the towpath to be included in the collaboration agreement between BW and EA.

Stephen Peters

➔ **Stop Press - The Answer is 'NO'** - At 3.30p.m. on the 20th of November a Government Press Release announced that EA will retain its navigational role on the rivers it currently administers. ➔

Boat Licensing—a damp squib?

Mark Tizard reviews the results of the 17-month consultation

When the Navigation Advisory Group (NAG Licensing and Mooring) was first approached in October 2016 we were told by the then Director of Customer Services, Ian Rogers, and the then Head of Boating, Mike Grimes, that the review was to be wide-ranging; nothing ruled in or out. The main aim was a simplification of what was then a complicated process, with a vast number of licence permutations. The review would also aim to be revenue neutral before any annual increases were applied. A three-stage consultation process was announced:

Stage One The boating associations, which between them represent a substantial number of boaters, were asked for their views;

Stage Two Boater's workshops were held where common areas from Stage One were discussed;

Stage Three The final options were to be presented to the boating community for comment.

NAG to be consulted between these stages.

A much more complex licensing process with many more licensing and pricing options.

Stage One: NABO's initial comments to the consultation

NABO Council debated at length and canvassed members' views via NABO News and the monthly email. When contacted by 'Involve', the external consultancy managing the process, we gave our views on the following key points.

Duration

It was felt that there should just be three licence options (twelve, six and one month licences). Using the car licensing process, it was felt that shorter terms should attract a premium in pricing to reflect the additional administration involved.

Discounts

After some discussion, the majority felt that the prompt-payment discount should be retained, as NABO considered it was good for CRT and encourages licence compliance—and focuses boaters' minds on insurance and BSS compliance. Online or bank transfer payments should be encouraged so that the prompt-payment discount could be linked to this. All other discounts should be reviewed, based on their individual merits—each needed justification to continue.

Licence calculation

Licensing should be reviewed to take account of the increase in widebeams, and that charging by area—length x breadth—should be considered but kept simple; only four to six bands.

Zonal pricing

While it might be attractive to CRT to try to limit the number of boats in certain areas, NABO considered that doing this by increasing licence fees was unfair, almost impossible to police and against the desire to simplify the process.

Additional options

On the licence application an option for a voluntary donation of £10 or £20 (supported by Gift Aid) to go into a boaters' welfare fund.

At the NAG meeting following the Stage One consultation, we were told that although the full report was not available, there were four main themes emerging, which were:

- 1 A consensus for a move to licence charging by boat area;
- 2 There should be no difference in pricing if a boat had a home mooring or not;
- 3 Prompt payment discounts should be kept, and other discounts should be reviewed to ensure that they were justified;
- 4 Congestion was a function of enforcement and management, and not of licensing.

NAG agreed with the above and understood that points 1-3 were likely to form the key areas to be explored in Stage Two.

Stage Two: Boaters' workshops

Boaters were invited to register for workshops around the country to discuss the Stage One recommendations. Despite many applications, attendance was poor, except for one oversubscribed meeting. Perversely CRT insisted on keeping congestion as a topic in the workshops, despite it being rejected as not relevant in Stage One and by NAG.

The outcome of Stage Two supported the earlier recommendations. Many felt that it would be very easy to put together the questions for Stage Three, as there were only two areas that needed reviewing; boaters' views on charging by boat area and the other discounts, the retention of the prompt-payment discount being supported by Stage One and Two.

Stage Three: Boaters' questionnaire

Instead of asking a few questions, after some delay CRT decided to ignore the views of the initial two stages of the consultation and the views of its Advisory Group, and go back to the drawing board to ask a wide variety of questions in Stage Three. Cynics could perhaps be forgiven for thinking that there was another agenda at work, although it might have been due to the changes in senior managers and their thoughts on the process. 11,085 responses were subsequently received, from a range of different boater 'types'. Typically, the quantitative (or 'closed') questions each received between 6,200 and 7,500 responses, and the qualitative (or 'open') questions received between 700 and 1,800 responses. Around 4,000 people sent only a very limited response, some to just a single question.

Conclusions

Finally, some 17 months after the initial discussions, we have a decision. So at NABO we have just two questions:

- 1 Has this new licensing structure simplified the licensing process?
 - 2 Is the new pricing structure revenue neutral?
- On the face of it, the answer to each is no; a much more complex licensing process with many more licensing and pricing options. Furthermore, the vast majority of boaters who currently enjoy a 10% prompt-payment discount—which the

Widebeam owners will have a double increase...the reduction in prompt-payment discount and the new width banding.

majority wanted to retain at every stage of the consultation—will see it reduced to 2.5% or 5%. A small number of boaters who currently pay by direct debit will see a 2.5% reduction in their licence fee, if they do so via the online process. Widebeam owners will have a double increase, due to the reduction in prompt-payment discount and the new width banding.

Is there any other organisation that would consult so widely and introduce changes like this over such a long timescale? An expensive process that cost many hours of management time and thousands of pounds for external consultants. Suppliers that I use just introduce changes, with their justifications and offer some advance warning. I can't help wondering if this is something CRT could have done as it seems to have followed its own agenda throughout.

Future review

One outcome hinted at a majority view that issues caused by those without a home mooring, especially London and the Western K&A, should be tackled. Perhaps not surprising, 90% of boaters invited to participate either having a home mooring or being based outside these areas! There is now mention of a review of the 'benefits' that boaters experience when boating in popular areas like London. I am concerned that this means that the perceived 'benefit' of cruising, in accordance with your licence, in certain areas, is at a premium compared to the benefit enjoyed by those who cruise elsewhere. Hopefully, the forthcoming report on the London Mooring Strategy Consultation will provide some clues. I have sympathy for those boaters who cruise in London and struggle to access facilities and moorings and I also have sympathy for CRT in how they manage the congested central area. However, CRT's figures show that, increasingly, boaters are moving in line with the CRT guidance, which was revised in 2015. Restricted licences issued to those who do not cruise far enough have reduced by 20% in 2017 compared with previous years.

NINF meeting

Mike Rodd represented NABO at The National Inland Navigation Forum at St. Pancras Cruising Club in February.

This forum continues to be a useful meeting point, bringing together navigational bodies including CRT, EA and other waterways—especially important at this time, given the on-going saga about the relationship between EA and CRT. Eight of its member bodies were represented, together with the General Secretary, Michael Stimpson, who reported that the NINF's finances were sound.

