



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 2 April 2019

A bronze statue of a man in a cap and jacket stands next to a horse. The man is holding a wooden pole that is attached to the horse's harness. The scene is set outdoors with a background of tall grass and a clear sky.

BOAT FIRES
COMPOSTING TOILETS
THAMES FUNDING



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Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images in JPEG format please. Please email or post your contributions by **May 4th 2018**. Our email address is nabonews@nabo.org.uk



Cover photo

This month's cover photo shows the bronze figures above Foxton Locks on a bright spring afternoon, spotted by the Editor. 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



The warming weather means that many of the estimated 50% of boaters who are leisure cruisers start to gear up for their first outing of the year and the other 50% who live aboard come out of hibernation to enjoy the spring sunshine.

As usual, Fly reports on a lively meeting of NABO Council in March and much else is going on behind the scenes. I have included a report

Evidence please

Editor **Peter Fellows** starts surveys of lost facilities and shallow visitor moorings.

by Mike Rodd on the last meeting of the National Inland Navigation Forum and I've had a read through CRT's Boater Report 2018, which sets out how boaters support the Trust through licence and mooring fees, and how the Trust spends its income on maintaining its navigations. On a less happy note, I've included a summary of a recent BSS

Helen Hutt spotted this on the Worcester & Birmingham. "I wasn't aware of the campaign but think it's a good one—I wonder if it's had any effect?"



February was glorious: unseasonably warm and sunny, and both the birds and trees were slightly confused; an early spring followed by (in Manchester) a month's rain in two days. There were flood warnings for a lot of rivers and hearing the flood alarms going was slightly scary, but the towns that were flooded in 2015 seemed to have put plans in place, banks had been repaired and held, so a sigh of relief for all.

I have had two meetings in a week and this has had an impact on my ability to keep my energy levels equalised. The NABO Council meeting in Tamworth involved a tortuous train journey which resulted in my arriving at the meeting over an hour late.

The Canal and River Trust Council meeting in Manchester in March was rather less stressful as it involved a local journey down the Buxton line to Manchester Oxford Road and a short walk to the Bridgewater Hall using the towpath. The meeting was vastly improved by the addition of a topic for discussion on 'Shared Space on Towpaths'. The three members who were asked to make a submission were myself, representing boaters, the Ramblers Association, plus the anglers' delegates. The cycling delegate didn't turn up, but we tried not to blame all cyclists, just the inconsiderate ones. CRT Council has made some recommendations which will be published. There was an interesting topic from the Waterways Ombudsman elect about the work done over the last year and anonymised cases are on the website. The Ombudsman is considering offering the services to other navigation authorities, which could be useful as the majority of cases concern mooring.

The IWA's Vision for London was recently published and, while NABO

agrees with and supports the IWA position on facilities, a lot of what was said could be applied across the network. Indeed, the provision of washing machines and showers is also important for those boats without a home mooring, particularly liveaboards. However, the minimum recommendations that were made some years ago seem to have become the norm rather than the basis for improvement and increased provision.

Busy like bees

Stella Ridgway attended the last CRT Council meeting.

A shout out for the Trust teams who have worked long and hard over the winter months on towpath improvement, on the Peak Forest Canal, where I moor, and elsewhere. Sometimes we are quick to criticise the Trust, but the actions of its staff to make boaters' lives and navigation easier can be overlooked. We also sometimes forget that unless we report something wrong it will not be logged. I have spoken to the Head of Customer Service concerning improvements to the online report form and I would urge everyone to report everything, either by phone on 0303 040 4040, or using the online form. This is going to be improved with inputs from the boaters' reps to the Council. We still have a vacant place on Council and if you would like to volunteer, please let us know.

Finally, the wet weather now seems to have been replaced by a period of sunshine and warmer weather and, for those of you who boat in the summer months, there will possibly be a chance to get out before the Easter break in April. Enjoy your boating.

The IWA Vision for London

www.waterways.org.uk/branches-egions/london/pdfs/vision-for-london



Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at the March Council

There is still no specification for a minimum water depth at visitor moorings, despite the (now defunct) NAG recommending that there should be—perhaps because CRT would have a huge amount of extra dredging to do. Councillors then decided to talk rubbish—literally, not metaphorically—with reports of a trial by a commercial company to collect rubbish from boats for recycling and rumours of charges to use CRT waste-bins. Canalside facilities continue to decline, with the new owners of BWML marinas now either charging for water and Elsan disposal or denying passing boaters the use of facilities. CRT facility blocks have also been closed. There is no information about CRT's survey of facilities three or four years ago and the Council will ask members for details of lost facility blocks to build a nationwide picture.

'Share the Space' is in the news

again, with CRT wanting to put up new signs to slow speeding lycra-louts along towpaths, especially on urban canals. Even mother and toddler groups have taken to Facebook to complain that towpaths are no longer safe for them to walk home from playgroups. There have also been fishing competitions along flights of locks, with the pegs located on lock landings. But the latest is a proposal by the National Federation of Bridleway Associations for horse riders to be allowed to use towpaths. Some may argue that this is what towpaths were built for, but they were used by steady little dobbins, plodding along at 2 mph with 20 tons of boat behind—not skittish 16-hand thoroughbreds.

There was news that the Marple Wharf development has been rejected, but there is now concern over the future use of the Whaley Bridge transhipment shed.

The understaffed and underfunded EA has decided to take mooring enforcement back in-house and get lock-keepers to do it, rather than the car-parking companies, which no-one seems happy about. Also on the Thames (and in London and on the K&A), there is a problem with 'slum boats', or multi-occupancy boats, being rented out. But most have a BSS certificate and a licence, so it seems there is not much that the EA and CRT can do about it. Legislation on multi-occupancy houses does not apply to boats, but neither the Government nor the navigation authorities seem to want to do much about it; so tenants are living with very little legal protection. It is predicted that liveboards, attracted by the lifestyle and affordable housing, will soon outnumber leisure boaters. CRT says it is not a housing charity, but increasingly it might be.

