



# NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners  
Issue 4 July 2019



**WIDEBEAM SAGA  
CRUISES ON**

**SURVEY OF BOAT  
OWNERS' VIEWS**

**BOATERS' LIABILITY  
FOR TOWPATH  
MOORING**



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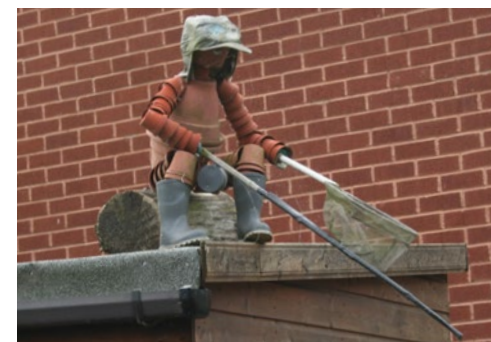
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## Next NABO News copy date

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](mailto:nabonews@nabo.org.uk)

## Cover photo

This month's cover photo is a flowerpot fisherman on the Staffs & Worcs, 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](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-regions)





I think most people would welcome CRT's 'Plastics Challenge', launched in June. Visitors to the waterways are being asked to pick up one piece of litter to prevent the half-million plus pieces of plastic entering the sea from UK canals each year.

It clearly chimes well with the Trust's wellbeing strategy and getting more people involved with the waterways as litter-picking

## More rubbish

Editor **Peter Fellows** considers the plastics problem.

volunteers. It also resonates with increasing public concerns over single-use plastics. However, one of the findings in the report didn't ring true to me: "... the amount of plastics and litter along a stretch of waterway does not relate to the surrounding population, levels of deprivation in the area or how much the towpath is used." When boating, it is common to pass through miles of countryside and small towns and villages, seeing hardly any rubbish in the water or along the banks. Then, within a couple of miles of an urban centre, it's everywhere. So the report's ten tips for visitors to reduce litter along towpaths are welcome. This new initiative is not really aimed at boaters, who, with rare exceptions, take care to properly dispose of rubbish (although I have seen black plastic bags of rubbish thrown onto offside land that could only have come from boats). But it's in boaters' interests to support the initiative, not only to make the waterway environment more pleasant and safer for wildlife, but also to reduce prop fouling and the need to delve down the weed-hatch. But here's the rub: despite

CRT claiming that it aims to increase the number of recycling points, members' experiences, reported for many months now, and in Jim Batty's letter in this issue, is that waste disposal sites are being closed and there are parts of the system that are now 'facility deserts'. We know that waste costs CRT enormous amounts of money and there can be serious problems with fly-tipping and people abusing disposal facilities, but it boils down to spending priorities. To prevent the new plastics challenge being seen as a bit of PR spin, there needs to be significant investment in waterside disposal facilities to prevent rubbish getting into the waterways in the first place.

My thanks to John and Marion Pearse, who have proofread NABO News for the last four years, but have now hung up their windlasses. If you would like to help out twice a year to proofread the text over a weekend, please let me know.

There's been a lot going on since the May issue: CRT's latest boat owners' survey reflects the discontent that many members have been reporting for months; Mike Rodd reports that the Government has decided to discontinue plans for CRT to take over EA waterways—a decision welcomed by NABO; there's a new Waterways Ombudsman (actually an Ombudswoman); more problems with widebeam boats on narrow canals, highlighted by Helen Hutt; and Mark Tizard reviews NABO's legal advice about boaters' liability if a cyclist hits a mooring pin. David Fletcher has been busy, with articles on GDPR, email from NABO, NAG operations and CO alarms. I've also included a review of member, Jim Batty's book, a first for NABO News. Plus a bumper crop of letters in this issue. Enjoy the summer.



The Marple Flight reopened at the end of May, so we have been treated to a great deal more traffic as boaters cross Bugsworth Basin off their tick-list of places to go.

We have noticed the speed and lack of boating etiquette that seems to have crept (or is that marched?) in over the last few years. When we moved aboard, the person we bought our boat from said: "you consciously need to slow down for the first three days as it takes that long to lose the motorway in your head". We notice that with the boaters who are obviously on a schedule speeding past us. I think they don't even notice the views over the landscape, which are particularly stunning this year. I think they forget that it isn't just the destination; it's the journey that is as important. We hear boaters complaining about the shallowness of the canal, but they are trying to cruise at maximum speed. (As this was one of the last canals to be built in the North West, costs were key and it was built to an average depth of about a metre, so it isn't the deepest of canals). But if you go slowly and enjoy the scenery, it will be a much better experience for everyone.