Of special interest at this meeting was the presence, by invitation, of CRT's Peter Walker, the National Infrastructure Services Manager, who reports directly to the Chief Operating Officer, Julie Sharman, and who has been deeply involved in the in-depth reviews of EA's assets. Peter expressed CRT's regret that the decision had been made by the Minister not, at this time anyway, to proceed with CRT taking responsibility for EA's navigations. While most members of NINF agreed this decision was unfortunate, NABO continues to be one of the few representative bodies that does not support the takeover. This is primarily because of the concern, expressed by many of its members, that CRT has yet to prove it is capable of managing its present responsibilities without taking on additional, very complex ones.

CRT to take over the Basingstoke Canal?

It was generally felt that all would support CRT taking over responsibility for the Basingstoke Canal from

the two relevant local authorities, as this would bring some long-term stability, and it would also support the amazing volunteers who have struggled for many years to keep the canal open.

The Great Ouse Boating Association representative felt that the EA was proving to be totally unable to manage the waterways of interest to its members, and that any move away from EA should be supported. He added that there had been a very satisfactory outcome to EA's proposal to sell off moorings at Ely, with the local council taking responsibility. Most users were now happy with the situation.

Peter was naturally questioned on the present internal CRT re-organisation, but being one of those senior officers whose job is being redefined, he was not able to add anything new at this stage.

The Historic Narrow Boat Club representative discussed its project to capture information relating to waterways folk who have been involved in the past, and urged NINF members to assist where possible.

Selling the family silver

There was discussion of CRT apparently selling off sites of heritage significance and the concerns that this raised. Peter Walker described the process and assured members that every effort was made to protect such sites. However, he also added that CRT was facing a massive funding shortfall when the Government grant ran out.

Sale of BWML

CRT has decided to sell its BWML marina subsidiary with 18 marinas and over 3,000 berths. British Waterways Marinas Ltd. was formed in 2004, and in 2006 BW decided to encourage the building of private new marinas to address a shortage of berths and expected increase in demand, estimated to be up to 11,700 new berths by 2015. It also led to a policy of closing one online mooring for every ten created in a new marina. By 2015, less than half of these projected berths had been built and supply exceeded demand in many areas, leading to under-occupancy.

In 2011, CRT's investment in BWML increased by £5m to buy failing marina businesses at advantageous prices and investment now stands at £11.2m. Despite the extra equity, BWML failed to perform and suffered a slump in profits in 2013/14. In the current 2017/18 financial year, it will return £250,000 to CRT, a 2.2% return on CRT's investment. So, CRT can better invest that money elsewhere if it can recoup its investment by selling the business.

However, CRT has an historic Port of London Properties debt of £13m inherited from BW. In 2016/17 it borrowed £50m using a revolving credit facility and in January 2018 it raised a further £100m by issuing bonds, and will raise another £50m from bonds in June. If it manages to sell BWML, it is likely that the amount raised will be used towards paying off the £13m BW debt, which must be repaid in 2018, rather than, as its press release states: 'All the proceeds from the sale of BWML would be invested in other income-generating assets, so as to deliver further sustainable revenue funding for maintaining the historic waterways in the Trust's care.'

Data from Alan Richards at www.thefloater.org, March 2018)



Photo: Roger Kidd

HS2 NOISE POLLUTION

Excessive noise from HS2 trains could make whole sections of canal no-go areas for mooring. Except for a limited number of permanent residential moorings, HS2 regards all canal users as transient and therefore not requiring noise mitigation.

The company will only provide noise fencing and earth bunding for what it considers to be permanently occupied residential sites. So a marina being used residentially for varying periods, or a popular mooring area that is used by a succession of boaters, are not eligible on the grounds that they are not permanently occupied.

If HS2 provided adequate noise protection for all areas in which boats moor, this would also enable other towpath users to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the waterways in line with the Government's and CRT's 'wellbeing' agenda. Information from IWA Bulletin, 8th March 2018

CRT PETITION AGAINST HS2

CRT has submitted a formal petition to the House of Commons identifying areas where it would like changes to mitigate the effects of HS2 on the Trent and Mersey Canal. The main areas of concern are at Great Haywood, Fradley and Kings Bromley. At Great Haywood, a viaduct will cross the Trent Valley and the Trust is concerned about its visual appearance in this historic landscape, requesting a bespoke design to minimise its impact, as achieved in the Colne Valley. At Fradley Junction, a large water main is proposed along the towpath during construction and CRT wishes it to be routed across a farmer's field to reduce the impact on the canal. At Kings Bromley, CRT would like to see power cables routed under the canal rather than over the top. canalrivertrust.org.uk/the-hs2-rail-network-and-our-waterways/publications-and-consultation-responses

BSS annual report of incidents and accidents

The 2017 review is based on 200 reports of 204 incidents (counting further affected boats) during the year, with 159 incidents on inland waterways and 41 on coastal waters.

There were no fatal incidents from fire or CO, but three fatalities were linked to people falling from boats. Also 23 people received hospital treatment linked to fire, sinking, capsizing, person-overboard, grounding; and stranding on inland waterways. Hire and small passenger craft incidents included seven collisions, five fire incidents, four lock sinkings, one other sinking related to a weed-hatch, a stranding and six person-overboard events.

Solid-fuel stoves were linked to seven incidents on inland and coastal boats. The indications point to a familiar pattern of issues with construction, maintenance and use, with examples of pyrolysis, flue maintenance and logs stowed too close to the appliance. There are also several mentions on social media of CO alarm activations from stoves that have door issues (damaged rope seals, incomplete closing, or broken glass), broken chambers/missing plates, damaged/deteriorated flue pipes/joints or blocked baffle plates

Total incidents from 1st January to 31st December 2017

	BSS	Non-BSS
Number of incidents recorded	148	11
Fire/explosion	60	5
CO (including near incidents)	2	-
Pollution	3	-
Person overboard	12	3
Personal injury	10	1
Capsize 0, collision 11, grounding 0, stranding 11, sinking including lock hang-up 39	61	2

Compiled and drafted by Rob McLean and Graham Watts from investigative work by Dave Washer

and flues. There were eight flammable vapour incidents in inland and coastal boats, with four each caused by LPG and petrol.