Byeeee

NABO calendar 2019

Council meetings are held at boat clubs in the Midlands area. Members are welcome to attend; please just let the Secretary or the Chair know in advance (contact details inside cover).

The dates for Council meetings in 2019 are as follows: April 28th (teleconference), June 23rd, September 1st, October 13th, November 17th (includes AGM).

NABO at the user groups

National Inland Navigation Forum

Mike Rodd reports back from the meeting

The National Inland Navigation Forum (NINF) met at the St. Pancras Cruising Club in February with all but one of the member bodies represented. This forum continues to be a useful meeting point, bringing together navigational bodies involved with CRT, EA and other navigation authorities.

There was much discussion surrounding issues relating to the possibility of the EA's navigational responsibilities being taken over by CRT. Feedback was that, within CRT, it was believed that any future funding from Government would depend on the Trust taking on the EA's navigational responsibilities. It was felt that the best NINF could do at this stage was to use all its political contacts to attempt to ensure an acceptable outcome. It was also felt that all bodies should ensure that they were invited to future

meetings of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways, as it appeared that most had not been invited to recent meetings.

Issues relating to threats to ban boats from using various so-called polluting fuels in their stoves were discussed. It was agreed to monitor the situation closely as the consequences would be very serious for many users. Likewise, issues relating to future developments on the availability/charging for red diesel need to be monitored carefully.

One interesting point was that, as valuable as the BSS scheme is, it is often interpreted as ensuring that people buying boats with BSS certification are guaranteed that the boat is fully inspected in terms of its operation. Maybe a slightly different name for the scheme might be considered so as to truly reflect what it is?

Can you help?

NABO needs a Minutes Secretary and an Administrator, and also reps. for the Middle Level, Anglian Waters and the River Trent — can you help?

The membership team would also welcome someone who could spare half an hour, every fortnight or so, to help with the membership database.

Also we'd like to hear from a member who has a legal background.



I name this boat ...

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



Changes to CRT's online mooring policy...

CRT has updated its online mooring policy, following a consultation at the end of 2017. There are two areas of change: the end of the online reduction policy, in which the charity had previously removed one long-term online mooring for the creation of every ten off-line marina moorings.

Moorings that have been removed to date will not be reinstated, and this will not affect marinas currently in development where an online mooring reduction has already been agreed. Secondly, single 'end of garden' mooring applications will now be considered against privately-owned land, not just land that has a residential dwelling on it. Permission will only be granted to the landowner and sub-letting the mooring will not be permitted.

Further information is available at 'Where can I find information about our moorings policies?' at canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/moorings/mooring-faqs.

CRT buys warehouses

CRT has bought the 153,803 square feet Conneqt Alpha warehouses in Cannock from Opus Land and Palmer Capital and appointed Avison Young and JLL to let the units. Collingwood Rigby acted as acquiring agent for CRT, with consultancy advice from Avison Young.

Tesni Thacker, of Avison Young, said: "We are very pleased to have been appointed to this devel-

...and licence terms and conditions

From 1st April, the following changes came into effect:

- The prompt payment discount rate will be 5% (reduced from 10%).
- Short term licences—one-day licences will no longer be available and CRT is reviewing the costs related to administering other short-term licences.

Around 70% of licence holders renew their licence online. Licensing agents can also process a payment. For those who renew via Club Agents, a new Agent's portal will be online in the next few months. Licence documents for fixing to a boat can also be sent to boaters through the post.

You can arrange this by updating your preferences on your online account or by calling CRT customer services on 0303 0404040.

opment, which has been designed to the highest standards and is suitable for warehouse, logistics or industrial uses." Catherine McLoughlin, from CRT, said: "We are delighted to have acquired Conneqt, Cannock. We are confident in our agency team of Avison Young and JLL that they will be able to provide us with advice and direction to ensure the swift letting of these units."



Conneqt warehouse,
Photo: Avison Young

Lockage report

CRT monitors lock operations, both for management of water resources and also to gain an understanding of changing patterns of use.

The latest report covers the period from January to December 2018, during which the Trust moved from ten Waterway Divisions to six Regions, which is reflected in the latest report. Lockage is defined as filling and emptying a lock chamber, recorded automatically by telemetry in most cases.

Boat movements are the actual number of boats that travel through a lock and, for a typical broad lock, the ratio can be between one and four boats per lockful of water used. Nationally, the total recorded lockage in 2018 was around 11.3% lower than in 2017.

Adam Comerford, CRT's National Hydrology Manager, notes that the reasons for year-to-year variations in lockage across different regions and individual locks are numerous and complex. But one reason for the change was that the summer of 2018 was the third driest and second hottest since 1910 and closures and restrictions due to reduced water resources led to local reductions in lockages.

The busiest site was the paired Locks 2 & 3 at Hillmorton on the North Oxford Canal (8,621

	Region	Average lockages	
		2017	2018
1	West Midlands	3493	3340
2	London & South East	3010	2755
3	East Midlands	2865	2733
4	Wales & South West	2643	2508
5	North West	1926	1177
6	Yorkshire & North East	1096	1004

lockages). In fact, nine out of the ten busiest locks were recorded in the West Midlands, the other being Bradford on Avon Lock on the K&A. Of the 150 locks that were monitored, the least used lock was Lock 1 at Graving on the Shropshire Union, with 30 lockages. As can be seen in the table, ranking of the waterway regions by lockages is unchanged from 2017.

The report can be found at canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/managing-our-water/annual-lockage-report.



