



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 3 May 2019

CRUISING RESTRICTIONS
HOW WIDE IS THE NORTH OXFORD?
THE TOP TWENTY BSS FAULTS



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Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images in JPEG format please. Please email or post your contributions by June 29th 2019. Our email address is nabonews@nabo.org.uk

Cover photo

This month's cover photo by the Editor shows April storm clouds over the Ashby canal near Hinckley. 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



It's not yet summer and there are already boating restrictions in place because of damaged or failed infrastructure and low reservoirs, the latter following the lack of winter and spring rainfall after last year's record-breaking dry summer. In the news section, I've listed a summary of restricted lock opening hours, as of the beginning of May, but it can't be long before other canals with limited reservoir

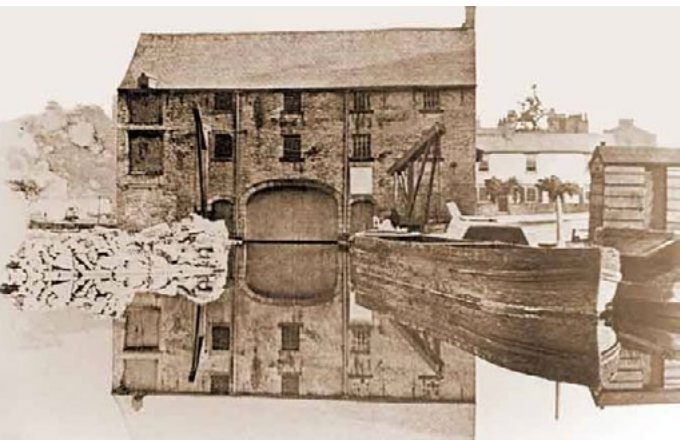
Warming climate and relationships?

Editor **Peter Fellows** detects changes that could affect boaters both negatively and positively.

capacity follow suit. I know that UK weather is notoriously variable, but scientists say that climate warming is now a reality. CRT's Hydrology Unit has plans to mitigate its effects on the waterways, but we should all be doing more individually, whether by supporting Extinction Rebellion and Greta Thunberg's kids' campaign, or reducing our personal impact on the environment. Phasing out the use of

Whaley Bridge transshipment shed, built to transfer materials from the Peak Forest canal under the centre arch to or from the Cromford & High Peak Railway—the two side arches.

Illustration: www.whaleybridge.com



gas and diesel will eventually happen and I believe navigation authorities should be planning now to provide facilities for all-electric boats, so that new craft can be built to this specification.

I've included a summary of CRT's Boater Report 2018 in which the Trust explains how it benefits boaters and needs our support. It has also introduced a shortened annual survey of boaters, renamed the 'Perceptions of the Trust' survey, and a new monthly 'Waterway Experience' survey that aims to 'get a much clearer picture of what's affecting boaters as it happens and react quickly' so that CRT can 'be more responsive and target our maintenance and repair work on the areas that really need it'. All this seems to indicate a shift in attitude towards boaters. It may be a coincidence, or maybe boaters' negative comments last year on CRT's logo and change to the 'waterways and wellbeing' Trust, are having an effect. Likewise, the NABO Council members who are meeting regularly with CRT's regional directors report the meetings to be 'open, friendly and positive' and 'beginning to show the real benefit of a close working relationship between CRT and its boating community'. Long may this continue.

Also in this issue, Mark Tizard shares his thoughts on how the boating community is changing, with a new category of 'financial boaters' growing fast, Kevin McNiff details problems of widebeam boats on the narrow North Oxford canal and Tony Brooks deals with the dreaded diesel bug in Techies' Corner. Finally, my thanks to members who have taken the time to write letters; please keep them coming and also let me know if there are specific technical topics that you would like Tony to address.



At my meeting with Daniel Greenhalgh, the new NW Regional Director who kindly came to my boat so I didn't have to travel, we discussed NABO's role with the Trust and how we can be a critical friend in assisting it.

We discussed lack of facilities; there are no showers at all on the Macclesfield or Peak Forest canals. This may not seem important to some, but the ability to shower for longer than four minutes is a treat (do let me know if you can shower in less time) and to have the use of a washing machine for bulky items would be wonderful, particularly as launderettes become fewer. We also discussed the transshipment sheds at both Whaley Bridge and Marple, and noticed that the Toll House was open in Marple last Saturday—unfortunately, only open when I was on dialysis, but the photos I saw looked good. The planning application for the wharf development at Marple was refused and I haven't heard what the next steps will be, but I wish that the Trust would concentrate on looking for ways to engage not only the land-based community but the boating community as well. The transshipment sheds offer a unique opportunity to bring the two communities together and I hope that this is noted.

Too often, and the new Regional Advisory Boards are testament to this, when I enquired at CRT's AGM about boaters being on the Regional Advisory Group, we were told that it was on the wellbeing agenda for inclusion of the wider community. This is where boaters' perceptions arise of not being included; the boating community is side-lined as being 'on the water' and that boaters 'animate the canals', as if we are there just to be gongoozled at and no more. He did make a note of those two points

and we will see if anything happens. We also discussed the increase in liveboard boaters, including the challenges, but also the opportunities, that these boaters bring, such as increased footfall along towpaths and safer areas.

I also mentioned the repairs being undertaken along this section of the Peak Forest canal and in the North West; they have a team that is going round doing small repairs. I hope it's the same in other regions as

Community involvement

Stella Ridgway meets the North West Regional Director.

it seems to be working up here. As always, if you report a fault to CRT, please do everything through the website or by phone to the central switchboard, so that it gets logged.

This brings me to the ongoing 'Share the Space' campaign. I asked that the form on the CRT website be updated, so that you can report incidents, such as near misses, accidents etc. I would encourage the use of this so that there are logged reports and not merely anecdotal evidence of bad behaviour by some towpath users (be they cyclists, anglers, boaters). Increased commuting use and speeding by a very small section of cyclists, who persist in not slowing down for anyone, is a cause for concern. I have also noticed that mobility scooters are a worry. Is increased signage at access points the answer? Let us know.

Finally, I have a CRT Council Boaters' Reps. meeting on 20th May, which I will be attending. I will be raising the above points, but if there is anything you feel that I should talk about, please email me.



Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at the April Council

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: June 23rd, September 1st, October 13th, November 17th (includes AGM).

good exchanges of views. There have also been some CRT 'strategic study days' in which invited attendees discuss the importance of a waterway to local communities. It was pointed out that boaters are also a community within other communities, and they are able to exert influence and support for land-based neighbours in fighting off unwanted developments, as seen in the attempt to redevelop Marple Wharf. This is a precedent that can be used in future.

There was also welcome news about CRT's new 'fast-response teams' of maintenance staff, who now have the authority to fix any new problems they come across when carrying out maintenance and repair works. But there is less good news about speeding cyclists not 'sharing the space' on towpaths—the latest were witnessed on the Grand Union in Warwick and Leamington.

The wonders of technology allowed April's Council meeting to take place by teleconference, with half of the members out on the cut.

News of CRT's latest staff reorganisation is reaching NABO from all regions of the country, with waterway staff having to apply for their jobs, redundancies in May, and morale at a low point. Several Council members had met waterway directors since the March meeting and reported

A boater is apparently being sued by a cyclist who hit a mooring pin and Councillors wondered whether everyone's boat insurance covers legal claims.

It prompted a discussion about whether CRT can pass a boater's details on to someone making a claim (it can—as set out in the licence terms and conditions) and whether CRT has a duty of care in areas along its navigations (not at all clear). As the land-owner, CRT gives permission for walkers and cyclists (and boaters) to use its towpaths and it could spell out each group's responsibilities. Obviously, boaters shouldn't tie mooring ropes across towpaths, but should they have a responsibility to make mooring pins highly visible (as many do already, with plastic bottles or bright balls on the pins)? Or should cyclists take responsibility for their safety by being vigilant? The real problem is that many cyclists see the routes as cycle-ways not towpaths. Councillors thought it would be good for NABO to offer guidance to its members.

Water shortages have started early this year, with lock restrictions on the L&L and Grand Union canals being introduced to save water. Most boaters are aware of the need to conserve water and will happily share broad locks and ensure paddles are down and gates are closed when they leave, but there is a minority who just don't give a damn and their behaviour needs to be challenged.

Finally, back to rubbish again, with some canalside waste facilities being closed due to local residents fly-tipping (I hate that term—it makes it sound like my fault!) their household refuse, costing CRT tens of thousands annually to deal with.

Byeeee ... 'til the summer.