All-Party Parliamentary Waterways Group

In March, the group called a meeting between waterway organisations and Thérèse Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment with responsibility for the waterways, and Richard Parry. However, it gave NABO only four days' notice, so the Council was unable to find a member who could attend.

Instead NABO was offered a chance to submit a question to the minister and we sent the following: 'The primary charitable objective of the Canal and River Trust is to preserve, protect, operate and manage Inland Waterways for public benefit. The first item listed under this charitable objective is 'for navigation'. However, there would appear to have been a deliberate change of language and focus recently and to many boaters it would appear that the Trust is now primarily interested in the 'wellbeing' of towpath users rather than the 'wellbeing' of the navigation and those that use it, thus causing many boaters to feel marginalised by the Trust. Does the Minister have a view on how different users can be fairly accommodated?'



The catastrophic collapse of the embankment on the Middlewich branch of the Shropshire Union Canal

Photo: Dóimhne Devaney

Conservation, restoration or vandalism?

David Fletcher ponders the 'development' of a canalside cottage

NABO does not normally campaign on restoration and conservation issues, but with Marple Wharf and Blowers Green Pumphouse in Birmingham on the recent agenda, here goes!

There is a little lock-keeper's cottage at the top lock at Audlem on the Shropshire Union Canal. It is one of those lovely little cottages with a bay window, so that the occupants can see up and down the waterway. Some people will know the place because boaters could get a cream tea in a little bag as they passed—a reward for doing the flight! BW sold it off and over the years the owners have done as they wish.

Anyone now passing can see that the cottage is being heavily modified with what is described in the planning application as a 'Proposed two-storey extension and sun-room to existing dwelling'. I would describe it as a new-build house that absorbs one wing of the cottage as a foundation and ground floor, and uses the remainder as a conservatory. The cottage is not listed and there is no suggestion of illegality. Planning permission has been granted by Cheshire East Council (reference 16/0596N) with the details on its planning website. CRT did not object and neither did anyone else. So the application was approved with the usual caveat that materials have to be 'in keeping'.

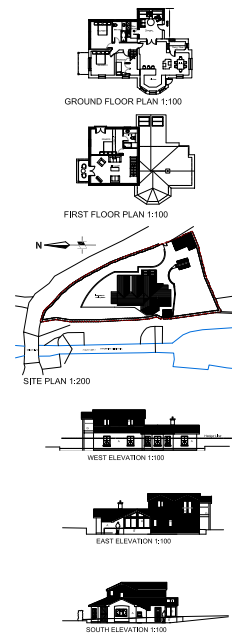
So is this the right thing? Should we be preserving the cottage in its original form, despite the fact that it



Photo David Fletcher

no longer has the original function and is not very useful as a dwelling? Or is it good conservation that gives the bulk of the cottage a long-term future, which would otherwise be lost? Or is it just vandalism? There is another similar cottage at the top of the Tyrley flight, which is apparently listed. Should we conserve every example or is one enough? Answers on a postcard to the Editor or English Heritage, who love this kind of thing.

I see that the route of the old Chester Canal, from Chester to Nantwich, has been declared a conservation area. This is good news, because at least similar issues on this part of the Shropshire Union will be captured and the debate can take place. For the record, although I find the new house to be not in keeping, I do like the conservation benefit. The cottage will still be there long after the new house has gone.



The Middle Level debate

Mike Rodd describes the background to a new waterways Bill and NABO's concerns.



Photo Peter Fellows

A record of the debate is at hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-02-28

The Middle Level is the central and largest section of the Great Level of the Fens, which was reclaimed by drainage during the mid-17th Century. The area is bounded on the northwest and east by the River Nene and Ouse washes, on the north by previously drained marshland silts, and to the south and west by low clay hills. The Middle Level river system consists of over 120 miles of watercourses, most of which are statutory navigations, and has a catchment of over 170,000 acres.

The Middle Level Commissioners (MLC) are the land drainage authority for these waterways. Established in 1862 to manage water levels, they consist of representatives from both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. Occupiers of agricultural property receive a rate demand directly from the Commissioners. The rates on non-agricultural properties, such as houses and factories, are paid through a special levy, issued to the district councils within the Commissioners' area.

The Commissioners are proposing that the laws under which they operate be modified, effectively to allow them to be free of 'the ancient right to use boats not used for the carriage of goods without payment of toll or duty'. In simple terms, private boaters do not presently pay a

licence fee when based on the Levels. They also do not have to have a BSS or insurance. The Commissioners intend to enter into reciprocal arrangements with CRT and the EA to ensure that boats can easily cruise through their waters.

The Commissioners held a consultation on their proposals and indicated that they were in favour of boats being licensed and insured on their waters. This resulted in a Middle Level Bill, which requires assent by Parliament before it becomes law. There were opportunities to comment on the proposed Bill during its debate in Parliament during February.

On reflection, and taking advice from members and boaters familiar with the area, NABO Councillors decided that they should qualify their approval of the proposals to include an obligation on the Commissioners to provide a minimum level of services and moorings, and this should be incorporated into the Bill. With this in mind, NABO approached the All Party Parliamentary Group for Waterways with its concerns.

The Bill was debated in Parliament on 28th February and Hansard records that NABO was the only association that raised objections: 'The Chief Executive of Middle Level Commissioners, Iain Smith, has said that about 1,500 ves-

sels use their locks every year and that about 100 boats are 'hiding', unlicensed, on the waterways.

He believes it is the largest stretch of water in the country that boaters do not have to pay to use. "I acknowledge that NABO has expressed concerns that there should be statutory provision for a minimum level of facilities and visitor moorings in the Bill and that the Bill could be a 'money gathering exercise' for the Commissioners".

As outlined by the Hon. Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster), however, provisions in the Bill prevent the Commissioners from raising more in navigation revenue than they spend on navigation. I hope that this will reassure boat owners that the Bill is not simply a matter of money gathering and that the appropriate safeguards are in place.

On the Second Reading Kevin Foster noted that the Inland Waterways Association, the East Anglian Waterways Association (EAWA), the Association of Nene River Clubs, the Middle Level Watermen's Club, the Residential Boat Owners' Association, the Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs and five local councils were in support of the Bill, and I understand that they remain in support. An additional clause requiring the Commissioners to ensure that the

existing moorings and facilities at March and Stanground were maintained and available was defeated.