Boaters moan about the Canal and River Trust not doing enough maintenance and dredging, but along here they have done dredging surveys and taken boaters' feedback into account when deciding where to dredge. Unfortunately, the use of bow thrusters, particularly on shallow canals, means silt banks are created quite quickly on bends and in winding holes, creating further dredging needs. So it's a vicious circle, particularly on shallower canals.

### Widebeams on narrow canals

The Trust says it is aware of the issues on the North Oxford, but the

issues faced on other canals are mainly anecdotal, so please report everything, either by phone, email or on the Trust's web-form.

I attended CRT's Council Boaters Rep. meeting in Birmingham, where we stressed the need for consistency of language across waterways authorities, particularly in places where a canal joins a river. Currently, the Trust uses the height of water to determine safety; not flow, which could cause problems. The EA produces data for most rivers and so the issue is really just about using the same language and it meaning the same, no matter where you cruise.

## The motorway in your head

**Stella Ridgway** urges boaters to slow down and enjoy the view.

We talked about the challenge that the Trust faces with the increased cost of rubbish removal and fly-tipping that seems to happen near to towns. Lack of recycling is also a challenge for boaters as most recycling centres are not next to a canal and are inaccessible on foot. Perhaps the answer is barges that go around collecting recycling and rubbish, or bins only available on the offside and emptied via barges? Let me know your thoughts.

Meanwhile, I hope the summer stays good and we don't get too much rain. We wanted to paint our roof as it was reasonably nice weather; then it rained as soon as we started. Still, we finally got the front third done this week and hopefully the rain will keep off long enough to do the next two thirds. Happy boating everyone—remember to keep the motorway out of your head and enjoy the journey.



## Fly on the wall

### Observes proceedings at Council in June

#### 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: September 1st, October 13th, November 17th (includes AGM).

More Sunday service train failures stopped the Chair attending, but member, Sue Merrett, had just a short walk along the towpath from her overnight mooring.

London mooring problems resurfaced, with 200 more boats since last year. Around 25% are rented and many newbies don't know what's required. Some 10% are unlicensed and some owners are removing the names and index numbers to hinder identification by CRT spotters. It's no wonder that CRT can't keep up with those who flout byelaws. Perhaps if a few boats were towed away under Section 8, it would send a message via the towpath telegraph that they should comply. There is talk of yet another London consultation, even though the outcomes of the last one have yet to be implemented.

Councillors don't like CRT referring to the 'boating season', telling anglers that they can fish from visitor moorings 'out of the boating season'. NABO likes 'busy season' instead—the boating season is actually 12 months. Also, fishing taster-days for children take place on visitor moorings 'for health and safety reasons', but this sends the wrong message to the children. 'Out of the boating season' also means the 'stoppage season' to CRT engineers, but maintenance and repairs should take place throughout the year.

Widebeams on narrow canals (again): the advice from CRT if you have a problem passing a widebeam

is to moor up, fill out a contact form and wait for the national boating manager to resolve the issue.

Councillors have consulted m'learned friends regarding responsibility for accidents caused by cyclists hitting mooring pins and Lycra-louts continue to cause problems on the K&A towpath, with some recording speeds in excess of 23mph on the Strava website. Sustrans is getting concerned that it might have some liability, because of towpath improvements, and seems to be backing what NABO is saying.

Lock passage restrictions remain, especially in parts of the Midlands. Councillors thought that this is a sensible approach to water conservation, as it groups boats together, encourages lock-sharing and makes passage on flights easier with boats heading in both directions. Leaking lock gates are another matter.

The latest Boaters' Survey shows support for CRT to be down in nearly all categories. CRT's spin says this is due to licence fee increases and last year's drought and resulting closures, but Councillors were sure it was because boaters notice things that are not working, like paddles, and the loss of facilities. To get satisfaction levels up, all boaters need to be able to navigate safely, to moor, and to have useable facilities. There have been improvements, for example, to vegetation management, so CRT's PR should focus on these.

Finally, an announcement from the EA: a completely new team will develop a five-year strategy to commercialise the Agency and allow it to generate more income. This will allow asset improvements that might make them more attractive to CRT, when grant negotiations with Defra take place in (coincidentally?) five years' time.

Byee and enjoy the summer.