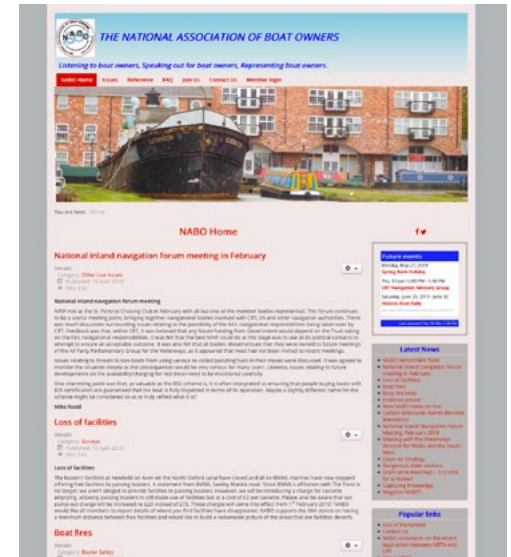
The NABO website and email

David Fletcher describes improvements to NABO's electronic communications

NABO has a website and email service that is at the core of our day-to-day and long-term business. The website is our online window and also the main depository of our knowledge base. We get thousands of visits to the site, the most popular being the listing of Parliamentary Acts and our recruitment pages. Nearly all of our new members join online through the website, referred from social media and our members' hard recruitment work.

The services are provided by a commercial internet service provider, as part of a package that provides a web presence, data storage, email services and support. For members, this is all very opaque, as you cannot tell who is providing the services; it just comes down the wire or the phone signal, and there it is. All that members need to be sure of is that the system is secure. The services are very good value for money; only a couple of hundred pounds each year. But for the web team (me), support is a key element. If things go wrong, can I get help?

For many years, we have been having problems with delivery of emails. We have become aware that some mails are being blocked, because we get bounce-back messages, but there are also some that simply disappear. We know that they get to the recipient's system, but are then blocked silently. This is highly frustrating when we are keen to use these tools for membership communication, being both time- and cost-efficient. Our progress on use of email has been halted for more than a year because of the lack of confidence in delivery of the mail. The mail industry is completely overwhelmed with the volume of junk mail, sent out by powerful systems. The problem is that no system is going to be perfect in getting this right; good mails vs. junk. We are also weary of the inbox full of junk; this has now reached the point where people don't read mails and delete them en bloc. So, communication breaks down. For NABO it was time for a change. In April, we completed a move to another internet service provider with better



email services. The website and log-in are all the same so, as members, you will see no difference. The prize we are chasing is more reliable email delivery. Early indications with the new system are good, though I continue to monitor the situation, take advice and make changes to the set-up. The April bulletin went out on the new system with only one rejection, against 30 in March; already a step change for the better. As I have said many times, BT Internet email addresses and some personal domains are the biggest problem, as they continue to randomly reject emails. I cannot complain to BT as I am not a customer, and they will not talk to me. Internet searches on this issue reveal a long history of problems with BT rejecting mails and failing to address the point. One thing you can help with is to report back on the NABO bulletins. They go out on the first of the month, so if you are not getting these, please drop me a line and we can try to sort it out. Of course, you have to log an email address with us, in order to get them. Finally, if you are an expert on email delivery, SPF and DKIM settings, please speak up. I welcome expert advice.

London & South East Mike Rodd

I travelled to CRT's office in Milton Keynes with Helen Hutt for an hour-long 'get to know you' meeting with Ros Daniels, the Regional Director for London & South East.



Her background is in heritage and tourism and she's only been in post for six months, but the meeting was open, friendly and positive. We touched on several topics of interest, including 'Share the Space', boaters' facilities (or lack of) and volunteers, and we emphasised NABO's willingness to share our knowledge and resources for the benefit of all boaters. We agreed that we must keep the dialogue going—so what we need now is someone to do that: a NABO member who boats on the Oxford canal south of Banbury, the GU south of Cowley, London or the Lea Navigation, who is willing to sit down and engage with Ros perhaps four times a year. Is that you?

Also, she would love to take up any offer of a trip on a member's narrowboat, and told us she is taking her helmsman's test shortly. So if you are on her patch and able to do this over the coming months, please let us know.

Wales & South West Mike Rodd

Of particular importance was the regular meeting of the Mon & Brec canal Boater Liaison Group on 27th March, also attended by Richard Thomas, the CRT Waterways Director for Wales & South West. Much of the meeting was dedicated to CRT's review of the extensive winter works that have been completed and a summary of work being planned. It was highlighted that the canal still has some serious problems relating to water loss, but these are all well identified and receiving attention.

Of interest, too, was the CRT report on the planned Mon & Brec Adventure Triangle Project, noting that major funding has already been secured, in partnership with the local Torfaen Council. Once again, this relaxed but

open meeting showed the real benefit of a close working relationship between CRT and its boating community.

On 29th April, I also attended the third in a series of invited meetings in Bath, held by CRT to consult communities covered by the Wales & South West Waterways Region, falling under Richard Thomas. The objective was to brief key representatives of local councils, representatives of various canal users, and related organisations such as Sustrans, the local police, etc. Richard outlined the strategic programmes being planned by his Directorate and stressed the importance of this meeting in understanding why the western end of the K&A was receiving negative publicity. The well-attended and very open and frank meeting then discussed some of the unpleasant incidents and environmental issues that had been reported, often relating to conflicts between the liveaboard community and other canal users.

Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

The fact that many vulnerable people were being poorly supported by the State, and having to cope on ever-decreasing incomes, was discussed in much detail. It was felt that CRT was doing its best to help, especially by working with representative organisations and working through CRT's Sean Williams and the enforcement team. There was a clear need for better communications between all interested parties, and CRT would look at how best to handle this. It was agreed that a form of 'Canal Watch' scheme should be introduced. The meeting then discussed the continuous cruising requirements, introduced some five years ago, and it was felt that these had been positive, if not always well

understood. The behaviour of cyclists was also reviewed and the Sustrans representative highlighted a positive programme that they had started, aimed at addressing the excessive speeding problem, about which they were extremely concerned, along with most other canal users. Overall, an excellent meeting with many positive suggestions.

North West David Fletcher

I attended the the second of two meetings for the region in May at Anderton. The NW is a big area, from Kendal in the North, Audlem in the South, western halves of the Pennine routes and bits of the Llangollen in the West. Chaired by the Regional Director, Daniel Greenhalgh, and supported by many of the team, Daniel explained that the region has had a very busy year with multiple major issues, such as the Middlewich breach, repairs to Marsh lock on the Weaver, the Melling culvert failure, Marple lock 11 collapse and rebuild, water shortages, deaths in Manchester clubland and internal rebranding and reorganisation.

Going forward, he said there would be seven Area Operations Managers, handling the day-to-day issues, who would be the prime point of contact for major issues. A Reactive Operations Manager would deal with emergency situations such as leaks, blown cills, or broken paddles. He acknowledged that the response on service issues has not been good and this arrangement is designed to improve the situation. Daniel said that he welcomed reports and comments from users on service issues.

We had a couple of presentations on corporate topics, like the rebranding, wellness objectives and the like. All very interesting, but heavy going when you want to talk about water points and sluices that have vanished or the many boats that are stuck behind a major stoppage. A member of the project team talked about current and future works; there is a big problem at Saltisford lock where the cill has blown. During repairs, the stop-plank brickwork collapsed, re-flooding the lock—fortunately during the night when nobody



was around. The area is now flooded and cannot be dewatered without some novel approach, and there is no forecast available yet on a remedy. The troubled work on Finsley Gate on the L&L is promised to be completed by 18th June, just before a nearby festival. The repair to Hurleston bottom lock was cancelled last winter because of artesian groundwater below the lock and a redesign of temporary works was required. The lock is usable with supervised passage for normal width narrowboats, and the plan is to start the repair in November to rebuild the towpath side wall. The Lune Aqueduct on the Lancaster canal and the Palmerston Street embankment in Macclesfield will be relined this winter. And a £1.5m dredging programme on the Peak Forest and Macclesfield canals.

There was a question about the towpath at the Chester Wall, which has been closed for years because Chester Council and CRT cannot agree on ownership, costs and liabilities. CRT has done some work in good faith, removing vegetation and clearing the rock of debris, but it now thinks that Chester is being unreasonable in denying ownership and liability for the rock, which supports the city walls—CRT has a point. I don't want them to have liability for this either.