At the time of writing, the Bill is with the House of Lords and, although supported by many organisations, there are some objectors, including NABO, who have entered a formal objection. NABO continues to support the Bill in principle, but it remains of the view that there should be a statutory provision for a minimum level of facilities and visitor moorings. Otherwise, given the present lack of facilities and visitor moorings, boaters would gain nothing from the revenue collected.

Of interest, among those objecting, the EAWA, which originally supported the Bill, has now raised some objections, including the need to ensure that the MLC should continue to fund the essential basic maintenance of the navigation channels through these waterways and not look to income from boat registration fees alone to fund that statutory duty. EAWA also has reservations about the constitution of the proposed Navigation Advisory Committee, which it believes should be truly representative of those who use the navigations.

Once the Lords have completed their deliberations, it is expected that a Select Committee will consider the petitions.

David Fletcher sails the high seas.

My wife and I are just back from a trip on Queen Mary 2, and very nice she is too! Currently she is the only transatlantic ocean liner in regular service between UK and New York, operating this service in the summer. For the rest of the year the ship is used for cruising, and that is what we were doing with her.

She is a definitely a liner, built to batter her way through large seas without compromise to time. The bow is sleek and pointed, able to slide through the water, and the life-boat boat-deck is high (25 m) giving large slab sides for the waves to roll by. She is powered by electric motors arranged in four external pods, two of which turn to steer the ship, there being no rudder. The power comes from generators; four main diesels and two gas turbines. At a cruising speed of 18 knots (\approx 21 mph), she can run on three diesels and uses about 40 megawatts of power. But at full speed when doing an Atlantic crossing, she needs the extra power of the gas turbines and uses about 80 megawatts.

She is fitted with stabilisers to prevent rolling side-to-side and they are very good in rough weather. We had many days at sea where the weather was calm, but the long ocean swells were very evident and the ship does not ride these so well; she pitches a lot, up and down by the bow. I have the impression that, because she is so sleek and narrow in the bow, she tends to do this more than a plumper cruise ship. The ship's wheel is a disappointment: more old Mini Cooper than ocean liner. But it is not used much, as she is mostly on autopilot.

In port, she generally does not need tugs. With four bow thrusters and the pod propellers she can reverse, turn in her own length, and go alongside sideways. But she is

big, and a bit of wind can soon bring things to a halt. We were stuck in one port known for its wind, and only got out when it dropped at sunrise; slip and go quickly. The local tugs were no help—not strong enough.

The cruise timetable is quite tight, going from port to port, arriving at dawn and leaving in the evening. If the ship is late leaving a port, it may be quite critical on time to get to the next place and she has to use her speed to catch up. Sounds good, but the cost is significant. So a passenger late on board can cost tens of thousands of pounds in extra fuel. Don't be late! Time, tide and cruise ships wait for no man.

So how do the necessities get to a ship like this? Food arrives by the container load. I saw 14 containers arrive in one port and the crew spent all day loading food into storage and freezers. All this is ordered centrally three months ahead and delivered to the port of call. So the menu is set this far ahead. How many toilet rolls do we need? Fuel comes on board from a coal-boat, sorry, bunker barge, which can be found alongside in major ports. The call goes out over the tannoy: "no smoking on deck", and the barge pumps away all day. The bill is shared out among the guests, and the posh people pay more ... that's democracy. Fresh water is 'made' on the ship, but it is quite usual to see a fire-hose connected up all day when in port, just getting a top up. Grey and black water are all treated on the ship and discharged clean into the sea. There are incinerators for burnable waste and the rest goes ashore in bales. Glass is ground up and tins are crushed and sent ashore for recycling.

Sometimes the port of call has no berth and the ship anchors off, and crew and passengers go ashore by

A QM2 experience



Photo David Fletcher

tender. They use the steering pods to swing the ship around to provide lee-side shelter from wind and waves for loading the tenders, through large hatches low down in the hull. This is a real challenge for the crew, and patience and small-boat skills are needed. The tenders are akin to a large Tupperware box, with lots of windage and no keel. Getting 100 plus, elderly guests on board without dropping any, and then motoring across open water to a jetty, is a test for everyone. Many of the guests have boating skills, so there is no limit to the advice available, as the crew struggle to come alongside the jetty. I don't fancy boarding one in a gale mid-Atlantic to abandon ship.

Generally there is no power hook-up in port and the ship keeps the generators running, but as the domestic power is small when compared to the propulsion, this is no great issue and it gives the engineers a chance to do some maintenance. On a port turn-round, when many

guests change, the suitcases have to be unloaded and loaded. About 4000 cases each way is a lot of fetching and carrying, and potential for some going missing. So there is a lot of colour-coding.

Communications? The ship has a guest phone system and internet via satellite, but it is very expensive. So you are basically cut off, unless in port or very close to the coast with cheap roaming in place. For most people, the first stop in a port of call is a café for a coffee and a wifi internet fix. Or you can just go off the radar! I had some free internet minutes on board and was able to do some NABO business, including sending membership renewals and the monthly Bulletin while in the ocean, thousands of miles from land. So don't tell me about being out of touch when cruising the cut. We had a wonderful time, but I am not tempted to take work on a cruise ship. The biggest problem is the passengers, so you do have to like people.



* Helen Hutt comments: "This is one of the first things I was told when I started living aboard; don't use a padlock on the outside. I fitted a double lock, named a 'Vachette', which looks like a Yale from the outside but needs two turns of the key so it cannot be tricked by a credit card."

The Regents Canal and surrounding area is experiencing increased robberies and burglaries. The Bow West Safer Neighbourhood Team, CRT and the Metropolitan Police have issued the following advice to boaters, applicable in any urban area:

Don't make your boat attractive to thieves

Thieves are always on the lookout for easy targets.

- Never leave anything valuable on display, however small and insignificant it may seem; thieves steal first and think about the value later.
- Don't leave anything loose in the cockpit or on deck.
- Don't leave your engine key in the ignition.
- Keep your boat keys separate from your engine keys.
- Always keep your boat locked when no-one is on board, even for a short time. A padlock on the outside means nobody is in, so consider fitting a dead-lock,*
- Use strong padlocks, rimlocks and good quality hasps on all your hatches and cockpit lockers.