## GDPR—one year in

David Fletcher examines your personal data in detail

The GDPR was introduced in May 2018. NABO has to comply (as do all organisations that hold 'personal data'), as we hold information about people for a 'business or other non-household purpose'. At the June Council meeting, the team took time out to review our current position one year in, to see how far we have got and what more needs to be done. We must regularly review our processing and, where necessary, update our documentation and our privacy information for individuals. We must also review and update our accountability measures at 'appropriate' intervals.

Personal data means information about a particular living individual. This might be anyone, including a customer, client, employee, partner, member, supporter, business contact, public official or member of the public. It doesn't need to be 'private' information—even information which is public knowledge, or is about someone's professional life, or the colour of your boat can be 'personal' data. Almost anything we do with data counts as processing; including collecting, recording, storing, using, analysing, combining, disclosing or deleting it. This applies to all members, even if they have no internet access or email. It would still apply if we kept the details in a box in the corner. We operate on the basis of 'consent' by members and we ask members to confirm their agreement to our Privacy Policy.

We have a policy in place and there have been no challenges to it and there are no plans to make changes at this time. But we remain open to suggestions from members. That said, 13% of members have not responded to requests to agree to our Privacy Policy. Everybody who has not agreed is reminded at membership renewal time as to their position. Some members continue not to respond. Do they object on reasonable grounds? Do they not understand? Do they just not read this stuff we send? We just don't know. We can address any of the above, but no response is very hard to deal with.

We implement security measures on our web systems through our internet service pro-

vider, including up-to-date software, Captcha, Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS—used for secure communication), and minimum requirements for passwords. We monitor false logins all the time, but we know that these are mostly members who mistype their passwords.

The Information Commissioner's Office is the Government body that deals with this, and they have good checklists to guide us. They are generic and apply to mega-corporations as well as us, so they need some interpretation. We have worked through these lists again to identify best practice for small organisations like ourselves. This is considerably simplified because we are not trading and only communicate with members who are providing consent.

Out of all of this, the Council identified a workplan for the next year:

- Continue with initiatives to complete agreement by the membership;
- Write to life members and share the data we hold (at annual renewal);
- Document the responsibilities of officers and approve these in the Council;
- Document the data that we hold, including the archives; say why we keep these and address actions from this review with a view to disposal;
- Write some simple procedures and approve them in the Council;
- Carry out a risk assessment and impact assessment on data loss, and address actions from it.

So we have made a good start, but there is consolidation work to do, and we have to keep an open mind on best practices for small organisations.

What can you do? When you get a membership renewal or other correspondence from us, please read it. If you are asked to respond, please do so. If you have an account on the website, keep your password secure. If you have expertise or experience of GDPR with other clubs, please do get in touch. We are happy to learn or share best practice.

## Do you read your email?

asks **David Fletcher**

Nearly 75% of our members now have email addresses registered in our membership system. This is extremely useful as it means that you can be kept in touch with Association news, membership renewal and queries.

Of course, that does rather depend on whether you read those messages. If you have a letterbox at home and the postman delivers letters to you, I'd guess you pick them up and open them every day. Think of your email 'letterbox' in the same way—if you've given out your email address, then people are likely to send you email, so it makes sense to open it as you would for post on your doormat. How often? Why not every day? We have had some feedback from members saying that they've not received an email (e.g. "My renewal reminder didn't arrive", "I didn't get the bulletin"). If we have your current email address, then any mailshots will have been sent there. But if we still have an old address, then that's where any mail will have gone! We only know there is

a problem if we get a rejection—and we do get them every month.

Some email services try to be helpful and filter out junk mail ... and Samsung smartphones seem pretty good at it. So, if you aren't hearing from us or if the monthly bulletin, sent on the 1st of the month, hasn't arrived, it's worth checking your Spam, Junk or Unwanted mail folders. If you see an email there with the sender as xxx@nabo.org.uk, that's us! You should then be able to click on the message and click on 'Not Spam' or take a similar action. Then future email from us should arrive in your Inbox.

Of course, if you are not ever going to read your email, then we are better off not having the address—at least we will know how to get in touch. We are keen to use the technology, indeed we could not operate without it, but not to the exclusion of those who do not wish to do so. But half-in half-out is not a good solution.

### Roy Lees

We were shocked to hear of the sudden death, following a massive heart attack, of Roy Lees, our jovial host who always welcomed us so warmly for Council meetings at Tamworth Cruising Club. It happened on Sunday 30th June, just a week after our last meeting, as he and his wife Jane were doing some work on their narrowboat, Lancashire Lass.