I asked about erosion of boaters' facilities, highlighting the loss of the Middlewich water point and sluice, Barbridge water point and Hurleston facilities. There were no answers forthcoming as nobody knew the details. Daniel acknowledged the problem and promises to report on this specifically at the next meeting. Waste disposal costs were unsustainable at the moment with insecure sites being used by fly-tippers and also by the growth in their own waste from volunteer and CRT's own activities. On the plus side, only 4% of dredgings had to go to landfill this year, because other means have been found to deposit this material; a big saving.

Surprisingly, there was no mention of vegetation and enhanced cutting plans. Obviously, trees and grass don't grow much in the north and it is much more fun rebuilding locks!

Overall the meeting was hard work; there was far too much corporate PowerPoint and not enough nitty-gritty. Also, it covered far too big an area. CRT reorganisation may be decentralisation for them, but it is just the opposite for me. They asked for feedback, so I said so.

Representing you: NABO at the user groups

CRT Council Report

Stella Ridgeway reports back from the March 2019 council meeting

The next CRT Council Meeting is after the AGM on Thursday 19th September in Birmingham.

As usual, please be advised these are my recollections from my notes and therefore they should not be regarded as minutes; anything missed is entirely down to the fact I haven't noted it or I just didn't remember.

We met in Manchester on 20th March, a Wednesday, so no dialysis and as I could get a local train into the city, without having to get up at the crack of dawn. The local team took the Council on a 'show and tell' around the side of the Bridgewater to Lock 89 and a walk to Lock 87—I had no idea this short-cut was there. Lock 89 is where there have been two fatalities as people use the header gates to cross the canal, rather than the nice bridge provided above the tail gates. So a temporary fence has been erected, preventing the use of the header gates as a walkway, but allowing boaters to access the lock.

The Trust has joined with Peel Holdings, the Fire Service, Police and Manchester City Council in a Water Safety Initiative. This is a wonderful opportunity to engage Peel and hopefully resolve some of the issues around the Bridgewater Canal. We walked up to Lock 87, where there are plans to redevelop all this and the area around Piccadilly Basin as a destination zone—something Manchester is lacking and therefore missing out on the tourism pounds. As an aside, next to Churchgate House on Oxford Road, there is a statue of a horse on the offside as a nod to the horses used in the past.

We returned to the Bridgewater Hall for the Council Meeting. The

Governance report was issued and there are to be additional members elected and appointed, to take effect from March 2020 after the next elections in December 2019. They propose some additional elected and nominated representatives to Council including a fifth private boaters' representative. We said this should be a liveboard, bearing in mind the significant increase in these. I shall be seeking re-election to Council as I feel that, after four years, we are finally getting somewhere and changes will happen, although probably slowly.

We had a full report from Julie Sharman, the Chief Operating Officer, on winter improvement works, and the uptake of winter moorings, with 703 permits sold for a total 2,294 months. There is ongoing work to achieve Green Flag awards and there are various initiatives to promote 'Don't Drink and Drown', particularly in city centres. She also updated us on the Marple flight, due to open at the end of May.

We then broke for lunch and resumed at 1.30pm, when a presentation was made by Kevin Fitzgerald, the Chair of the Waterways Ombudsman Committee, with an introduction to the new Waterways Ombudsman designate, Sarah Daniel, who officially starts in June 2019.

The Council had requested some items for debate and the first was on sharing the towpath. I was asked to speak on behalf of boaters, with angling and walking reps also speaking. The Cycling UK member sent apologies, which was a shame as

we need responsible cyclists to set examples to the few who insist on speeding, which was the crux of the issue. A towpath is a small strip of land adjacent to the canal, usually no more than six feet wide and often narrower than that, and everyone is responsible for their own behaviour. Regarding anglers, if you see bad behaviour, please report it as angling clubs sign a code of conduct with CRT and can be fined if their members are not adhering to it. I tried not to just be critical of cyclists, as I know commuting is limited to

certain areas and particularly bad behaviour is due to a minority; so reporting all incidents, no matter how minor, is important.

After the various presentations, we split into groups to see if we could find any ideas. In brief, these were: better directional signage where there is a dedicated cycle-path nearby; more communication with Councils and other stakeholders about access and egress; and making reporting incidents on the website easier, as there is loads of anecdotal evidence but little reporting.

Summer Roving Rally cruise on the Huddersfield Narrow canal

The Huddersfield Canal Society and CRT are inviting boaters to join a cruise across the Pennines on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal from 22nd June to 1st July. The Roving Rally will allow mutual help with locks and assistance from volunteer lock-winders.

Starting at Portland Basin in Ashton-under-Lyne, the eight-day cruise will visit Stalybridge, Mossley, Uppermill, Diggle, Marsden, Slaithwaite, Milnsbridge and Huddersfield, with an optional final day on the Broad Canal for those with suitably-sized boats. Boats that fit the

shorter, wider locks of the Huddersfield Broad and Calder and Hebble canals can continue to complete a circuit. Full-length narrowboats can wind at Huddersfield for the return journey.

There will also be a programme of evening events. Places are limited by the capacity of Standedge Tunnel, so early expressions of interest are essential; first come, first served. Boaters should email bob@huddersfieldcanal.com. Not all boats fit the canal - the controlling dimensions and other information are available at canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/library/279.pdf.

THE CHARMING MACCLESFIELD CANAL

Completed in 1831, and passing through unspoilt countryside, with its iconic stone bridges and unique historic structures, such as the elegant, restored iron railings at Ramsdell Hall. All that's missing to complete this beautiful scene is a huge vinyl banner from CRT advertising their new logo.

from nb Alton's Facebook page

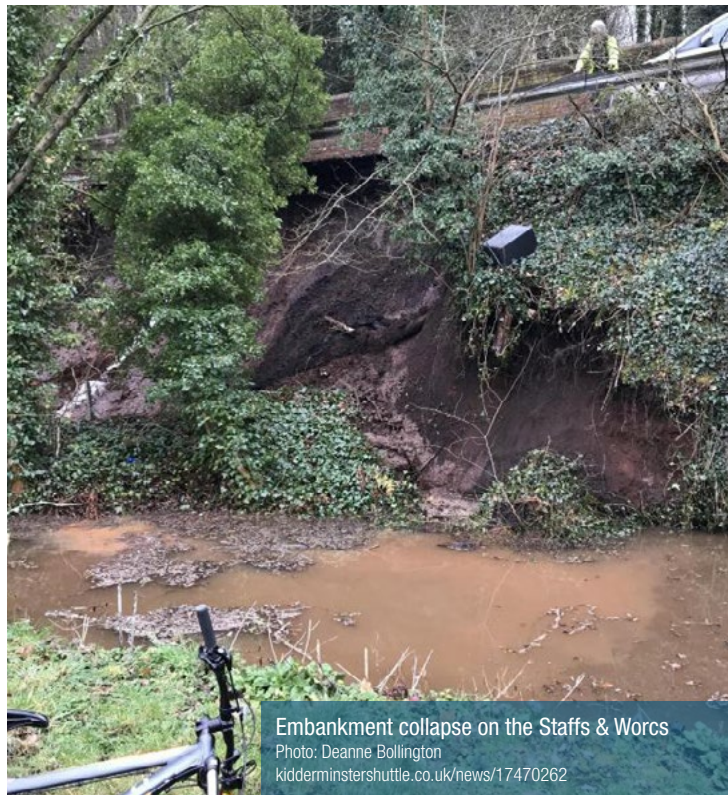


Cruising restrictions

Following the dry winter and spring, CRT has started to impose cruising restrictions to save water and there are a number of infrastructure failures that are also restricting passage. Here's a summary of those in place at the beginning of May (all 'until further notice'):

- On the Leeds and Liverpool canal, locks at Johnsons Hillocks, Blackburn, Greenberfield, Bank Newton and Gargrave are all open at 10am and close at 5pm, last entry 4pm. Barrowford locks are open at 10am, and close at 4pm, last entry 3pm. There are also overnight restrictions in the Wigan central area. Lock 65 (top of Wigan flight) and Lock 85 (bottom of the flight) are open from 8.30am to 9.30am for entry onto the flight and 12.30pm to 1.30pm to exit from the flight. Padlocks on lock 88, Pagefield lock, and lock 89, Ell Meadow lock, open at 8am and are locked at 3pm daily.
- Vandals drove a JCB, left on-site by a CRT contractor, into the control unit of Bridge 20, Coxhead swing-bridge, on the L&L between Wigan and Liverpool, resulting in damage costing at least £70k to repair. CRT is unsure of the timescale of the repair, but anticipates that it could be several weeks. The bridge is being opened manually twice a week until a repair is completed, and boaters should arrive at 12pm on Mondays or Fridays. If you have a Liverpool Link/Salhouse Dock booking, make sure you leave enough time to allow passage through Bridge 20. The nearest upstream winding hole is at Downholland (Bridge 20a—20) and the downstream winding hole is at Lydiate Boat Club (Bridge17).
- Due to low water levels on the Rochdale canal, passage is only available between 9am and 4pm at Locks 7 and 13.
- Continuing problems with the narrowing of Lock 4, Hurlston Locks, on the Llangollen canal mean that slightly over-width boats are increasingly getting stuck. The lock flight will be open between 8am and 5pm, when a CRT team will be available to assist boat passage.