Crime Prevention

Improve your security

Improve your security

- Fit an alarm and use a visible sticker to say that one is fitted.
- Doors should be made from strong solid timber or have steel skins if you need extra strength.
- A wireless DIY boat alarm is easy to fit.
- Consider fitting a small CCTV camera to capture images of possible suspects.
- Fit passive infrared activated security lighting to help deter someone from proceeding further.
- Wooden interior shutters can increase your security and privacy.
- Consider having a strongbox down below.
- At night remain vigilant; walk in well lit areas and only use a mobile phone if absolutely necessary (mobile phones are sought after by thieves).
- Familiarise yourself with the area; know important contact points (i.e. nearest roads or iconic sites for emergency dispatch purposes). Familiarise yourself with helpful establishments, such as public house, a late shop or garage, to turn to in an emergency.

Keep a list of serial numbers

- Consider registering your property with a data website like 'immobilise.com'. Any property with a serial number can be registered (e.g. phone, TV, bicycles).
- Keep a list of all the serial numbers of valuables, including navigation equipment or an outboard motor. Keep a copy of the list at home and on your boat. This can help you, the police and your insurance company if you experience a burglary.

Before you go ashore

Always do a quick security check before going ashore:

- Lock anything valuable out of sight in a strong locker secured by a strong padlock.
- Lock up emergency money away from other valuables.
- Keep your curtains/shutters closed so that no-one can look in.
- Keep unused ropes, fenders and other items in locked cockpit lockers and cupboards. Make sure that any other property stored outside the boat is made secure.

Be a good neighbour

Get to know other boat owners in your vicinity and work together to keep yourselves secure:

- Keep an eye on other boats, as well as your own.
- Report any suspicious persons or

IF YOU HAVE A BREAK-IN

If it's not reported the Police are unaware—report it using 999 for an emergency and 101 for non-emergency calls. Check that your boat is still seaworthy and hasn't been badly damaged. If you can, check that neighbouring boats haven't been broken into as well

antisocial behaviour to the Police or local Safer Neighbourhood Team. Consider following them via Twitter.

- Don't let strangers into your boat, however genuine they may seem.
- Keep in contact with one another via email, social media, or meet and greets.

And finally, remember

- Mark everything that you buy for your boat with your home postcode.
- Keep your list of serial numbers up to date.
- Take your personal papers with you—don't leave them on board.
- Don't leave your home address on show.
- Keep everything securely locked away because your insurance company may not pay out if you don't.
- Lock up. Look out. Stay safe!

Canalsafe

Due to the recent rise in incidents in the capital, London Boaters, in cooperation with the police, have set up towpath patrols to give a presence on some of the areas that have suffered most with break-ins and muggings, reported on the London Boater's Facebook page, unfortunately mostly after the event. So Gilxs Wendes has set up a page, CanalSafe to act as an information board and report on the London boaters' community initiatives and efforts for a safer towpaths.

facebook.com/groups/1026796084115833/about/



New Mills in the High Peak

Stella Ridgway has nothing but praise for this small town on the edge of the Peak District.

New Mills on the Peak Forest Canal is unique, having the park below the town, which enables you to walk to the railway station and the town centre without going near a road. It involves using a track so walking boots or Wellington boots are advisable.

If you moor on the pilings just through Carrs Swing Bridge (# 30), when travelling towards Whaley Bridge, and walk back towards Bridge 29, you will see a track beyond a wall.

So many people rush up and down the Peak Forest Canal, 'ticking off' Bugsworth Basin.

Walk down it and across the green bridge and then along the track next to the farm with alpacas and llamas. Turn left and walk down the track to the railway viaduct and the Torrs Country Park. A walk straight along this road and up the

slope takes you to the Co-op.

The track to the left takes you alongside the ruins of old mills, to the Union Road viaduct, passing an old leat and small weir. Across the first wooden bridge and along the track following the River Goyt, you arrive at the junction of the Rivers Sett and Goyt. Across the bridge over the Sett, Archie the Archimedes screw is here and it generates power for the Co-op freezers.

On a dry day, this is a lovely place to sit. Following the path gives two options; both of which take you under the Albion Road viaduct. To the right, there are often intrepid people rock-climbing, and a set of steps up to the museum and bus stop. The museum allows dogs and is worth a visit. Further along brings you to the Millennium Walkway, a fantastic walk above the river. From here, you can walk up the hill to New Mills Central Station or continue along the Sett Valley Trail. To

Goytside meadows
Photo: Stella Ridgeway



the left takes you up the hill to the Rock Tavern and, if you turn left and walk up to the end, you come out on Wiksmoor Road opposite Victoria Street—around the block walk with a difference. If you have dogs, they will love Goytside Meadows, but if there are cows there please do not let them off the lead—the cattle are very curious and tame and will come to say hello.

Shopping

Bread and milk are sold at the local shop opposite the end of Victoria Street (directly opposite the New Mills Marina), but take a stroll along Albion Road, where there is the first of three hardware shops, an excellent shoe shop (one of two), hairdressers, a sandwich shop and a plant shop. If you walk up Albion Road, get your bread at Potts Bakery (open until

1.45pm and 12-noon on Saturdays). Check the basket on your left as you go in—they sell the previous day's bread for 50 pence.

At the top of the hill are New Mills' three chain stores: Boots the Chemist and a Hallmark Card Shop; a third store, Sainsbury's Local, is below. Take your time exploring—there are small knick-knack shops, charity shops, an excellent butchers and some good cafés. On Fridays and Saturdays, there is a small market opposite Sainsbury selling vegetables, and Lomas from Buxton has a van there on Fridays selling everything. On Saturdays, there is also a flower stall. There are many and varied shops—a taste of what towns used to be like, and long may it continue—but don't expect the shops to be open on Wednesday or Saturday afternoons.

Safety on rented boats

Alison Tuck explains why people rent and why they will not divulge safety fears.

Sinking of a rented boat

www.standard.co.uk/news/london/londoners-horror-as-houseboat-sinks-with-all-of-her-possessions-on-board-a3509466.html

To officially rent a boat on CRT waters, a new licence class was added last year for residential lets. The relevant BSS and new licence require the boat to have a residential mooring, which, in London in particular, is virtually impossible to get.

Last year, CRT presented a solution to the Navigational Advisory Group (Mooring and Licensing), which involved a 'hire-boat light' BSS and allowed the boat to be rented on a CCing licence. This would have made living on a rented boat safe, manageable and above board, but unfortunately the proposal was rejected by the traditional user as-

Boats in London; almost certainly not rented!