Roy had recently retired from the company he set up and ran for many years and he and Jane were looking forward to spending more time cruising.

Our thoughts are with Jane and their children and grandchildren.

**Helen Hutt**



The Waterways Ombudsman Committee has appointed a new waterways ombudsman, Sarah Daniel. She takes over at the end of July when Andrew Walker, who has been in post for almost seven years, retires. Sarah writes to tell us a bit about herself, being an ombudsman, and her first impressions of the world of waterways.

“I live in the north west with my partner, Graham. We have two grown-up children, a lovely new granddaughter and a Jack Russell, who loves to walk along the canal towpath and chase the ducks. My working background has always involved complaints: after graduating, I worked for the DWP for the UK and Australian Governments, specialising in benefit claims and tribunal work. Here I gained an understanding of working with members of the public in difficult circumstances and the importance of putting complicated information into layman's terms, to allow both sides to understand why a decision has been reached. In 2004, I joined Ombudsman Services dealing with complaints about communication providers, becoming an ombudsman in 2009—I've helped in the resolution of thousands of complaints on a range of subjects. In 2016 I was promoted to lead ombudsman and managed the multi-sector ombudsman team.

The title 'ombudsman' is very grand, conjuring up images of wigs, gowns and complicated legal jargon, but it's not like that at all. In fact, I believe that being an ordinary middle-aged woman from Warrington makes me the perfect candidate to look at issues through the eyes of a fair and reasonable person acting in a reasonable way. That is the role of the ombudsman; to make sure that both sides of the argument have had equal opportunity to present their case. Then to look at the information and evidence which has been provided and come to a decision, clearly explained and, if appropriate, with a resolution or remedy.

I have already met some staff from the Canal & River Trust and I was encouraged to see that they are working hard to improve the way they capture and respond to complaints at the first level to avoid the need for escalation. The ultimate aim for any ombudsman is to make themselves obsolete by providing feedback to providers to enable them to learn from past mistakes and make improvements to processes and procedures. This



## New Waterways Ombudsman

**Sarah Daniel** introduces herself

For more information about the scheme please visit the website [www.waterways-ombudsman.org](http://www.waterways-ombudsman.org)

should mean that my part-time role gets smaller as my time as the ombudsman progresses. I have a five-year term to see if that holds true.

So, what attracted me to this role? Last year, I decided it was time for a life change, to restore some balance and look for a new challenge which would make the most of my experience, but allow time for other activities, like being a grandma. So, I was thrilled when I was appointed by the Committee, which has responsibility for ensuring the independence and integrity of the scheme. I am keen to get started and very grateful to Andrew for his support in the changeover period. I have a lot of new waterways' jargon and terminology to learn and to start there will inevitably be some gaps in my waterways knowledge, but the process of complaint handling and investigation is at the core of the role, where my expertise and experience lies.

Hopefully our paths won't cross in the future and you will not need to use the service. But it's always good to know that there is somewhere to go if you are unhappy with a final response from the Trust to a complaint.”

## Representing you: NABO at the user groups

# NAG: Operations

A report by **David Fletcher** from the June meeting

**Vegetation mowing app:** Search for an app called 'Explorer for ArcGIS', install it, then search for 'CRT' to find the maps.

**Winter stoppages:** have your say [canalrivertrust.org.uk/notices/winter](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/notices/winter)

**Information on Nicospan** [greenfix.co.uk/products/bioengineering/nicospan.html](http://greenfix.co.uk/products/bioengineering/nicospan.html)

These meetings continue, with a mix of users working to provide advice to CRT in operating the waterways as it affects users. There are subgroups that cover the main issues: dredging; winter stoppages; vegetation; and the new one—moorings. These small groups generally operate well, as they can get down to the detail, and the CRT staff involved are well engaged and listening. And they are generally free of politics, which is a nice change. The missing item is licensing, of course. I was in London in June for the latest meeting at the Little Venice office, well attended by users and senior CRT managers.