Hillmorton Locks 2 and 3, the busiest on the system last year,
Photo Wikipedia

New Chair for Regional Advisory Board



Nigel Weatherill
Photo: Liverpool Echo

CRT has appointed Professor Nigel Weatherill as the new chair of its North West Regional Advisory Board. In a voluntary role, for an initial three-year term, the former Vice-Chancellor of Liverpool John Moores University will help guide strategy and decisions at the Trust.

Boat fires

The annual BSS incident report was published in March and provides a summary of the incidents over the last year.

Compiled by **Graham Watts**, BSS Manager, and **Rob McLean**, BSS Communications Manager, from investigative work by **Dave Washer**, BSS Technical Assistant

A total of 132 boat incidents, based on 124 events, were recorded up until February 2019. In three events, fire affected more than one boat. There were 54 fires and CO incidents on inland waterways, which is the lowest number for three years. In 18 of the reported incidents, the cause is unknown or inconclusive. In 24 of the 54 fire and CO incidents, the boat was used for residential or extended use, but this may be an underestimate as, in a further seven fire/CO incidents, the 'use class' is not known. There were three boat fire fatalities, all liveaboards; the highest number in one year since 2012. All victims lived alone on their boats and alcohol consumption was confirmed as a significant factor in two of the incidents. None of the boats is thought to have had a smoke alarm on board.

Of the three fatal fires, the first was in February at Stone, on a narrowboat, with a single female fatality. The fire started when embers fell from a stove through its open door and onto a combustible floor surface. The stove door could not close as the catch was broken (BSS Check 8.10.5 which is advice only). The hearth extended less than 225mm and had no upstand (which would not be compliant with BS8511:2010).

The second was a fire and explo-

sion in March at Boroughbridge on a small cruiser, with a single male fatality. It had an unknown cause, but is likely to have been a candle or oil burner. Three other boats were damaged in the resulting explosion and fire, one completely destroyed.

The third was a fire and explosion in May at Sharpness on a small GRP motor sail yacht, with a single male fatality. It is believed that the fire started in the petrol-engine space after maintenance work the day before.

Disproportionately at risk

Home Office figures indicate that fire fatality incidence in houses is 1 in 341,666 people, whereas the fatal fire rate for liveaboard boaters this year was 1 in 7,333, suggesting that it is far more dangerous to be involved in a fire on a boat as a liveaboard than it is as a house resident.

The Home Office Fire Safety Unit has published information that homes with smoke alarms improve survivability by eight times, which is likely to be equally true for liveaboard boaters. The BSS plans to review smoke alarm policy in due course.

The BSS is monitoring the significant growth of boats used as domiciles and the likely demographic taking on this lifestyle, possibly through financial pressures to live aboard as a form of low-cost accommodation. It is also assessing the

likely impact that this would have on the installation, maintenance and use of powered and fuelled boat systems. It aims to ensure that boats feature sufficiently highly in Fire and Rescue Service prevention initiatives, especially where there are hotspots of liveaboard boaters that present concerns.

Near-fatal fires

- An explosion in April on a leisure cruiser at Ely caused major injuries to two adults and one child, including serious burns. The fuel for the explosion is not yet confirmed as gas or petrol.
- A woman was also taken to hospital after a canal-boat caught fire on the Grand Union Canal in London, but no further information has been provided.
- An owner was refuelling his petrol outboard engine on a lock landing stage. The petrol vapour ignited and the owner suffered burns to his chest and arms. The boat, then alight, drifted toward a weir boom.
- A fire in September near Bath on a liveaboard narrowboat undergoing a refit caused major injuries to two adults.
- In August, two 'retirees' spent their savings on an unregistered boat in a marina and three days later a rapid fire developed on the boat at its mooring. The two occupants jumped into the water and were admitted to hospital for treatment. No further details are available and the owners have not responded to requests for information from the navigation authority officer.

Rented craft incidents

A rented boat with a private BSS certificate caught fire due to pyrolysis in the wooden surround of the solid-fuel stove, causing substan-

tial damage to the boat in the stove area. Both tenants required treatment for smoke inhalation and a hospital check-up, but they effected repairs and moved back aboard.

CO incidents

In February, a rotating chimney cowl on a solid-fuel stove failed and the CO alarm was activated. Trading Standards engaged with the maker and the product was withdrawn from the market. BSS plan a press release, guiding owners to check their rotating cowls, ensure they are maintained to the maker's instructions and, if in doubt, to remove or replace them.

Other fatal incident

A private boat owner was knocked into a canal by the tiller swinging after hitting an underwater object. By the time a friend could rescue the victim and secure him to the boat he was unresponsive and did not survive after attendance by blue light services.

Hire-craft incidents

There were six confirmed incidents, including three sinkings in locks, two incidents that involved slipping (one on a gunwhale that resulted in a collapsed lung of the victim and the other when the victim jumped from the boat to the bank and sustained a serious head injury that required intensive care in hospital). The remaining incident involved the explosive shattering of a glass cooker-lid that resulted in hospital treatment for cuts to the victim's head from glass shards.

There have been 13 boat fires since August 2018

15th August at Acton Bridge, 21st August at Caversham, 29th August at Rugby, 22nd September at Bath, 2nd November at Godalming, 5th December at Iver, 16th December at Stockton, 21st December at Woodbridge, 22nd December at Oxford, 23rd December at Brighton, 8th January at Griffin Marina, 14th January at Cowes, 15th January at Rickmansworth and 16th January at Strood.



Smoke alarms can improve survivability by up to eight times according to the Home Office Fire Safety Unit



Braunston historic boat rally

The annual Braunston boat rally of historic boats has been confirmed for the weekend of 29-30th June. The 17th such event at Braunston, it attracts well over 80 historic boats that gather and take part in parades.