Photo Wikipedia Commons



sociations and, I suspect, by the hire-boat companies as well. It was rejected without understanding the current situation and without consideration of the consequences to boat owners and users on the system.

The problem is that society has moved on and things have changed from the baby-boomer generation. Millennials and Generation X ('the younger generation', of which I am one) mostly do not have the income or resources to own both a boat and a house.

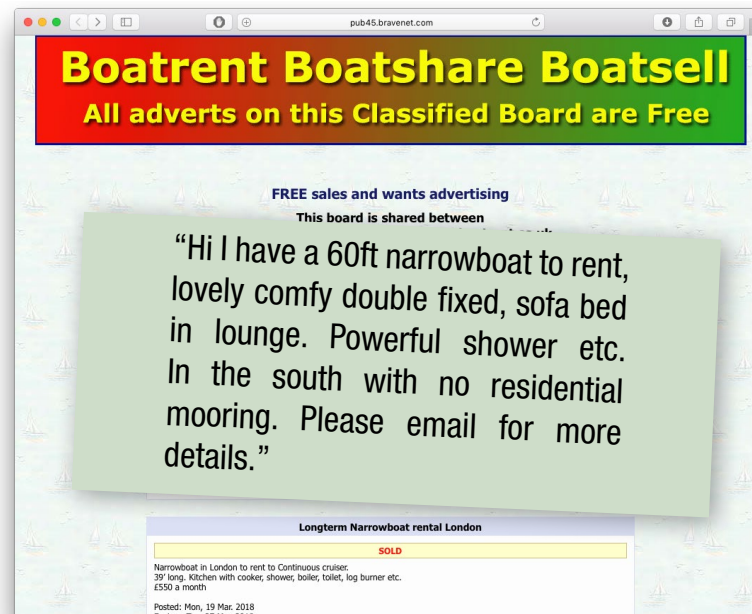
Those that do are looking at alternative ways to fund ownership of both, using the second home and static caravan models, where you fund ownership by renting out to pay running costs or ground rents. Without this, boat owners have to make the choice between owning a boat and owning a house. Some are choosing to live on their boats and others are choosing to sell them. There is also a growth in roving trader licences, as people look for ways to fund their boat ownership.

Add to this the housing crisis and the demand for cheap/affordable housing, which is driving the growth in tenanted boats in London and other urban centres. The IWA says on its website that find-

ing a boat to rent is extremely rare, but this is just not true.

Finding a legitimate boat to rent on a residential mooring is extremely rare, but finding a boat to rent is really easy. There is an increasing demand by people wanting to rent and there is no end of boat owners offering their boats online for renting out. You only have to search 'Gumtree' or even 'Right Move' to find them. They all require me to move every 14 days and then I too can enjoy the waterways for £390pcm! There is even a specific website (boatrent.co.uk) that specialises in introducing renters and tenants, and also a company that legitimately 'rents' boats without a home mooring. How? It uses the 'Shareboat' clause that CRT has created in which the tenant buys a minority share in the boat. Here's a quote from an online advert for one of their boats: "The monthly fee is administered through a company called 'Escape the Rat Race'. This is the only legitimate way to pay for a boat that is continuously cruising and the business model is endorsed by The Canal and River Trust."

There is also a huge growth in peer-to-peer renting, which is taking place through social media (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat etc). It's extremely easy to find a post about someone who wants to live on a boat, someone who is thinking of living on one, someone who wants to rent, and "do you know anyone who's got a boat for rent?"



This is all taking place in groups and forums and it's very difficult for the navigation authorities to track and monitor.

There was a well-publicised sinking of a rented boat last year, but it is virtually impossible for tenants to talk to the authorities about their safety concerns, now that CRT has pushed renting underground with the licensing restrictions. People know they could lose their home if they speak out against their landlord.

CRT has no idea how many boats are rented 'illegally'. At NABO, we recognise the problem and will do all we can to support tenanted boats and represent them and all other types of boaters. We will continue to warn of the pitfalls of renting and constantly remind people to be aware; if they want to rent, they should seek advice on boat safety and getting the relevant licence. We will also remind people about CO monitors and fire alarms.

TECHIE'S



CORNER

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

By the time you read this it will be Spring, and this is a good time to make use of the odd sunny day or weekend to carry out some basic maintenance on your boat. In fact, apart from a mid-season oil and filter change and any painting, all my maintenance is done between October and April when I visit the boat to make sure all is well. Here are some things you may not have thought of.

Winter jobs

Tony Brooks offers some seasonal advice



Tony Brooks has offered to answer any technical enquiries that members may have. Please send your question(s) to Tony via nabonews@nabo.org.uk and I will forward them to him. Note: Tony may use the questions and his answers without further permission to advise others.

Windows

Most window frames get infested with algae or moss, so it is an ideal time to give them a good scrub out with a bleach solution. You may need an old toothbrush or teaspoon handle to get right into the channels and rubber seals. When you have done this, poke any dirt out of the condensation drain holes in the lower channel. Also lift out any hopper windows and clean the rubber that the hopper sits on. If you find that a rubber sealing cord has risen up on the corner of a window push



Misplaced window sealing cord



Window channel with a year's growth of moss

it back using a teaspoon handle, just flush with the top of the channel. If it keeps happening, the rubber might have shrunk, so you may have to cut it before pushing it back in. I cut at the top where it is crimped into the frame. If the channel where the moss grows keeps filling with water, the glass may have dropped and blocked the drain holes. If so, you may be able to lift the glass using a smooth flat screwdriver blade as a lever, via the outside drain hole. Take great care and do not apply too much force or the glass may shatter.

After a prolonged spell of wet weather, inspect the woodwork around roof vents and below/beside the windows. Any dark patches or stains indicate a leak from the vent or window, possibly between the frame and the boat's structure. If your boat has a separate dry cabin bilge, it is a good idea to leave the inspection trap open during the winter to help ventilate the bilge and also make it easy to see any water in there. Water could be condensation or leaks between window or vent frames and the steel. Only exceptionally will it be an actual hull leak. I find leaving a disposable nappy in the bilge is more effective than simply sponging the water out, because it takes weeks for all the bilge water to find its way to the trap. Just take care lifting the wet nappy out—they can and do split; dropping a load of jelly into the bilge.