### Moorings

The big issue in London is, of course, moorings. The annual boat count shows a further 200 boats in the area. Though the rate of increase is down, numbers keep going up and there is no solution to the insufficiency of moorings. The London Plan is being implemented, but this only provides a limited increase in services and mooring places, and goes nowhere near to meeting the problem. CRT is very keen to keep the Regent's Canal open to visiting boaters and it is doing this by providing bookable moorings in Little Venice and the Paddington Arm. Moving boats also have to be able to get moorings on the way in, so moorings are also needed at Red Bull and similar sites. The fact remains that the demand for water space far exceeds the availability, so what is to be done to address this? CRT does not have the powers to exclude boats and its

previous attempts at special licences have not found favour. It is to start a campaign to persuade boaters not to moor on water points and lock landings, which will involve two warnings and then the threat of removal of the boat.

### Vegetation

CRT is now using updated mowing schedules with Fountains. There are several specifications, for example: cut to edge; or cut 0.5m either side of the towpath. These are displayed on maps by colour code, available on mobile phone devices. If you think that they should cut to edge at your favourite mooring, or on a line of sight on a bend, you can check what is supposed to be done.

### Stoppages

The winter stoppage group is working on plans for the coming winter, which are available for general comment, so please go and look and make your views known.

### Widebeams

The intrusion of widebeam boats into narrow canals also received quite some discussion. CRT agrees that there is an issue, not least because of the underwater damage that they cause. But boaters are worried about the obstruction that they cause on narrow waterways. Some of these boats have been craned into marinas for residential use—there is no objection to this, but they should not leave the marina to cruise narrow waterways. CRT has a plan to address this, based on education and persuasion.

### Bank Maintenance

CRT has about 500 km of soft tow-path bank repairs to carry out in coming years. It wants to standardise repair methods, as regions have been doing their own thing with mixed outcomes and some early failures.

The preferred method uses

geotextile sheets with pockets for wooden stakes, backfilled with dredgings or coir bundles, depending on environmental needs. The repairs need time to grow and are generally not suitable as visitor moorings. They will be asking for boater's input shortly—getting this right is a big money issue.

# BSS Advisory Committee

**Alison Tuck** reports from the June meeting at Hatton

CO alarms and BSS inspections—implementation of the new regulation on CO alarms has gone well, with a low rate of failures due to not having an alarm installed; the message seems to have got through that a CO alarm is required. There was comment about the criteria for checking the position of alarms being too complicated and why aren't they the same as hire-boats. The Management Committee wants boat safety examiners to explain potential sources of CO to boat owners during the examination but examiner associations are not happy with this.

Implementation of the new examiner course is going well and it will be a combination of distance learning and practical in-class training, so it looks like the BSS will run the course soon to get more qualified examiners. There are currently 120 examiners and the Scheme thinks 220 would be the maximum.

An on-going safety issue is some boaters using a cheap gadget, sold on ebay, that can be used to refill gas bottles at petrol stations. The BSS doesn't want to highlight it, out of concern that more people will do it, but there are significant cost savings to be had. A boat safety check wouldn't be able to tell if a bottle has

been refilled in this way. Calor Gas is aware of the situation and is working with the petrol retailers.

The number of incidents reported between January and May this year is significantly down, but the committee was unsure of the reasons why; either the scheme is working well or incidents are not being reported. There have been no incidents causing fatalities.

An explosion in January involving a petrol engine on a cruiser, when a crew member was refuelling the boat and the ignition key was turned. An incident relating to a solid-fuel stove after the occupier left the stove running with the door open, which activated a CO alarm. A narrowboat owner spent seven hours in a hospital decompression chamber following CO poisoning caused by a generator operating on the stern deck, when the wind blew exhaust fumes into the cabin through ventilators. The owner was asleep and was alerted by the CO alarm, which he considers saved his life. One electrical fire caused by an ancient electrical heater that hadn't been used for some time. The owners stopped the fire from spreading using a hose and a portable fire extinguisher, having been woken by the smoke alarm.

## EA's National Navigation Users Forum

Mike Rodd attended in London, 12th June

A well-attended meeting that proved to be most intriguing. Chaired by Robert Gould from the EA Board, the main purpose was to provide an update on the significant changes taking place within EA in terms of support for their navigational responsibilities. The driving factor was the Government's decision to not, at this stage, go ahead with the proposal for CRT to take over EA's navigational responsibilities. The result has been a major reorganisation within the EA, including shifting the navigation work into the Flood and Water Directorate. The team, headed by Andy Wilkinson, has a brief to develop a five-year business plan from 2020, aimed at producing a sustainable navigation programme.