And to whet your appetite, here's a photograph from 2011 by Tim Lewis

www.braunstonmarina.co.uk/Events/2019-historic-boat-rally-29th-30th-june



Loss of facilities

The boaters' facilities at Newbold on Avon on the North Oxford canal have closed and all ex-BWML marinas have now stopped offering free facilities to passing boaters.

A statement from BWML Sawley Marina read: 'Since BWML's affiliation with The Trust is no longer, we aren't obliged to provide facilities to passing boaters. However, we will be introducing a charge for cassette emptying, allowing passing boaters to still make use of facilities but at a cost of £2 per cassette. Please also be aware that our pump-out charge will be increased to £20 instead of £15. These charges will come into effect from 1st February 2019.'

NABO would like all members to report details of where you find facilities have disappeared. NABO supports the IWA stance on having a minimum distance between free facilities and would like to build a nationwide picture of the areas that are facilities deserts.



A sign outside one of the boater-friendly pubs at Newbold on Avon.



Duncan Davenport and Cllr Brian Clarke (Cheshire West and Chester Council) on the new pontoon moorings
Photo, CRT

New moorings in Northwich

New pontoon moorings have been installed on the River Weaver in Northwich by Cheshire West, Chester Council and CRT at the Barons Quay leisure development next to the Odeon Cinema. The £175,000 funding came from Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Boaters now have direct access to the town's shops, restaurants and bars. Mooring at the front door of the Odeon has to be the most stylish way

to visit the cinema. Moorings are free for up to 24 hours.

Duncan Davenport, CRT's Customer Operations Manager, added: "Enabling boats to moor in this area is a win, win for everyone. Boaters will help the local economy and their colourful narrowboats add to the attractive town centre waterway scene."

Onwards and upwards

Andy Tidy reports on the latest CRT National Council meeting in March.

The meeting was in Manchester's Bridgewater Hall, which provided an opportunity to see the lower section of the Rochdale 9 (locks, not prisoners).

The reason this section was selected is because it is a largely ignored length, which CRT is planning to submit for a Green Flag award (CRT has obtained Green Flag status in several other areas, but to date

these have tended to be in 'pretty' locations - not the gritty inner-city). So, this is a pretty ballsy move. The Green Flag team have seen what is there and, while they say it is a challenging location, it's not impossible. CRT's desire is to prove that, if they can breathe life into the urban canyon in Manchester, they can do it anywhere.

Well, they are starting from a pretty low point with slippery tow-paths, graffiti covered walls and piles of excrement (canine and human). But, they have bravely nailed their cleaner, greener, safer colours to the proverbial mast and I look forward to seeing this largely overlooked historical gem take a more central place in Manchester's city centre.

My place on the National Council - elections

I am an elected member on the National Council, representing Boating Businesses, and the four-year term in office is coming to an end.

I therefore have a decision to make; to stand for re-election or not. I have found that it takes 18 to 24 months to get a grip on how the Trust works and who does what, so I feel that I have been at my most effective in the last two years. It therefore seems a shame to dip out now and, with your support, I plan to stand for a further four years. I think that the elections will be held at the back end of this year, preceded by nominations and canvassing, but I thought it would be helpful to let

you know what my plans are and to let you buttonhole me when you see The Jam Butty out and about this summer. It has been both a pleasure and an honour to serve on the Council, ensuring that boaters' (business and pleasure) views are heard and to ensure that my favourite playground continues to survive and thrive in the decades to come.

The National Council meeting

I can't pretend that these jottings represent comprehensive minutes, but they do try and capture my take on the more significant things discussed, and hopefully provide an insight into how your Trust operates.

The Appointments Committee

There was a report of work undertaken to review the make-up of the Council, observing that, from a starting point of 32 members, it grew to 34 and then, largely due to the reduction in regional chairs, the number has now fallen to 29 (compared to a constitutional maximum of 50).

The plan is to expand the Council

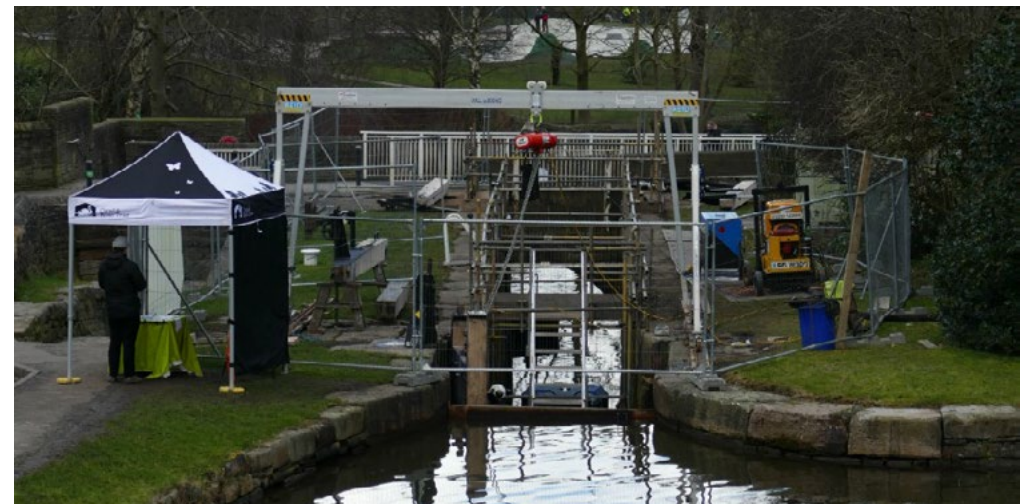
back to 34 members for 2020, including representatives for Friends, an extra boating representative (exact constituency to be decided), a wellbeing expert, an additional youth representative and a second volunteer. These changes are subject to formal amendment of the Trust's rules. A general discussion took place, highlighting possible stakeholders who are not currently represented, and who may benefit from inclusion in an expanded Council in the future. The improved Trustee rotation periods, discussed at the last Council, were ratified.