Locks, hinges and runners

Check that all door catches and locks are adequately lubricated and ensure that all screws are secure. 'Yale' type locks can jam if the screws that hold the barrel into the door work loose. Make sure that hinge screws are still tight. If they turn in the hole without tightening, glue a matchstick or two into the screw hole and, when the glue has set, snap off the matchstick; you can then tighten the screw. Rub a candle along drawer runners to keep them moving easily; also good on sliding hatch runners.

Engine mounts

If your engine is on flexible mounts, it is vital to make sure that the bolts holding the mounts to the engine beds are tight. It is amazing how many odd rattles are cured by this simple step. If the engine foot is held partway up a long threaded rod, make sure that the two big nuts on each foot are tight. Tighten the bottom one towards the top; never the other way round.



Electric fridge

If you have a 12 Volt electric fridge and want to make it just a little less hungry for electricity in the summer, pull it out and cut some large holes in the floor, positioned so that the black 'radiator' on the back of the fridge is above them. This allows cool air from the bilge to be drawn up to improve cooling of the fridge works.

Those of a more practical bent may like to improve things even more—get a couple of 12 Volt computer fans and connect them in series, with the feed from the terminals on the fridge control unit. Then screw them over the holes in the floor, so that they blow upwards.

Manuals on both the Shoreline Boat Refrigeration and the Danfoss websites give the details*.

If you have a mains fridge, power the fans from a voltage-sensitive relay so that they only blow when the batteries are charging.

* e.g. www.shoreline-marine.co.uk/admin/document_library/FIELDNOTES.6.pdf, refrigerationandairconditioning.danfoss.com/support-center/search-and-select



Rewind

Issue No 2, April 2003

Howard Anguish scours the past issues of NABO News in search of juicy little tidbits.

Chairman's column: Sue Burchett continues the ongoing debate about overstaying, which certainly occupied much interest in Council and elsewhere. She also had concerns about dredging proposals; NABO had joined with IWA and the DBA to hold British Waterways to their word to dredge to the original 'as built' profile. At a recent User Group meeting, IWA had agreed that BW should dredge to a shallower profile which BW had 'gleefully accepted'. Sue asks that IWA should consider 'which side they are on'?

Environmental latest—silent running zones: On certain isolated waterways, even where a statutory right of navigation exists, there are moves to limit craft to electric and human powered vessels. Where similar environmental sensitivity exists on short lengths of the connected canals, it is proposed to introduce 'Silent Running Zones', through which powered boats must drift or be bow-hauled with engines turned off, especially during the breeding season of certain species in the first half of April. (Please remember the date!)

Croeso i'r gymdeithas cenedlaethol perchennog y cychod yng nghymru (Welcome to NABO in Wales). It was good to see that our Welsh members were not forgotten with this message appearing to remind them that their interests were covered by the NW Representative, who regularly attends Local User Group meetings, and increasingly so, since EA had become the River Wye Navigation Authority, which

runs partly through Wales and partly through England.

Fly on the wall: Fly had picked out some subjects that had been of interest at the recent Council meeting: the Railway and Safety Bill is causing consternation among some boaters because of clauses which affect the consumption of alcohol by boaters! Apparently you're okay while moored, but not when moving or moving after drinking. The end of lunch-time drinks at the pub for steerers? Obviously a good ruling for professional steerers but a definite wet blanket for leisure boaters! Council thinks it's unenforceable, as well as removing one of the joys for many boaters, but 'promise to keep their eyes on it.' The increasing use of business barges was also of interest and Council expressed concern that their use may take up valuable mooring space. The third item was the suggestion that marinas should provide facilities for the storage and disposal of so called 'grey water'—specifically containing soap, washing and washing-up water. Initial conclusions were that this proposal would be impractical.

Tailpiece from letters: 'Newtwork Northeast'. Safety work on the railway bridge over the Aire and Calder Navigation in Goole has been postponed a year for environmental reasons. The work, due to close this commercial waterway this March, apparently could not be done without disturbing the habitat of a colony of a species of newt. One hopes this has not prejudiced the safety of the species homo sapiens.

NABO News back issues are available online at: nabo.org.uk/index.php/reference/nabo-news-back-issues

Letters to the Editor

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

CRT's withdrawal from Trust

One has to wonder if the senior management team of CRT, who have brought to the Trust little or no experience of managing a navigation authority, are looking at the railways of this country for inspiration. Given their illustrious leader's previous experience of railway management, it may well be the case that they are! Will they, perhaps, continue to pursue their programme of a 'Wellbeing' provider, prioritising facilities for cyclists, walkers, voles and fluffy ducklings? And promoting their various 'ego projects', all to the detriment of what is supposed to be their primary function of caring for the navigation and preserving the unique historical industrial buildings and sites, until there are no longer sufficient funds to pay their salaries, bonuses, fringe benefits and pension contributions, and all the freeholds to our heritage sites have been sold.

They could then follow the example of both Stagecoach and Richard Branson with his Virgin Rail franchise and pass the bankrupt, broken system back to the Government, wash their hands and walk away from the Trust, retaining all their monies and pension rights of course. Watch this space.

Brian D Jarrett

CRT's (lack of) focus on boating

It seems likely that CRT will revert to one Navigation Advisory Group, based on the structure adopted for NAG Operations, which has a small central core with sub-groups bringing in a wider group of experts who are not necessarily members of the NAG. I could write a whole essay on the subject of how this seems another way to marginalise boating within CRT by watering down the NAG and having NAG Mooring & Licensing as a sub-group that's only used occasionally.

I am worried about the future of boating and I am going to make one statement: people don't come

down to the canals to look at the water; they come to see boats. Without boats on the system, CRT doesn't have a product to sell. This constant attack on boating is already seeing a decline in leisure boating, as it's becoming too expensive for most. In the upcoming licence changes, I predict an increase of 5% for most boaters, year-on-year. Added to this, with the boating population being of advanced years, I predict non-liveaboard boat numbers will decline rapidly. And they won't be replaced by liveaboards, due to the increasing number of restrictions and vilification of people who want an alternative lifestyle. Boating needs to be at the core of things if CRT is going to succeed; not a peripheral or after-thought.

Alison Tuck

Trouble in the Partings

Boaters who cruise the River Severn as it approaches Gloucester will be familiar with the narrow channel leading to Gloucester Lock, which all craft must use to enter the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal. The river divides at the Upper Parting and the navigable eastern channel originally rejoined the main river at the Lower Parting, downstream of the now disused Llanthony Lock. Locals know the river along this stretch as 'the Partings'.