- In the Midlands, due to reservoir capacity as low as 60%, the Buckby, Foxton and Watford lock flights are closed overnight, with lock opening hours from 9am to 5pm (last entry on the flights at 4.15pm). This will allow more time to back-pump water from the Braunston summit onto the Leicester summit.
- In Birmingham, problems with the water supply into the 47-mile Wolverhampton Level are due to only one of the three pumps at Bradley groundwater pumping station being operational. CRT engineers are working to replace one of the failed pumps as soon as possible. This means that locks at Wolverhampton, Rushall, Walsall, Factory, Brades, Spon Lane and Smethwick are open from 8.30am to the last boat through at 4pm each day. CRT is also working with Staffordshire County Council, the owners of Chasewater Reservoir, and Natural England to secure an additional feed into the canal.
- The Lancaster canal is dewatered between Bridge 164, Millness Bridge, and Bridge 166, Crooklands turnpike Bridge, for emergency repairs to a culvert.
- On the Stainforth and Keadby canal, there is assisted passage daily between 9am and 10am due to failure of the Wykewell lift-bridge.
- A cutting collapse has closed the canal between Wolverley and Debdale locks on the Staffs and Worcester canal. The closed section is open for boats to pass the slippage from 9am to 10am and 2pm to 3pm each day.
- Finally, some better news on the Peak Forest canal, where the Marple flight is planned to re-open on Friday 24th May.



Embankment collapse on the Staffs & Worcs

Photo: Deanne Bollington
kidderminstershuttle.co.uk/news/17470262

National boat count

CRT's annual national boat count shows that licence compliance remains high, with 96.5% of boaters holding a valid licence (96.9% in 2018), which is the tenth year that licence compliance has been above 95%. The only region where licence compliance is below 95% (at 94.1%) is London & South East.

The boat count shows a 2.3% increase in boat numbers, with all regions except the North West seeing small increases. The Boat Licence Customer Support team can help boaters who might be struggling to pay their licence fee and CRT urges boaters to contact them as, in the majority of cases, they are able to find a way to keep people on the water. However, in 2018-19, 106 boats were removed from CRT canals and rivers as they were unlicensed or in breach of the terms and conditions.

New boater surveys

CRT's annual Boaters' Survey has been shortened and renamed the 'Perceptions of the Trust' survey, which was sent out to a third of the Trust's leisure boat licence holders at the start of April. It has also introduced a monthly 'Waterway Experience' survey of boaters to gather up-to-date feedback on the waterways they cruise.

The aim is to 'get a much clearer picture of what's affecting boaters as it happens and react quickly to improve boaters' experience.'

Jon Horsfall said: "Boaters are the eyes and ears of the waterways and are often the first to come across any problems."

The survey will be sent to a sample of boaters sighted on each waterway region every month. Volunteer lock-keepers will also give hire-boaters postcards with survey details at various key sites.

Dredging in 2019-20

CRT is planning to spend £8 million in this financial year on dredging the following canals: Oxford Canal (between Enslow and Wolvercote); Grand Union (between Bull's Bridge and Boston Manor); Upper & Lower Peak Forest Canal (River Tame to Whaley Bridge); Macclesfield Canal (various lengths); Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal (Sebastopol to Usk Road); Coventry Canal (Coventry Basin to Hawkesbury); Worcester & Birmingham Canal (Diglis to Lea End Lane); Llangollen Canal (spot dredging); and Chesterfield Canal (River Trent to Babworth).

Annual maintenance dredging will take place on the River Weaver, the Ribble Link, the River Severn and the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal, and throughout the Yorkshire and North East region. Jon Horsfall, Head of Customer Service Support, said: "We listen to boaters' feedback and we target our dredging accordingly: if we get lots of reports of a problem spot, it will go onto our priority list. Please share your knowledge and experience with us so that we can target our resources to make the biggest difference we can to your cruising." Report areas in need of dredging at canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us/ways-to-contact-us, on 0303 040 4040, or by tweeting @CRTcontactus.

Welfare guidance

¹ canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/original/34378-equality-act-reasonable-adjustment-policy.pdf?v=db65fc

² canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/licensing-your-boat/boat-licence-customer-support-team/do-you-know-a-vulnerable-boater

³ canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/original/35483-equalities-questionnaire.pdf?v=470fd9

⁴ canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/original/35777-safeguarding-position-statement.pdf?v=7be916

CRT's Welfare Guidance is a support service intended for Trust staff and volunteers who have concerns about the welfare of boaters. If you come across a boater who you feel needs assistance, the following information may be useful.

The Guidance ensures that the Trust signposts them to the most appropriate agencies that can provide support services. It is being implemented in conjunction with CRT's Equality Policy to promote equality for people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010¹.

Boaters may be vulnerable due to disability, age, illness, or financial circumstances, for short or long periods. Boaters can also become vulnerable by not being fit for work, domestic abuse, or mental health needs². Self-referral by a boater or a family member is also accepted. Typical trigger criteria that may lead to a referral are a complaint or concern raised by others, non-compliance with CRT terms and conditions, or behaviour that causes the Trust a concern and could cause a risk to themselves or others. In summary, the Trust will:

- Help boaters identify the support available from local authorities, who have a duty of care to provide adequate services (housing, social services, benefit advice etc.), or other support agencies;
- Help CRT staff and volunteers identify boaters who may be vulnerable and where support may help prevent them receiving enforcement action because of their vulnerability;
- Allow CRT staff to work with nominated advocates where

boaters would like them to liaise with someone else on their behalf.

The guidance will also help to reduce the financial costs incurred from licence evasion, enforcement action, court procedures, or boat removals.

After a referral is made, those with a support need may be offered the following services:

- Flexible payment options;
- Working with other CRT teams to consider signposting options;
- Permitted overstays on medical or other appropriate grounds;
- Putting boaters in touch with nationally recognised boating organisations; and
- Reasonable adjustments for boaters with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

When a possible adjustment has been identified, CRT will request that an Equalities Questionnaire is completed³. The Head of Customer Service Support is responsible for implementing the arrangements and the Welfare Officer is responsible for periodically reviewing the document to ensure its on-going relevance and accuracy. The Trust also has a policy 'Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk' and concerns should be raised to the Designated Safeguarding Officer⁴.

External agencies

AdviceUK
0300 7770107 www.adviceuk.org.uk

Age UK
0800 1696565 www.ageuk.org.uk

Christians Against Poverty
0800 3280006 www.capuk.org

Citizens Advice
0344 4111444 www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Civil Legal Advice
0345 3454345
www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice

Debt Advice Foundation
0800 0434050 debtadvicefoundation.org

National Debtline
0808 8084000 www.nationaldebtline.org

Salvation Army
0207 3674500 www.salvationarmy.org.uk

Samaritans
0845 7909090 www.samaritans.org.uk

Shelter
0808 8004444 www.shelter.org.uk

StepChange Debt Charity
0800 1381111 www.stepchange.org

The Money Advice Service
0300 5005000
www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Waterways Chaplain
01727 818144
waterways@workplacematters.org.uk

0800 numbers are Freephone



Mutual benefit

in the Boater Report 2018 CRT explains how it both benefits boaters and needs their support.

Peter Fellows has a shufty

CRT's boating team would like to hear boaters' views, comments, and suggestions by contacting them on 0303 040 4040, at www.canalrivertrust.org.uk, Twitter @CRTboating, or Facebook [facebook.com/canalrivertrustboating](https://www.facebook.com/canalrivertrustboating).

Perhaps as a consequence of widespread negative comment by boaters last year on CRT's change in focus to become 'a Trust for the waterways and the wellbeing that they offer to people and communities', it has published a Boater Report 2018. The report is subtitled: 'Caring for our waterways—how the Trust applies its finances to benefit boaters'

and it emphasises that CRT's 'core work to care for the navigation will always come first, and boats and boaters will always be at the heart of what we do: the waterways must stay open for boating.'