Chief Executive's update

This is always a key element of the Council meeting, when Richard Parry presents an update on the good, the bad and the ugly within the Trust. Facts come thick and fast but these were the key takeaways from my perspective:

Income was down fractionally, but costs were controlled and overall break-even was achieved. Four or five Key Performance Indicators had been missed and, in particular,

Lock repairs at Marple
Photo: Dave Thompson



Up the Rochdale nine
Photo: Peter Fellows





Did you know that 15% of volunteer lock-keepers are called Dave?

the reportable incidents (accidents) and unplanned navigation closures had exceeded the plan. Specific reference was made to two inquest outcomes for deaths in Manchester and at Pontcysyllte, with the actions being considered to address the underlying risks.

Delays in reopening the locks at Marple were highlighted with a scheduled end-date in May, with £1m committed to what has been a very difficult site. Burnley embankment and the blown cill at Gloucester were also flagged up.

Restoration activity was covered, in particular the work on the

Towpath widening, Edgbaston tunnel
Photo Peter Fellows

Grantham and Montgomery canals, helped by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Towpath enhancements have been underway in many locations, including a significant bridge widening in Birmingham. The impact of these enhancements has been an almost instant increase in user numbers.

The Trust now has just six regions and all the regional chairs are in place. A filmed extract from the Regional AGM in Birmingham was shown to demonstrate the impact these regions can have on local stakeholders and political influencers.

The future Green Flag location aspirations were highlighted, including the Lower Peak Forest, Erewash, Sheffield/Tinsley and Lee/Hanwell

navigations. Canals will feature strongly in this year's Chelsea Flower Festival and on Gardeners World.

The strong growth in volunteer numbers was supported by the 'Join the Daves' video. Did you know that 15% of volunteer lock-keepers are called Dave.....?

An expanded approach to supporters was presented, which includes Facebook and Twitter engagement. After the data protection changes, the number on the email list reduced to 49,000, but has since bounced back to 94,000 in February 2019.

The investment portfolio was covered briefly, with photos of the new investment and joint venture buildings in which the Trust has an interest.

Income generation activities that are underway include the re-pricing of some London moorings, the push to have more hydro schemes agreed, and a long-running dispute with Thames Water that is nearing resolution.

The plan for the next year is to see income rise to £218m, costs of £215m and an operating surplus of £3m as a buffer for the future.

The Key Performance Indicators are under review by the Board to ensure they focus on user satisfaction.

The transfer of EA navigations has been the subject of a further tender, but the sticking point remains the major flood prevention structures. An outcome is awaited, but any change at this stage is considered unlikely.

Complaints Process/ Ombudsman

John Horsfall (Head of Customer Service Support) and Simon Woods walked the Council through the complaints process in the following context:

- 4m visits per fortnight;

The plan is to see income rise to £218m, costs of £215m and an operating surplus of £3m as a buffer for the future.

- 80,000 anglers of which 10,000 are regulars;
- 34,000 leisure boats and 1,000 business boats delivering £13m of income.

■ Visitor satisfaction stands at 90%. The complaints process covers all the above and the numbers are:

Level 0: 1456 solved at first contact
Level 1: 645 solved by a senior manager

Level 2: 97 solved by an independent senior manager

The Ombudsman had nine cases opened with eight not upheld and one upheld. The role of the Ombudsman is to be an independent and impartial means of settling disputes outside the courts. The Ombudsman Committee comprises five members, of which the majority are independent, and they review 14 - 17 cases per year. Andrew Walker (the current Ombudsman) is standing down this year and will be replaced by Sarah Daniel.

Sharing the Towpath discussion

This was an interactive group discussion which forms part of the Council meeting. The action taken to date by CRT was covered by the Chief Operating Officer, followed by short presentations from the perspective of residential boaters, anglers and ramblers.

The various issues, conflicts and options in this contentious area were discussed in small groups and the key observations collated for future consideration within the Trust.

Management of short-stay Thames visitor moorings

From February, the short-stay visitor moorings at selected lock sites on the non-tidal River Thames have reverted to management by Thames' Waterways staff, while the EA final-



Visitor moorings at Laleham
Photo: Peter Fellows

Middlewich breach

CRT has admitted that it failed to implement recommendations that may have prevented the Middlewich breach. The last principal inspection of the embankment was in March 2010 with two recommendations to be carried out within one to five years.

Due to settlement of the embankment and the resulting low freeboard, the inspection report recommended raising the existing waterway wall at a cost of £13,000 (section 4.2). It also recommended that the embankment crest be raised (section 4.3), with puddle clay within the crest, at a cost of £28,000.

David Fletcher commented: "I wonder if this was a local decision by the old NW area not to do the work. What is disturbing, if not surprising, is that CRT has withheld this information; maybe the top management did not know. I think the issue now is what are they doing about it, and where else is the system vulnerable to overtopping? Here, there is a combination of a large upstream pound (unlimited water), a large level drop across the lock (10-12 feet), large paddles that are known to be a problem, insufficient

ises arrangements for a long-term solution that draws on the lessons learned from trials using external contractors.

In the interim, lock staff will manage short-stay moorings at the following lock sites where charges will apply: Lechlade, Eynsham, Kings, Osney (East St moorings), Iffley, Culham, Abingdon, Goring, Sonning, Marlow and Cookham. Visitor moorings are free for stays of 24 hours and will be monitored by patrol launches.

These moorings are available at the following locations: Reading (Scours Lane), Wargrave (Lashbrook moorings), towpath opposite Queen's Eyot, Boveney (opposite Andrews Boathouse), Egham, Laleham, Weybridge towpath, tail of Desborough Island, Walton towpath, Walton Gridley Miskins, Hurst Park, Kingston Rail Wharf (upstream end). Signage at all sites is being replaced to ensure users are aware of the change in arrangements.

downstream weirs, a low bank and a vulnerable embankment. This cannot be unique. Surely the paddles should have stops to prevent them being fully opened?"