### *The Government has decided not to go ahead with the proposal for CRT to take over EA's navigational responsibilities*

The overview of this work was presented by Alice Mayne, an EA Deputy Director responsible for navigation and commercial activities. Navigation is now an integral part of EA's plan to become commercially viable wherever possible – even if this will require changes to its legal basis. Thus, there is a review of charging strategies, investigations into potential income generating schemes, exploration of possible local contributions and an in-depth assessment of all operational requirements and their funding. This review is being undertaken

with other navigation authorities and is clearly building on CRT's experience. There is, for example, a continuing study of all charging schemes, striving for consistency across all authorities. This is intended to result in a public consultation in spring 2020, for implementation in 2021.

Likewise there is a small, well-informed, team looking into EA's asset management, with objectives mirroring CRT's to adopt commercially recognised standards etc. Additional funding has been made available to immediately address some of the most urgent needs – clearly this follows on from CRT's in-depth analysis of the asset-management challenges facing EA.

Finally, Julian Kennard gave an overview of some of the immediate national navigation issues, which included:

- The need to address Defra's clean air strategy and the questions this raises relating to emissions and the impacts on boating in general;
- Updating AINA's Hire Boat Code with a target of 2021 for a public consultation;
- Issues relating to the changing use of the waterways for residential use.

It was a meeting largely with a one-way information flow, but valuable in terms of seeing EA's short-term focus away from the possible merger into CRT of its navigational responsibilities, with a largely new team brought in to develop a strategy for sustainability. After five years? Well, as one of the EA speakers said, maybe then it would be sensible for them to hand over to CRT!

## Contacting CRT

now at weekends too

From 7th July, boaters are able to get in touch with the CRT customer service team seven days a week. The team will respond to enquiries from 8am-6pm Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm on Saturdays and 10am-4pm on Sundays. Passage bookings can only be made on weekdays. You can get in touch with the Trust to report an incident or to let them know about any non-urgent problems you have, or have come across, by calling 0303 0404040, tweeting @CRTcontactus completing and emailing the web-form or chatting live at canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us/ways-to-contact-us. Examples include low or high water levels, damage or vandalism, fly-tipping or animal carcasses, unlicensed or speeding boats, or facility breakdowns (e.g. water point, pump out).

In an emergency, call 999 and, when you have received a response from the emergency services, inform CRT on its 24-hour emergency number (0800 47 999 47). This type of emergency is, for example, when lives are at risk (including serious injury, illness, fatality, need for rescue help, fire or explosion on a boat), or to report a crime.

## New West Midlands Team

In May, CRT announced the following appointments:

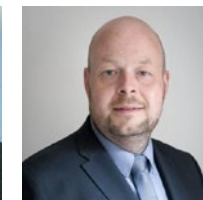
- **Rebecca Whitehouse** is Regional Operations Manager, responsible for the operations teams across the region, managing the Area Operations Managers and Reactive Response and Contracts Manager. Rebecca's team also includes volunteer lock keepers and the Towpath Taskforce.
- **Tom Freeland** is Boating and Customer Service Manager, responsible for boat licensing and customer service support.
- **Ian Lane** is Head of Operational Projects, responsible for Community Roots projects in Coventry and the Black Country, destination development and management, and



Becky Whitehouse



Tom Freeland



Richard Preston

### CRT CONTACTS

**Emergency:**  
Phone: 999 then 0800 47 999 47

**Urgent:**  
0800 47 999 47

**Non-urgent:**  
Phone: 0303 0404040  
Twitter: @CRTcontactus  
Live chat: canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us

**Environmental pollution:**  
EA 0800 80 70 60

Also call CRT's emergency number when a situation is urgent (but be aware that staff will make a judgement based on the severity of the incident and do not always ask an on-duty staff member to respond directly). Examples include a seriously damaged lock, bridge or tunnel, a boat trapped in a dangerous situation (e.g. on a weir or in a lock), serious flooding or a breach that risks lives or property.

To report environmental pollution (including dead fish or fish gasping at the water surface), call the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60.

CRT's input to Coventry City of Culture and the Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

- **Ani Sutton** is Community Engagement Manager, leading volunteering and education, and the youth and events programme.
- **Richard Preston** is Partnerships and External Relationships Manager, responsible for engagement with funders, authorities and businesses, campaigns and communications.
- **Audrey O'Connor** is Heritage and Environment Manager, leading a team of ecologists, environmental scientists and heritage advisors.

## CRT survey shows decline in boaters' satisfaction

The survey, carried out in March and April this year, was sent to a third of CRT's boat licence holders and received 1,163 responses.

Narrowboat owners were the most positive, with 65% expressing satisfaction with their boating experience.