In recent times, cruising this section of river has become notorious for striking obstructions, both on the surface and submerged out of sight. The problem is amplified by the tidal nature of the river, which moves debris and deposits silt, leading to an increasingly shallow channel with the increased risk of striking the river bed or hitting an underwater object. Despite repeated complaints to CRT (and to BWB in earlier times), reports of fallen trees are ignored and no meaningful dredging has taken place for many years. Countless vessels have incurred damage over the years to stern gear, after hitting logs or touching the river bed. The cost of repairing bent propeller shafts and propellers can be consider-

able, not to mention the anguish to boat crews and the disruption to cruising plans and loss of holidays while boats are out of commission. In some cases, we hear that BW/CRT has actually reimbursed owners for the cost of repairs rather than undertake a proper dredging regime which would improve the river for all users.

The problem has now been brought to a head with owners of several larger seagoing boats based at Upton-upon-Severn planning to move their permanent moorings from Upton Marina to the Bristol Channel to avoid the hassle and fear of damage to their valuable craft. This has led the management of Tingdene Marinas to act to protect their commercial interests and those of their valued customers, and a meeting between the Operations Director and the local Waterways Manager has been sought to resolve the ongoing problem. However, CRT appears to be in denial and refutes that craft are encountering problems in the Partings. It would be of immense help to the case if any boat owner who has experienced difficulties or damage could inform Upton Marina, who will coordinate the reports and use the evidence to seek improvements to the river at Gloucester. If you have first-hand experience or knowledge of boats sustaining damage in the Partings, please submit full details with dates, location, nature of problem and the response you received from CRT when you reported the incident. Julie Rawlings at Upton Marina will gladly receive your emails at uptonmarina@tingdene.net

Stephen Peters

Letter to Damian Kemp at CRT and his reply:

For a bit of background information, up until just after the Trust was formed there were a number of places, mainly in the West Midlands, where visitor moorings are mixed in with permanent moorings. Where there were more power outlets than permanent moorers, other boaters could turn up, plug in and insert a prepaid card. No problem. Then it was decided to convert all electricity pillars on permanent mooring sites to 'Smart Metering'. This required all moorers to set up an account with MeterMacs and prepay for electricity online.

This effectively locked out about 90% of boat-

ers, as an account was only available to those with a CRT (now Waterside Moorings) mooring. Actually, only those with a CRT mooring with power were eligible. So there are now some electricity supply pillars that rarely get used, other than by visiting boaters who have a qualifying mooring elsewhere. The one that really annoys me is in Boston that has ten power outlets for six permanent moorers.

So, the list is:

1 Card Operated at:

Bardney visitor moorings
Cromwell Lock Pontoon
Newark Pontoon (bizarrely one of these is a 63-Amp socket)
Rotherham above Eastwood Lock (another with a 63-Amp socket)
Clarence Dock Leeds
Worcester
Gloucester Docks West Quay

There are three different card systems: RAMCard/Digicard, where you leave the card in the reader and units are removed as you use them. Press a button to eject the card with unused units remaining on the card for later use; Rolec which are purchased in KWh units; and AMPY which are purchased in money units. Both of these place all the value on the pillar as soon as the card is inserted and, when the boater leaves, any unused electricity remains on the pillar for the next user.

2 MeterMacs sites with visitor moorings and spare power outlets:

Cuckoo Wharf at Aston on the Birmingham and Fazely
Ocker Hill on the Walsall Canal
Boston Pontoon

Then there is the nice new pontoon at Leicester which, for some bizarre reason, has Smart Metered pillars despite not having any permanent moorers (a bit academic at present as there was no power connection in September). Mind you, the water supply is a very welcome addition. Llangollen visitor moorings all have power supply included as part of the mooring fee.

The electricity pillars at Salthouse Dock in Liverpool have card readers, but so many were giving free electricity that I believe the Trust decided not to repair them and to allow free power. Not a very business-like decision, but that's my personal opinion.

On my last visit to Brentford three years ago, the moorings had been provided with pillars but there was no indication of how electricity would be paid for. I have been in discussion with the local IWA branch but they don't know either. And finally, I read a few months ago that pillars were to be provided at Islington visitor moorings as a joint enterprise between CRT and the London Authority??. I haven't heard if they are there yet or how electricity would be paid for.

It's not your decision I know, but I would see the best way forward being to convert all the Trust's electricity pillars to Smart Meters and give all boaters who want one, a MeterMacs account. A reasonable charge could be levied for this. The scheme could be extended to self-operated pump-outs, removing the necessity for any boater to purchase cards in advance, and the need for the Trust to sell them or making arrangements with local shops to sell them on its behalf.

Having read all this, you will have gathered I'm an advocate of more power hook-ups around the country, especially with all the current debate about diesel emissions.

Pete Earley , NB Joanie M

Damian's reply

Dear Pete,

Thanks for your email. Wow. There's a lot there to digest! My initial reaction is that you've just offered us a no-brainer quick win! There's undeniable logic in what you're suggesting. So, that's the positive part out of the way; now for the caveats!

As you know Waterside Moorings is operated as a commercial entity – not entirely standalone, but definitely at least half an arm's length away from the rest of the Trust. Its overriding objective is to profitably operate our permanent moorings and provide the Trust with revenue to spend on the network at large.

It may be the case that the income and savings made by converting all pillars to MeterMacs and opening up their use to all would not offer

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 that I spotted on the South Oxford Canal.



enough income to cover the cost of this within any acceptable timeframe. Of course, the flip-side to this is that it's quite tricky to put a number on the amount of goodwill this would create among boaters without knowing the demand etc. I honestly don't know how much effort and cost goes into administering the pre-payment card system, so I'm poorly placed to say whether the business case could be made for that part of your suggestion too.

You're right though, there's growing momentum in the air quality debate and this is only going to increase. To this end, we've set up a working group to investigate the related risks and opportunities.

With all the above in mind, I'm eager to champion your idea to colleagues and have copied in the head of Waterside Moorings, the chair of the Air Quality Working Group, head of boating, boating policy and engagement manager and a couple of colleagues from our comms team. I really appreciate your input, Pete.

Damian Kemp



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