The Middlewich breach
Photo Harry Arnold, Waterway Images

Volunteering is not so happy-go-lucky

Joe Parkin explains why you won't see him locking you through Braunston this year.

As a boater of many years standing, when I sold my boat I wanted to still be involved with the canals and so volunteered as a lock keeper. Living near Braunston I spent most of my time helping boaters at Braunston locks, and doing so I can well understand why CRT is desperate for more volunteers, as it is far from the happy-go-lucky experience with fellow boaters that I imagined.

The main problem is that when many people see a 'locky', volunteer or real, they then think all will be done for them, with many, and I will add regular boaters as well as hirers, deciding to stay on their boats and wait for the locky to do the work.

There are times when your volunteer 'partner' fails to turn up, and then it gets too much with a boat in the bottom of one lock blowing his horn waiting for the gates to be opened, yet here I am being shouted at, at another lock, not to open the paddles too much but to stay and open them slowly, the helm being somewhat on the nervous side. Such occurs all too often.

With six locks in the flight, well, it can get nasty with some boaters who certainly do not 'go with the flow' but expect full attention. Telling them you are only an unpaid volunteer just helping out doesn't seem to wash with some.

I'm often being told that if I can't do it, then I should not volunteer. CRT tells me to ring up when I am left on my own, as does happen



Photo CRT

when a fellow volunteer who has had enough packs it in and walks off, or just does not turn up, but it is very rarely that there is anyone spare, so I'm told 'do what you can'.

There is one particular volunteer who maintains he is there just to give advice, and doesn't get his backside off the lock beam, except when someone, not he (!) moves it. Then there are the others who dash about doing everything, usually without thinking and getting in a mess, both being a pain.

Having got that lot off my chest, luckily there are those boaters who are pleased to see you, appreciate what you are doing, so make it worthwhile. So if you want to try it, then do so, but be prepared. Me? I've had enough, and occasionally walk up the flight to see the activity, but certainly do not volunteer any more.

narrowboatworld.com/11348-volunteering-not-so-happy-go-lucky

Recently, there has been much chatter in the press and on social media, such as the NABO Facebook page, on mooring issues, so I thought I would summarise some of the points that have been raised in various recent press releases. First, the policy, for the last ten years or so, of withdrawing one CRT towpath mooring for every ten marina berths created in the locality has been dropped, but the moorings that have been withdrawn will not be reinstated. CRT has also dropped its objections to end-of-garden

All the goss about moorings

Mark Tizard keeps his ear to the ground on mooring developments

moorings, providing that they are occupied by the applicant and not sub-let. Marina owners will no doubt object to these changes but, with the recent sale of BWML, CRT no longer has an interest in this area.

After protests last year at the proposed high level of mooring price increases in the London area, Waterside Moorings, the CRT division that manages permanent moorings, has reviewed the proposals with the help of external advisors. The upshot is that 16% of berth holders will see increases close to inflation, but 76% of occupants will see substantial increases that CRT has agreed to cap at 10% a year for a transition period of up to five years.

Meanwhile, CRT is implementing the outcomes of the lengthy

London moorings consultation, which included, for example, the replacement of unrestricted towpath moorings with dedicated business moorings, some bookable spaces and the creation of more long-term moorings outside the popular central London area. The IWA has also published its own London Strategy Document. NABO is broadly in agreement with the majority of the observations raised in this, but there is a general feeling that IWA/CRT are seeking to close the stable door after the horse has bolted. In 2010, there were some 2,000 boats in the London area; today there are nearer 5,000. In that time, there has been no realistic increase in facilities, increasing house prices, increased gentrification of the popular East End, rose-tinted press articles about cheap living on the water, supported by CRT's wellness by water campaign.

It was implicit in the last licence consultation questions and outcome that CRT felt that congestion in London and other popular areas needed to be addressed. The majority of boaters who responded to the consultation and the then-disbanded Navigation Advisory Group (Licensing and Mooring) disagreed that this should be linked to licensing. Perhaps they are using the IWA to initiate yet another consultation. Included in the document are proposals that more of central London should change from 14-day to shorter term moorings, bookable moorings, tighter enforcement etc. etc. NABO is in favour of a mooring mix, which ensures that those visiting or travelling through have access to moorings. This is in addition to the additional facilities.

IWA proposals

However, a couple of proposals in the IWA document, expanded in the



annexes, cause NABO concern. The first is that boaters should be expected to pay for the use of services that are currently provided and maintained free of charge. The second, and more contentious, is that a congestion charge should be introduced for central London. This would also be linked to an overstaying charge. The idea is that this charge would be linked to those made by car-park companies (i.e. £120 or £60 if paid within a certain period). Let's be clear: these are not charges but penalties. Under its powers, CRT is allowed to charge for the services that it provides, but not to raise penalties. How would this be enforced? It will involve outsourcing to a third party, despite CRT previously responding that this was not on the agenda. The other side of the

argument is, of course, that CRT is benefitting from 3,000 extra boats paying substantial licence income and that it should be able to use this income to substantially improve the available facilities and increase the number of towpath rangers to keep boats moving.

In 2010, there were some 2000 boats in the London area; today there are nearer 5000.

Moorings on the Regent's Canal
Photo: Peter Fellows

CRT is allowed to charge for the services that it provides, but not to raise penalties.

The legal argument

Then there is the legal argument: currently we have one licence with two options (boats with a home mooring and those on a continuous journey).

This licence enables us to travel without hindrance throughout the system. Licence evasion and overstaying is at an all-time low, according to CRT, as a result of its revised enforcement policy. So will any of these proposals solve the popularity of stopping in central London, beyond making it the preserve of the rich at the expense of the poorer boater?