Across the regions, boaters in the West Midlands and East Midlands were most satisfied, at 68% and 67% respectively, while continuous cruisers also expressed satisfaction levels of 65%. Boaters in Yorkshire and the North East were least satisfied, with only 48% expressing satisfaction.

Jon Horsfall, Head of Customer Service Support, said: "We are disappointed in the drop in boater satisfaction. We recognise the past year has been one of change for our customers, including changes to the prompt payment discount and increased licence fees for boat owners with wider boats. We also acknowledge the impact of last year's drought and the effects of unpredictable infrastructure failures on customers throughout the year. I thank everyone

Satisfied with their experience of cruising the waterways

Would recommend the waterways to other boaters

Overall upkeep rated as OK to excellent

Feel they know the Trust very well or a fair amount

Trust the charity to look after the waterways

Feel favourable to the Trust

2018 %	2019 %
70	61
76	58
74	69
53	59
62	56
54	47

who has taken part in the survey and would like to give all our boating customers the assurance that boating and navigation is at the very heart of everything we do."

The full survey report will be published on the Trust's website.

## Update on lock restrictions

Following rainfall over recent weeks, CRT has updated its water saving measures on the Leeds and Liverpool, Oxford and Grand Union canals. It is removing restrictions at Johnsons Hillocks and Blackburn locks as they are fed by feeders as well as from the summit.

However, the L&L reservoirs have not seen enough rainfall to refill them to a satisfactory level and restricted opening times remain at Barrowford Locks, Greenberfield Locks, Bank Newton Locks and Gargrave Locks, as they are solely fed from the reservoirs.

The opening times remain in place on the Wigan Flight to minimise vandalism risks. On the Oxford and Grand Union Canals, the Trust remains cautious and is keeping the restricted opening times to ensure that the canals have the best chance of staying open throughout the summer.



David Carter and Michael Limbrey at Crickheath basin  
Photo: CRT

## More on the Monty

CRT, volunteers from the Shropshire Union Canal Society and contractors have upgraded nearly five miles of towpath, relined the canal bed to restore navigation to 1¼ miles of the Montgomery Canal from Maesbury to Crickheath, near Oswestry, and created a winding hole basin.

### First boats in 80 years

This will be the first time in 80+ years that boats can return to Crickheath, after the canal was closed due to a breach in 1936. In Wales, the work will include restoring 12 historic structures, dredging four areas to improve the flow of the water, towpath works and community involvement.

For the first time in any canal restoration, two nature reserve lakes have been constructed parallel to the canal at Aston Locks, near Queens Head, to provide a three-hectare habitat for aquatic flora and fauna that were removed from the canal.

### Montgomery Canal SSSI

The Montgomery is designated as a SSSI on both sides of the border and in Wales it is also recognised as a Special Area of Conservation, being one of the most important sites for wildlife in Europe.

The four-year, £4 million project is being funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, supported by the Montgomery Canal Partnership, and is due to be completed by 2020.

The canal runs for 35 miles between England and Wales, but only around half is currently navigable. The 15 organisations that make up

the Montgomery Canal Partnership aim to fully restore the canal within the next decade.

### 60% restored

The Partnership chair, John Dodwell, said: "This means that 60% of this historic, lovely canal has been restored. We look forward to more support from the public, both by volunteers and donations, to enable us to make further progress."

The areas awaiting restoration are 7.5 miles from Gronwen to Arddlin, at the northern end of the navigable Welshpool section, and 8.5 miles from Refail to Newtown, Powys, in the southern end of the Welshpool section. The canal is all in single ownership; the water supply is secure; and all the locks have been restored. A restoration fund is currently focussed on raising £300k to rebuild Schoolhouse Bridge, the last lowered bridge in England.



Stuart Moodie and Sara Hill with an underwater drone camera to monitor wildlife at the new Monty nature reserve  
Photo: CRT

Details can be found at [www.restorethemontgomerycanal.uk](http://www.restorethemontgomerycanal.uk).



## Towpath cycling : a legal precedent?

In June, a court case was reported in which a woman who stepped into the road while looking at her mobile phone won damages from a cyclist who collided with her. The Judge ruled that even though she was distracted when she was hit, the cyclist was liable, stating: "Cyclists must be prepared at all times for people to behave in unexpected ways."