Taking information from annual reports, the report describes how boaters helped fund CRT's work in 2017-18, with around 10% of its annual income, or £20.4m, coming from leisure licences, rising to 18.6% (£38.1m) when income from moorings and boating businesses is included. The report says that licence evasion is down to its lowest-ever level at 3.1%, which, if paid, would produce an estimated £600,000 in additional income.

If income from BWML marinas is also included, the total is £46.6m (22.7%), although this income stream ceased, following the sale of BWML in December 2018. The figure of £46.6m is roughly comparable to the £50.7m (24.7%) from the Defra grant agreement* and £51.1m (24.9%) from investments in property, through rental income and returns from non-property funds. The final 27.5% (£56.4m) comes from utility companies using the network to support water distribution, power cables and digital networks, and third-party funders, councils, companies and donations from supporters.

The report then goes on to explain how the income is spent (see table), emphasising the benefits to boaters, and gives some examples of individual costs: £780/year for



Examples of expenditure on boating-related activities **

Type of expenditure	Amount £m 2017-18	% of total	Amount £m 2016-17	% change 2016-17 & 2017-18
Maintenance, inspections, repairs & minor works	27.6	19.3	24	+15
Major infrastructure works	22	15.4	19.6	+12
Supervision, volunteering management, training, safety, travel & insurance	19.7	13.8	22.5	-12
Third party-funded regeneration projects ***	14.4	10.1	25	-42
National operational & technical teams	12.6	8.8	11.6	+9
Operational buildings, craft, plant & equipment	12.2	8.5	12.1	+0.8
Allocated support costs (IT systems and costs of employee training, development & recruitment)	12.1	8.5	13	-7
Vegetation management	7.8	5.5	7.9	-1.3
Dredging	7.7	5.4	6.3	+22
Customer service & facilities	6.9	4.8	7.3	-5
Totals	143	100	149.3	

*The Government support runs until March 2027, increasing by around 1% per annum to 2021, but is then fixed from 2022, so in real terms it will decline every year when inflation is taken into account.

** The table does not include £10 million for museums and attractions and 'other', which gave a total spend of £153 million in 2017-18.

*** Third-party funding was mainly for towpath re-surfacing, mostly in urban areas.

Facilities at Leighton Buzzard
Photo: Mark Tizard



‘[CRT] would like boaters to become a Friend, to volunteer, or to help to spread the word about the value of the waterways.’

one km of grass and hedgerow cutting; £960/year for cutting one km of offside vegetation (not including trees); £50–£150k for one km of dredging; £30–£100k for a new lock gate; £25–£75k for grouting a lock chamber; and £115/bin/year to empty towpath bins weekly.

CRT considers that the spend on waterways is split roughly evenly between maintenance, repairs and other asset improvements (last year, 160 major works projects, 175 lock gates replaced, 133 km of canal dredged with 102,000 m³ of silt removed, 777 planned repairs

and 240 ‘unexpected repairs’); and day-to-day running of the network (including, for example, contracts to manage vegetation and collect waste, and its own workforce that maintains water levels, provides assistance and responds to incidents).

Last year, an estimated 600,000 hours of volunteers’ time and 225 community adoptions of local stretches of canal by partner groups were also used to carry out work that ranged from towpath clean-ups to off-side vegetation management.

To maximise long-term prospects, to increase awareness of the Trust and its work, and to promote the benefits that waterways bring to people’s lives, the report calls for support by more people, with boaters integral to that goal.

It would like boaters to become a Friend, to volunteer, or help to spread the word about the value of the waterways and why they should stay open for everyone—both as a vital part of our history and a source of wellbeing today.

Towpath mowing
Photo: Peter Fellows



The cost of living afloat and boaters’ data

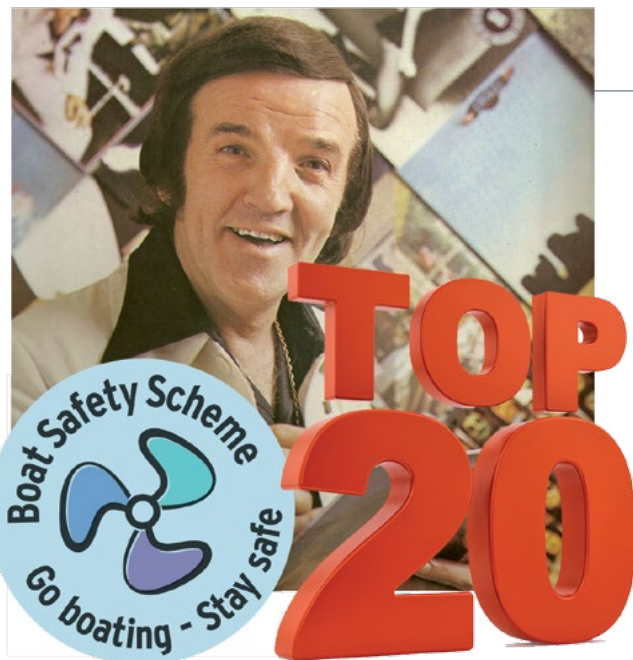
Mark Tizard shares some thoughts

Having lived happily on our boat for nine months, it was strange to move into our newly-completed house in March. There is a regular discussion on the various Facebook sites about the relative costs of living afloat or on land. We thought it would be cheaper afloat but on reflection this has not been the case. The cost of the mooring and licence was broadly similar to the cost of council tax and utilities. But taking into account the cost of boat operation and maintenance, the boat was more expensive. When you factor in boat depreciation and the likely house appreciation, then the house wins hands-down, which was the majority view in the discussion I joined. It is clear that living on the boat is a lifestyle choice, not a financial choice. Of course, there are many other factors that come into play and this is often not the case for those who embrace the lifestyle for economic reasons—often driven to it by the high cost of accommodation in urban areas. Some of these boaters are vulnerable and find accessing services and benefits difficult, as a recently-published survey confirmed. Many are unaware that CRT, to its credit, after initially rejecting the suggestion by NABO and others, appointed a boaters’ Welfare Officer, who has published its welfare guidance. This provides a ‘signposting support service’ and I strongly suggest that if you see a boater in difficulty you encourage them to have a look at CRT’s website—search under

‘vulnerable boater’ as there is some good advice and links. There is also a very helpful Facebook group called ‘benefits for boaters (liveaboards)’.

A few years ago, CRT changed the licensing terms and conditions to include permission for it to release your data to third parties. NABO strongly objected on the basis that this could lead to CRT outsourcing enforcement. CRT confirmed this would not be the case; however, no doubt we’ve all seen the outsourced third-party enforcement signs at their long-term mooring sites. We now have the IWA proposal for CRT to introduce car-park level penalty charges for overstaying, or congestion style charges in London.

Another aspect of this data transfer occurred recently: NABO was contacted by a boater who had been approached by a solicitor acting for a cyclist, who allegedly had been injured after cycling into a mooring pin. CRT passed the boater’s details to the cyclist’s solicitor. Regardless of the specifics of this case, this raises some interesting questions: What criteria does CRT apply before releasing a boater’s details? Does CRT, as the landowner, have a duty of care in these circumstances? Does my insurance provide legal cover? Given the drive for more people to use the towpath and waterways and the need for everyone to ‘share the space’, are there legal obligations we should all be aware of? Does CRT need a policy akin to their welfare one?



Top twenty BSS faults

Data compiled by Rob McLean, BSS Communications Manager, 17th April 2019

Of the top 20 types of faults in private boats, found by BSS examiners during the year ended 31st March 2019, the highest number, 4,691, concerned LPG installations, followed by 3,468 inadequate battery and electrical installations, 1,713 faulty fuel systems, 1,420 inadequate fire extinguishers and 516 unsecured appliances.

For comparison, in the previous year, ending 31st March 2018, the faults recorded in private boats were a little different. Of 6,243 faults: 1: 3,392 vessels were not provided with adequate fixed ventilation. 2: 636 a.c. electrical circuits did not pass through a consumer unit. 3: 430 solid fuel appliances had unintended gaps. 4: 381 open flues to LPG appliances were not operating effectively. 5: 339 appliance flues and exhausts were incomplete or not in good condition. 6: 300 a.c. shore-power and battery charging lead inlet connections were not of the correct type, or not suitably protected from the weather. 7: 240 vessels were not provided with adequate means of escape. 8: 105

instances of warning notices not displayed on sea-going boats with closable ventilators. 9: 105 shore-power, battery charging and other a.c. power source leads and connectors were not in good condition. 10: 91 appliance flues and exhausts did not terminate directly to outside air. 11: 73 appliances required a flue or exhaust, but were not fitted with one. 12: 80 instances where it was possible to simultaneously connect more than one power source to the a.c. distribution system. 13: 54 shore-power, battery charging, and other a.c. power source lead connections were not of a suitable type. 14: 17 electrical systems were not insulated from the hull.