There are no easy answers. One wonders whether the current difficulties of double- and treble-mooring with limited facilities will naturally limit any further increase in boat numbers and there is some evidence that numbers are tailing off.

Still on moorings, NABO has recently contacted CRT asking that it considers introducing a minimum depth to the national policy on visitor moorings. We suggested that existing visitor moorings should be checked so that they conform to the channel depth of the canal. If you are aware of any shallow visitor moorings please contact moorings@nabo.org.uk with the exact location (e.g. bridge/lock numbers or any other distinguishing features).

Boat dwellers needs assessments

Finally, the National Barge Travellers Association (NBTA) has issued a best practice guide for 'Boat

Dweller Accommodation Needs Assessments', which has been circulated to local housing associations and related bodies like CRT. While it should be stressed that CRT is not a housing association, it must be said that a substantial number of its customers use their boats as their only home. There is a demand for more residential moorings and if, for example, planning allowed dedicated residential marinas, the demand is there.

NABO is broadly supportive of the request for planning authorities to look more sympathetically at planning applications for more residential moorings. Although the NBTA's implicit claim that it is the representative body that should be consulted on these matters, this is their opinion.

Other organisations, especially the Residential Boat Owners Association, also represent the residential boating community, but NABO remains the only boating organisation that represents all boaters.

NBTA also asks for boaters without a home mooring to be allowed to remain for a period of 42 days, or longer if needed, and to be exempt from any enforcement of travel distance.

NABO has always believed that it is for the navigation authority to determine whether a boater is complying with the relevant navigation acts. Our members without a home mooring do not have an issue complying with CRT's current guidance. On the odd occasion when an overstay is required, due to medical or mechanical issues, CRT is increasingly seen as sympathetic to these requests. Occasionally, these issues are passed to our continuous cruising representative and they are, in our experience, resolved through further discussions.

Thames funding

Thames boaters' perspective on the current state of the non-tidal Thames' funding

A paper presented by **Anthony Riley**, General Secretary of the Thames Motor Boaters Association, to the All Party Parliamentary Group Meeting in November 2018.

Drastic reductions in Government funding for the non-tidal Thames waterway managed by the EA are having a major impact on the maintenance of the waterway and the provision of services for all classes of boaters. Government policy is to move towards a self-funding regime, but outdated legislation and observance of treasury rules conspire to prevent much needed growth of alternative funding streams. Boating users currently contribute some 50% of current revenue, but this falls well short of the level of funding needed to maintain the river as a recreational waterway.

Total spending has fallen from some £20 million in 2010 to less than £9 million in 2017/18. The number of vessels registered to use the river and contributing to direct revenue income has declined considerably since reaching a peak in the early 1970s.

Hire boat decline

The decline in holiday hire craft has been exceptionally severe, from a high of almost 800 in 1980 to well under 200 today, whilst private powered craft registrations have fallen from almost 14,000 in 1973 to approximately 8,000. Powered craft are the major users of the 45 locks situated along the length of the river and very much value, and depend on, the assistance provided by the lock-keeping staff who also undertake the weir keeping duties which assist in

the flood control process. This paper makes no attempt to address the flood control and risk management issues, but it is important to note the current stalemate regarding progress on the lower Thames flood relief scheme covering Staines to Teddington.

Total spending has fallen from some £20m in 2010 to less than £9m in 2018

The Authority of the day has struggled with the issue of funding for many years and levels of service and maintenance have declined, although there had been a significant investment programme a few years ago, which was welcomed and appreciated by river users. However, these improvements will be at risk if continued maintenance cannot be ensured.

Growing issues with liveaboards

In recent years new challenges have started to appear, in particular a growing problem with itinerant and unsuitable craft being used as residential accommodation. Such craft are creating enforcement problems for both the EA and landowners, and legislation is complex.

These craft are also imposing strain on the general availability of



The non-tidal Thames at Windsor

Photo: Peter Fellows

moorings for recreational craft.

Being dependent on Government funding for so much of its income has left the Agency little room for manoeuvre when faced with draconian reductions in grant aid such as those experienced in recent years.

Legal, financing and charging constraints facing the Agency make it all but impossible to replace these funds with other income in the short to medium term other than by imposing rises in registration and related charges on the small number of river users that already pay the greater share of revenue income.

Registration fee increases

The EA has recently announced significant increases of 5.7%pa for each of the next two years—even greater for the other waterways under their control—but this additional income can only be described as a sticking plaster when considering the scale of the problem. It cannot be right that the only avenue for increasing income is to charge more to a decreasing number of customers. The Agency is severely limited in its ability to raise income from any

sources other than the provision of navigation services and mooring rights with limited contribution from the water companies.

In the original 1932 Thames Conservancy (TC) Act local authorities bounding the river were required to contribute specified sums but these requirements were removed by subsequent amendments to the legislation. Today the local authorities bounding the river face their own funding issues and are unable to contribute to the river. Similarly, the statutory payments from the water companies were significantly affected by the privatisation under previous administrations and, it is fair to say, are a small contribution when considered against the undoubted importance of the river as a key natural resource and raw material serving the population of greater London and the south east. The EA has recently estimated that it requires at least £20m pa to fund all its inland waterways responsibilities but has been slow to recognise alternative sources and seek the changes to legislation needed to permit it to pursue these opportunities for new

income streams.

Although the Inland Waterways Order 2010 provided some enhancements to charging rights these are still restricted to purposes covered by the TC Acts. We understand that the EA is now creating a director-led unit to consider all aspects of exploiting commercial opportunities to replace previous public funding, but are concerned that, however successful this may be in the longer term, it will do little to assist in alleviating immediate problems.

Pressures on maintenance

Whilst the Thames above Teddington still remains a pleasant cruising ground, particularly during the summer period, the pressures on funding are having significant impact on maintenance, particularly maintaining channel depths and ensuring overhanging trees and vegetation permit clear passage.

It should be noted that these ‘paying customers’ are by no means the only people that depend on and enjoy the river, whether for recreational or commercial purposes. Millions of people visit the river every year to participate in events or simply to enjoy the environment. Local communities and businesses the length of the river derive income from these activities and value the Thames for what it clearly is; a national recreational asset.

It is only right that both central and local Government should recognise this and contribute to the river’s maintenance and management funding. Some of these other recreational activities, particularly the growth in wild water swimming and similar events attract considerable commercial involvement but it would appear that under current legislation there is little opportunity for the EA to enjoy any financial benefit.

Looking to the future

Mention must be made of the current uncertainty regarding the possible transfer of the EA managed waterways into the care and control of the Canal and River Trust which is currently on hold. Regardless of whether or not such a transfer might eventually take place it is likely that these same funding constraints will apply.

The Agency [has] little room for manoeuvre when faced with draconian reductions in grant aid.

In considering the longer-term future of the EA waterways, three potential scenarios appear to present themselves:

- 1 Government recognises the public benefit of the waterways and provides a more appropriate level of funding.
- 2 Government permits and enables changes in current legislation to give the EA greater freedom to pursue new income streams.
- 3 Government decides to press on with transferring the EA managed waterways to the Canal and River Trust, which will also likely require further funding and revised legislation.

It is impossible to identify any other potential transferee for the waterways.

It should be noted that all three options require Government support and intervention and cannot be resolved by the EA acting in isolation.

How do we make the Thames what it should be—a thriving, vibrant, and valued waterway?

TECHIE'S



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

What's in a name?

Does the composting toilet do what it says on the tin? asks **Brian Jarrett**

The (true) composting toilet on Brian's boat

It required the following steps to achieve a rapid composting process:

I would like to point out that, while there are many toilets on the market that claim to be 'composting', in reality they are only separators of solid and liquid waste and do not carry out a true composting process. While in Canada, I had a true composting toilet in my Northern Territory log-cabin.

the solid contents should be dried by evaporation; and the composting material should be slightly warmed and agitated to break it down to a fine 'night-soil'. To achieve this, you need a heat source below the toilet pan, a fan to draw air through the toilet, which vents to the exterior, and a device to agitate the drying contents. I designed my new boat to have the same Canadian toilet and I need only to empty the dry dusty soil every three to four months. It is indistinguishable from ordinary soil and can be emptied into a hedgerow.

Perhaps what is needed is a real understanding of the composting process, rather than people sounding off half-cock against all composting toilets. The real problem is that many that are sold are not true composting toilets.

CRT on the disposal of the waste from a composting toilet

After conducting a survey, CRT estimates that there are around 1000 boat-owners who have installed composting toilets to reduce their environmental impact.

There have been instances of boaters emptying the contents of composting loos in toilet block facilities, causing them to block up. The survey found that a third of composting toilet users disposed of the solid waste as compost, with the remainder using Elsan facilities or bagging and binning the waste.

Half of respondents pour the liquid waste onto open ground. There are currently no canalside facilities to dispose of composting toilet waste and CRT's advice is that it should be double-bagged and binned.

Also, CRT does not permit disposal of composted solid waste on its land, even if it is fully composted.



Rewind

Issue No 2, March 2004

Howard Anguish explores NABO News from 15 years ago.

NABO Chairman. Stuart Sampson advised, in his column, that BW had announced significant cuts to waterways staff—the 2000 staff to be reduced by 140—to reduce 'fixed costs'. In a section titled: 'An unprecedented outbreak of common sense at Watford!', BW Head Office had recently taken big steps to appear boater-friendly and some of the more silly items had been removed from the licence conditions: 'Without any future pangs of guilt, you will now be able to charge batteries without being underway, use canal water for your flowers and put gangplanks against the bank.'

Stuart also mentions that BW did not consider its licence gave you the right to use any one spot as a long-term mooring unless you have a permit: "NABO does not condone overstaying, but it does support the basic right of boaters not to have to pay for permanent moorings that they would never be in a position to make use of. All these people tend to be dubbed 'Continuous Cruisers' and so condemned to roam the waterways forever like lost souls yet they don't really cruise continuously".

Another suspect term he mentions is 'liveaboard' "NABO Council has officially resolved to avoid using it."

Worried woman of the waterways writes about silly signs. "I have mentioned before the substantial cost of erecting signs to tell us how much was spent on a particular project.... there are so many signs that they lose significance. On the Staffs &

Worcs, between Wolverhampton and Great Hayward, every balance beam has 'Caution gate paddles.....' not one of these locks has gate paddles. No wonder we tend to ignore signs. While 'Health and Safety' tyranny rules and the Nanny State expands, we will be so cocooned by rules and there will be no freedom to choose, right to roam, excitement or adventure allowed."

I asked someone who was there: 'How on earth did boatmen cope safely single-handed with a loaded pair, or even a loaded motor and two loaded butties?' and he replied: 'We just done it, there weren't no Health and Safety then, folk knew how to do things and got on with it.' **Fly on the wall comments** on the introduction of the Continuous Cruising Guidelines, to take the place of the defunct Moorings Code. Fly mentions the guidelines define 'place' as a locality with an identity. 15 years later, CRT still seems to be struggling to arrive at an acceptable definition!

A final comment.

3—2—1—Thunderbirds are go!

"Have you seen BW's new plans for their maintenance fleet? They will be making Pods, which can be floated to the site by barge or craned off a truck, but not, as far as we know, raised up into some hopelessly un-aerodynamic green thing which launches off a ramp, but maybe.... It would have to be blue! There will be welfare pods, workshop pods, maybe pee pods?"



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