CO alarm checks were introduced on 1st April 2019 and in the first couple of weeks, out of 1,237 examinations: 84 vessels with one or more accommodation spaces did not have the correct number of CO alarms; three boats did not have a CO alarm within the same accommodation spaces as solid fuel stoves; ten boats did not have CO alarms in open view or of a suitable type; and 13 boats had CO alarms that were not in good condition. From these initial results, it appears that around 9% of boats are not compliant with the CO alarm provisions and that most of the 84 examiners' comments were made because no CO alarms were found on these boats.

- | | | |
|-----------|-------|---|
| 20 | 347 | cases where the gas locker was not up to the level of the top of the cylinder valves and/or had a path for leaked LPG to enter the interior of the vessel |
| 20 | 347 | portable fire extinguishers that were not in good condition. |
| 18 | 382 | LPG pipe joints were insecure, not in good condition or incompetently made. |
| 17 | 420 | low-pressure LPG hoses were not accessible for inspection, not of the correct material, or in poor condition. |
| 16 | 430 | fuel filters inside engine spaces were not fire resistant. |
| 15 | 483 | LPG cylinders were not secured and stored upright with the valve at the top. |
| 14 | 503 | battery cable connections were not effective or not in good condition. |
| 13 | 512 | electrical circuits that did not pass through a battery isolator, or were not otherwise protected. |
| 12 | 516 | non-portable appliances were not properly secured against accidental or unintended movement. |
| 11 | 523 | fuel feed, return and on-engine hoses that were unsuitable for the fuel used and were not fire resistant. |
| 10 | 610 | cases of LPG pipework were not made of a suitable material, inadequately secured or damaged. |
| 9 | 623 | LPG appliance burners were not in good condition and not delivering a proper flame. |
| 8 | 654 | locations of LPG shut-off valves were not in open view, or their location was not clearly marked. |
| 7 | 662 | electrical cables were not supported in a safe position. |
| 6 | 760 | fuel shut-off valves were not in open view or their location was not clearly marked. |
| 5 | 764 | battery isolators were not in open view or their location was not clearly marked. |
| 4 | 935 | battery terminals were incorrectly insulated or protected. |
| 3 | 1,073 | incorrect portable fire extinguishers and/or incorrect fire ratings. |
| 2 | 1,172 | LPG systems were not free of leaks as defined in the tightness test. |
| 1 | 1,266 | batteries were not secured against excessive movement in any direction. |

NOT 'ALF!



Modern boating

Mark Tizard's view on the changing waterways

As a teenager, I'd hired a boat with friends and enjoyed sailing, and this summer it will be thirty years since we bought our converted small Woolwich and became canal enthusiasts. Our recent boating trips have made us aware of how much things have changed: BW is now CRT; historic infrastructure like Bulbourne and Marsworth yards have been sold for housing; annual reorganisations mean expertise is leaving and morale is low. Yet CRT is investing huge capital in encourag-

ing more users onto or by the water. Boaters, who were BW's main priority, are now competing for CRT's attention and, in the eyes of many, losing out in the drive to attract more non-paying, non-water users.

Thirty years ago, there were relatively few continuous cruisers; those who were tended to be younger, free-spirited individuals and BW enforcement had a light touch. We can remember being one of only two boats moored at Victoria Park when travelling through London. Moorings were at a premium and

the majority of boaters were part-time and, if looking for one, marinas were still few and far between, offering basic facilities. Most canalside pubs had not been gentrified (or closed) and, if you knew where to look, you could learn real history from former working boaters. I still have fond memories of the White Horse where, over a few beers, a father and son, both born in boats, would recount how hard life was, but how they missed it nonetheless.

But the one common theme was that boating was a lifestyle choice and you had an interest in, and respect for, the countryside and the canal infrastructure, whether you were a boater or BW employee. I'm sure I'm looking back with rose-tinted glasses, but now things on the canals have definitely changed to reflect modern society. Just last week, we heard two engines running well after 8pm, and we encountered one angry boater who, having moored up to have his lunch at a tunnel exit using his centre-rope, complained loudly at the rocking motion as we came out. Most worrying was the boater who came into the top lock of Buckby flight (due to be locked overnight to conserve water) and wound both paddles up. We told him that the gate was still open and, leaving the paddles up, he sauntered back and pushed the gate so that it slammed shut. We pointed out there was another boat approaching, but he had no interest in sharing. So, as well as the potential damage to the gates, seven lock-fulls of water were wasted. These were not hire boaters.

The pace of change has accelerated over the last five to ten years and the majority of boaters now fall into three categories: first, the continuous cruisers who roam the system (often, but by no means exclusively, retired); secondly, boaters with a mooring, the majority of

whom are 'holiday boaters,' but a growing number who are residential or high use, living under the Council Tax radar; and lastly, and the fastest growing category, the financial boaters. They are difficult to define, but typically these boaters have no previous boating experience, and they are attracted to popular areas by the thought of a floating flat that is cheap to buy or rent compared to the land-based equivalent. They are only interested in moving every 14 days, as this is the minimum requirement, and they are keen to stay within a defined area, whether because of their social life, work or schooling. These boaters often have little in common with the wider boating community and little knowledge of, or empathy for, the canal infrastructure. At the other extreme, financial boaters include the growing number of widebeams coming onto the system. I spoke to a very friendly couple, just north of Braunston, in their brand new 13-foot beam widebeam, who were heading to the South as they had heard that the canal was wider there, but were dismayed to learn that the bridges remained the same size.

This is not a rant about the growth of this new style of boating; it is important to realise that the vast majority of these boats are licensed and comply with CRT's guidelines, although licence evasion in London and the South East is nearly double the national average. This new type of boater is, on average, substantially younger than the other two categories mentioned above. This is the new reality for CRT and the Trust needs to embrace them, educate them in canal etiquette, perhaps by peer pressure, and look at innovative ways of improving facilities and moorings. 'Share the space' is under pressure on the towpath, but it's under pressure on the water too.

After investigating a complaint by a narrowboat owner with 42 years' boating experience, the Waterways Ombudsman has had to conclude that, while the Trust admits that the canal north of Braunston Turn to Hillmorton is unsuitable for widebeam craft, its policy is such that these boats are not banned from the seven-mile pound. As such, he is therefore unable to uphold the complaint.

Maximum dimensions

The published maximum dimensions for the North Oxford are quite clear and state that the navigation is only suitable for boats up to seven-foot beam. Interestingly, the Ombudsman begins by suggesting that, as widebeams have already ventured along the pound, it must be suitable for them. That's a bit like

Nowhere to turn

CRT abdicates responsibility on the North Oxford canal

Kevin McNiff investigates the increase in the number of widebeams in this part of the Midlands



Near Willoughby Wharf a lot of the time in 2018

when large vehicles attempt to drive along unsuitable roads and tracks, after relying on satnav misinformation, and then find they are unable to manoeuvre, or get stuck.

Why the problem?

Construction of a new 550-berth marina at Onley began in 2016, following planning consent by the local authorities. Objections were raised over the planning application, one from the Braunston Marina owner being subject to a threat of legal proceedings by the developers over copyright infringement in the use of their drawing and plans for the site. Over 200 individual objections were received. Despite these, the Council granted planning permission, noting that CRT, as a statutory consultee, offered no objections.

A complainant was even reminded that CRT had no authority to prevent the marina plans going ahead, but the question remains as to why they didn't have a closer look at the plans and prohibit use of the navigation by anything over seven-foot beam. This would not have prevented the developers from providing internal facilities to crane in widebeam boats for mooring or servicing.

Potential new moorers, invited to the site during construction, were told that moorings, slipway and workshop facilities would be provided for boats over seven-foot beam. The unusual curved marina entrance, approved by CRT, seems designed to facilitate widebeam movement.

The problem is that access along the canal to the marina is restricted, due to the narrow profile of the canal bed, overgrown vegetation and lack of suitable depth out of the main navigation channel, not to mention the curves at blind bridges—curves specifically designed for 70-foot narrowboats. Those familiar with

boating on this section of the canal are more than aware of the challenges faced; in several places, merely the passing of two seven-foot beam boats is difficult.

From November 2016, when the issue was first raised with CRT, its local management did little to mitigate the potential for breaching the navigation dimensions and now, with the marina open, a fait accompli has taken place. This could surely be construed as maladministration as defined by: 'Delay, incorrect action or failure to take any action'. But not according to the Ombudsman. Analysis of most marina-based boats does suggest that many owners don't 'go out'. They are used as floating cottages and there is no doubt that the additional internal area of a widebeam does offer many advantages.

Because all boats on CRT waters must have a cruising licence, whether the owners go out or remain is a choice that they are entitled to exercise. So is the potential navigation problem overstated?

Gridlock

In response to the Ombudsman's investigations, the Trust agrees that a 'bow-to-bow' meeting of boats involving anything over seven-foot beam would increase the risk of collision and grounding, and of craft getting stuck. This would be worse if two widebeams were involved. Its suggested solution would be for a boat to reverse a maximum of 2.25 km, to where passing would be possible.

It has also been announced that the locks at Hillmorton passed over 10,000 boats in the 2018 season, up from 9,718 in 2017. It is fair to say that the popularity of the canal can mean several boats following each other in both directions, which begs the question as to how all these boats could reverse—and to

"[In] a 'bow-to-bow' meeting of boats ... over seven-foot beam, [CRT's] suggested solution would be for a boat to reverse a maximum of 2.25 km, to where passing would be possible."

where? Propelling a boat in reverse is more than a challenge for anyone, with or without a bow thruster, and the ensuing melee would jam the navigation completely. And this is assuming one convoy of boats was willing to reverse.

With three hire fleets north of Hillmorton, five in the Braunston/Napton area and varying levels of expertise by both hire and private boating skippers, the outcomes could have a negative impact on all concerned. Willoughby cutting, with its severely overgrown vegetation, presents even two narrowboats with passing problems, exacerbated by sloping stones that reduce the navigable depth.

The Ombudsman's terms of reference don't require the post-holder to be a competent navigator of waterways, but the same is unfortunately true of CRT management; hence the questionable solution being tabled. Although the Ombudsman studied Google Earth photographs along this length, CRT doesn't know the depth side to side—especially where offside field boundaries have been eroded.

Ostrich like

There are now several widebeam boats in both Dunchurch Pools and



Willoughby cutting, with its severely overgrown vegetation, presents even two narrowboats with passing problems.

Barby Moorings marinas and at least one whose owner seems to remain on the navigation. The number of widebeam boats on all CRT waters is increasing to a level where separate licensing criteria came into effect in April.

Demographics suggest that widebeam craft represent residential solutions to an ever-increasing affordable housing shortage in the south, and anecdotal evidence suggests that widebeam boats are increasingly migrating north to the waterways around Braunston.

But only the Grand Union is suitable for these craft. It is only the narrow locks at Hillmorton (and Stretton Stop) that prevent widebeams going further north to Hawkesbury.

However, even faced with this, the Trust will go against its own published dimensions as a matter of policy, taking a 'monitoring and then react' approach. As can be foreseen from previous such moves against increased liveboard mooring in London, Bath and Oxford, the problem will become a reality and any future attempt to control it will surely fail.

Long term

In CRT's attempt to attract future funding when the Government grant period ends, boaters are seeing no end of new schemes to attract millions (sic) of towpath visitors and users. Health and safety has gone out of the window, with lack of any control over unsuitable craft: kayaks in previously prohibited tunnels

and on aqueducts; paddle-boarding across the Pontcysyllte near Llangollen, to mention just a couple of instances. All, it would seem, being driven by the 'wellbeing' mantra, so loved by officialdom everywhere.

Mitigation

Options that could be investigated at Braunston should include:

- A semipermanent bund at Bridge 90, secured to only allow seven-foot boats unrestricted navigation;
- Published windows of passage—like through Braunston and Blisworth tunnels—to allow safe navigation for widebeam boats through the bund and to include one-way north/south timed movements;
- No narrow beam passage at these times; and
- No widebeam towpath mooring between Braunston Turn and Bridge 90.

There are precedents for closing or restricting navigations as the notice below shows:

Sunday 10 February 2019, 10:00 until Sunday 10 February 2019 12:00.

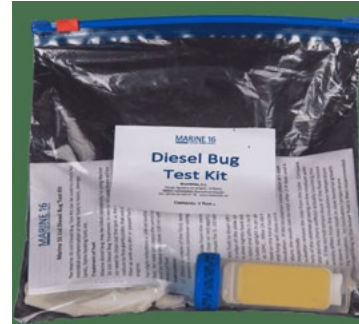
Type: Navigation Restriction.

Reason: Information.

Original message: On Sunday 10 February 2019, Blisworth Tunnel will be temporarily closed during the hours of 10.00—12.00 for an organised canoe paddle. During this time, please follow instructions and/or advice from on-site personnel.

It is sad but true; the day will surely come when the scenario of bow-to-bow confrontations becomes reality, with abuse (verbal or physical) and vessel or infrastructure damage.

I have been getting questions that appear to relate to problems following diesel bug infections. 'Bug' is a generic term that covers microbes (bacteria), moulds and yeasts that are found in all diesel fuel.



For example, Fuel-guard www.fuel-guard.co.uk/diesel-bug.html.

Further information on diesel bug treatment is available at www.pbo.co.uk/gear/12-diesel-bug-treatments-tested-43353.

I have no idea why well-documented occurrences appear to be getting more common, but my emails show that they are. The longer fuel is in storage, either in the marina or in boat tanks, the more the bugs will breed, until they eventually start to block filters and pump valves. Please, at the very least, buy your fuel from outlets with high throughputs and also take steps to prevent the bug breeding. First of all, try to minimise the amount of water there is in the base of the tank.

Diesel bug?

Tony Brooks peers at the small things that lurk in your fuel tank

Certainly keep it as full as possible during the winter and give serious consideration to the regular use of a fuel additive. I syphon the water from the bottom of the tank every spring and always drain down the fuel filters when I change them, to look for any slimy deposits. If you find any sign of the bug, immediately use a suitable biocide additive, like Marine16 www.marine16.co.uk/product/-category/fuel-treatment, others are available. I tend to use a water-removing additive late spring until mid-summer and then a biocide additive in the last fill of the season.

One reason the bug is getting more prevalent is that often red diesel is just road diesel dyed red and, by law, road diesel has to contain a proportion of bio-diesel. Bugs like bio-diesel and it encourages them to breed. It also absorbs more water than ordinary diesel and this also encourages bug growth. So, not only buy diesel from high-volume outlets, but also try to buy bio-free diesel if you can.

TECHIE'S



CORNER

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



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.

Rewind

Issue No 3, May 2004

Howard Anguish explores NABO News from 15 years ago.

Mooring guidance for continuous cruisers In April 2004, British Waterways issued their long-awaited guidance document, which was reproduced in this edition of NABO News, setting out the three main legal requirements:

- The boat must genuinely be used for navigation throughout the period of the licence.
- Unless a shorter time is specified, by notice, the boat must not stay in the same place for more than 14 days (or such longer period as is reasonable in the circumstances); and
- It is the responsibility of the boater to satisfy BW that the above requirements are met.

The guidance went on to set out in more detail how these regulations would affect continuous cruisers. Words which are still very familiar, as are the definitions of 'Navigation', 'Place' and 'Neighbourhood', which are set out in detail, but little seems to have been clarified in the intervening years.

NABO policy documents In a response for more 'openness and accountability' from its members, NABO published five draft policies for comments from members. They covered such issues as 'Dredging and Channel Dimensions', 'Stoppages' and 'Vegetation Management'. Vegetation management, in particular, is still an issue and, although the policy declares that: Vegetation should be managed so it does not impede or prejudice the safety of activities concerned with navigation, it is evident that in 2019 there is still much work to be done, despite the best efforts of NABO.

Worried woman of the waterways commented: "Does the tarting-up of the areas around canals worry you? All the twee notices, the 'creative art', the interpretation boards, the instantly vandalised 'wind this handle to hear a load of hot air' posts etc. etc., supposedly these are all put there to enhance the canal environment. For whom? Not for boaters, and they are usually accompanied by 'No Mooring' signs!" **Inland marina WiFi broadband has arrived!** In an 'advertorial', UK Canal.com (Solfa Computers) announced the launch of the world's first inland waterways marina-based WiFi by DSL Broadband Internet Service at Trinity Marina in Hinkley. It was certainly a sign that the march of modern technology was making inroads into the backwaters of the inland boating industry. It is now taken for granted that such facilities are available.

Fly on the wall reports that NABO Council is asking for members to attend national rallies in the summer to the extent that NABO would pay for the cost of rally entry in exchange for some basic promotion of the Association. Something for the present Council to consider?

Lavender Blues—a member's letter! "I heard on the radio that a prisoner had been awarded compensation by a judge who agreed that 'slopping out'—having to empty your own toilet—was degrading! Does this mean we can all sue BW or EA for not providing enough toilets (say every mile or so), thus causing us to have to use toilets that we have to empty ourselves? Oh—how humiliating!" Well, it made me smile!



NABO News back issues are available online at: nabo.org.uk/index.php/reference/nabo-news-back-issues-2

Letters to the Editor

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

Composting toilets

Following Brian Jarrett's article on composting toilets, I would like to add some observations over the last five years. We now use the term 'separating waterless toilets', of which the separation is only the first part of a fully-composting system. A high degree of composting can be achieved in the toilet by regular deep mixing, a 30-40% carbon addition (I use cat-litter pellets) and a reasonably large container (20-30 litres). With a cycle time of 30-40 days, I regularly achieve 50-60 degrees, which indicates a high level of decomposition. I then store the material for 3-4 months, which produces a material indistinguishable from garden compost. All of this is achieved without the power requirements of fans and heaters, without toxic chemicals and with no demand on the Elsan disposal system. There are no smells and, because there is no liquid content, the weights are considerably less than cassettes. Dr Kate Saffin is in the process of releasing a carefully-constructed survey of many forms of toilets in boats and off-grid living, which will hopefully help shape the future of composting systems' toilets for boaters and CRT. I hope Brian and the others can add to the understanding of the composting system via the Facebook page 'Composting toilets for boats and off-grid living' www.facebook.com/groups/composting-gloos.

Tony Sulman, nb Dunstan

More on composting toilets

As a boater who has been composting for five years now (and is currently analysing the 1500 responses to an online survey of all things boating toilets, as well as admin for the Facebook group on the subject), I was interested to read Brian Jarrett's article about his composting system. He is, of course, quite right—there is no such thing as a 'composting' toilet! It is a thoroughly mis-

leading term, as it implies that that composting takes place within said toilet and, as he rightly points out, the toilet is merely a collection unit. It is much more accurate and useful to think of composting 'systems'—comprising a collection unit and a process for further composting and final disposal. It is possible to start the composting process at the collection stage with a bit of effort (regular mixing), but all need further time to complete the process. Collecting units that dry and desiccate the solid matter don't necessarily compost (i.e. achieve complete biological breakdown). Which isn't to say that his doesn't, just that we don't have a way of testing how effective any of our composting is—other than it looks done. Something I would like to see is some research that tests compost at various stages to clarify exactly what is happening, whether drying systems are composting, and how long a system such as mine, which cold composts, actually needs to complete the process.

Kate Saffin

Various waterway thoughts

Stoppages: I'm unaware of the stoppage programme as I no longer get a list, so I rely on information from the local coal-boats and then linger in areas that are unlikely to be affected. For the first time in over 20 years, I had an official winter mooring—at Braunston with one other boat.

Dredging: there are a number of places where I used to tie up, where I am now unable to get near the bank. In fact, there are also canals that I now no longer travel because of lack of depth in the channel or places to tie up—the Ashby and the Caldon foremost.

Widebeams: the increase in widebeams means I now avoid the Grand Union, and the North Oxford is also falling prey to widebeams being dropped into the new marinas. I hope that this will not be a trend on long lock-free pounds. The increasing list of places I no longer stop now in-

cludes stretches where one encounters racing canoes—Hartshill and Gailey come to mind. My drainage holes are low and getting canal water from their wash coming into my sink is not pleasant. Also, there is no warning as they are quiet, which can make them quite dangerous. It's ironic that all other boats slow down out of consideration for moored craft.

Vegetation: I've asked grass-cutters if they carry scateurs as they must be at risk from trailing brambles etc. as much as the rest of us. The North Oxford, north of Braunston, has had some work done on the holes in the towpath, which has helped, but it is still dangerous in winter weather. A visit to the Leicester Arm after a gap of 14 years had me amazed that the shoulder-high hedges are now mature trees overhanging the canal.

The trees are a hazard, dropping bits of themselves onto boats, apart from making travel through a green tunnel rather boring. At leaf-fall time, it can make the cut like porridge, with progress almost impossible. Their root systems must damage the towpath/canal bank and, once that size, to cut them back is a major undertaking.

Improvements?: I know money is short, but when I think of the overall amount which must have been spent on the new polo-mint logo, signage, clothing, stationery and huge advertisements, I do begin to wonder where CRT is going. It certainly makes me wonder, when I'm slip-sliding along the towpath in my wellies, whether the general public is inclined to venture forth. Have I seen any improvement since CRT took over from BW? Not really.

As a single-hander, it's nice to be locked up or down a flight, and the volunteers are a pleasant bunch to talk to. I'm sure they are doing worthwhile work on other things. But talking to old lengthsmen, and realising how much trouble-shooting they got on with in their quiet way, makes me wonder if the old ways weren't best. However, I will say that on the lower Staffs & Worcs, I found it well-kept. A contract team appeared within a week to remove the debris of a bridge parapet that was demolished by a drunken driver.

One of the team travelled, expenses paid, from Lincolnshire each day. When I had to ring CRT to have the next lock unchained after the work was over, I will say that someone did arrive

I name this boat ...

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



in the hour stated. But chatting to some of the CRT staff, I was surprised to learn how much they are moved around from one canal to another, which must make it difficult to get a full working knowledge.

Sue Merrett

Planning for listed CRT structures

Having been on or around canals for 50-odd years, I have obviously seen some changes, not all for the good, and one of these is the loss of industrial heritage. I recall a trip on the South Oxford in the mid-70s, when I came across an abandoned workshop at one of the locks, complete with forge, anvil and tools. The chances of that happening again are nil for a number of reasons. I digress slightly, and it may be just my perception, but we seem to be losing canalside architecture at an alarming rate. BW did, and CRT continues to, dispose of property they no longer need for operational use, for immediate financial gain and to rid themselves of the maintenance burden, but they do not look to the future. Just look at all the small lengthsmen's huts, with the stoves that gave a little warmth and shelter in the harshest conditions, which have been allowed to collapse into piles of rubble. These things make up the uniqueness of our canals and will never be replaced. There is one of

Bless!

Another gem from London Boaters

'Morning. Does anyone on here know how to change over Calor gas bottles? Mine has just run out before my first morning coffee and the bottles are really heavy and a bit of a faff to change, so it would be great if you could do that for me please. I'll make you a coffee as a thank you... upon successful completion of the task of course. I'm on the Grand Union Canal.'

a chain of 'Northern Engine' pumphouses at the top of Seabrook Locks on the GU; a magnificent building that is sitting forlorn at the edge of a field, slowly decaying. Sentiment aside, I am a realist and appreciate empty property deteriorates, requires maintenance and provides no income. But I believe it is far better that they are leased or rented, so that the heritage value can be protected, rather than being sold off. So no, I do not think CRT property division should have a free hand over listed properties.

Peter Caswell

Autogas being used to refill Calor bottles

I didn't know you could do it, but I'm not surprised someone has tried, with a 13kg one now costing upwards of £35 and forever rising. I guess the Mayor of London would prefer it if my boat does not have a stove and uses a gas boiler for heating and hot water (when the engine is not running—he would also approve of that no doubt). But until the day comes that, wherever we moor, we can plug into clean electricity (and

that will never happen), we are beholden to the barons who control Calor gas. I must confess that no stove was my choice, to avoid the dust and the need to carry solid fuel, but you pays your money and makes your choice.

Peter Caswell

Farewell

It has been 25 years since I had my narrowboat built, but I regret to say that for a miscellany of reasons I have now sold her and that she will not be replaced. I appreciate that I could change my NABO membership status to 'Associate', but I miss my boating and feel it best to take such actions as will eliminate ongoing reminders of a much-enjoyed pastime but which is now in my past. Accordingly, please be advised that I do not wish to renew my NABO membership when it shortly expires. With this decision made I have, of course, cancelled my annual standing order. I have much enjoyed reading NABO News over the last 20+ years, so I'd be greatly obliged if you would kindly forward my thanks and appreciation to those currently involved in its production, and also pass my thanks and appreciation to the NABO Council members, past and present, for their unstinting hard work which all too often is poorly acknowledged—if acknowledged at all—by silent members such as me. I wish NABO well and trust that the Association's voice will be loud and clear for decades to come.

Anthony L. H. Jankel

Bar Keepers Friend brass cleaner

I have been using this stuff from Lakeland, which is good for heavy cleaning of brass, but it needs a proper polish afterwards.

David Fletcher



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The Midland Chandlers website has been upgraded, the new site features a number of major improvements