The Judge continued, saying that the cyclist: "owed a duty to other road users to drive with reasonable care and skill. Even where a motorist or cyclist had the right of way, pedestrians who are established on the road have right of way" and that the cyclist "did fall below the level to be expected of a reasonably competent cyclist in that he did proceed when the road was not completely clear."



Photo: Wikipedia Commons

## Marple open again

Problems with the lock chamber walls, first at Lock 15 and then at Lock 11, resulted in the lock flight being closed to through-traffic since September 2017. After 20 months of emergency repairs, the flight opened again in May.



Photo: CRT

## Amsterdam to ban petrol and diesel powered boats

As part of its efforts to improve air quality, Amsterdam City Council is proposing to ban all petrol and diesel powered boats from the city centre (within the A10 ring road) by 2025. Diesel cars made before 2005 will be excluded by next year and other petrol and diesel vehicles will be banned from the city centre from 2030.

The Dutch marine trade association is discussing the implications of the new legislation with its members and several thousand boat owners who will be affected by the new legislation. It is hoping to agree some concessions to mitigate the economic consequences for its members and it is lobbying to have the area covered by the ban reduced in size to the immediate city centre. From International Boat Industry News, 10/5/19

## Plastics Challenge

Peter Fellows examines CRT's initiative on plastics disposal and litter

In June, amid much publicity, CRT launched its 'Plastics Challenge', asking everyone who visits a waterway to pick up one piece of litter.

This, they say, would make canals clear of plastic within a year. It follows a study by Coventry University that reviewed data from 15 representative locations and found that plastics account for almost 60% of waste in and along CRT's waterways.

The study estimated that 570,000 items of plastic from the waterways reach the sea each year, an issue highlighted by TV programmes, such as David Attenborough's Blue Planet and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Anita Rani's War on Plastic. The research also found that the amount of litter along a stretch of waterway does not relate to the surrounding population, levels of deprivation in the area, or how much the towpath is used. A considerable amount of rubbish ends up on towpaths and in the water from land and buildings alongside the canal or from being dropped from bridges.

### The cost of waste

Almost everyone would agree that rubbish is a big issue for CRT and other navigation authorities, with CRT reporting that in 2017/18 it 'dealt with nearly 5,500 tonnes of waste from customer bin areas and individual pedestrian and dog waste bins at a cost of £775,000 and £185,000 respectively'.

It also spent £80,000 clearing away fly-tipped waste on towpaths and other property. CRT claims that it 'recycled most of this waste with



78% diverted from landfill', and it will 'try to put recycling bins at every location, (but) due to logistical reasons such as a location being isolated and rural, it sometimes means (it) can't get a recycling service there.'

The Plastics Challenge report is at [canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/features/plastic-and-litter-in-our-canals](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/features/plastic-and-litter-in-our-canals)

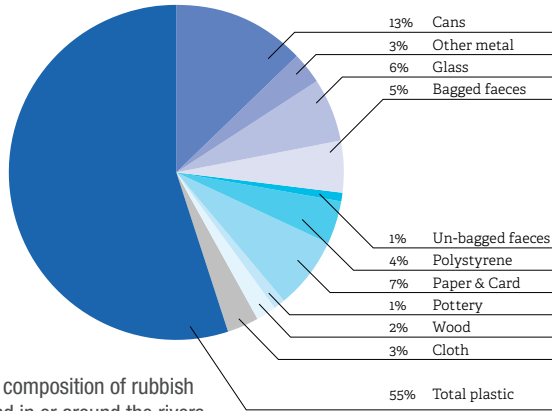


There are two aspects to this: litter left by visitors—and CRT is encouraging more of them with its waterways and wellbeing strategy—and refuse disposal for boaters.

The ten tips for visitors to reduce waste along towpaths are welcome (such as not buying bottled water or coffee in disposable cups, products with microbeads or glitter in them, and using beeswax paper wraps or reusable containers instead of cling-film or foil for sandwich wrappers).

The report also states: ‘most of our rubbish compounds only accept boaters’ bagged domestic rubbish, but we have an increasing number of recycling points. By separating recycling from general rubbish, we avoid paying landfill tax. If someone puts a bag of general mixed waste in a recycling bin, the whole bin will be treated by our contractors as mixed waste and the tax will be charged on the whole load.’ The tips for boaters to ‘store rubbish securely until you reach a bin, so it doesn’t get blown into the canal’ and to ‘separate recyclables and make use of recycling facilities’ are self-evident to most boaters.

On the NABO Facebook page, some boaters responded: “I agree



The composition of rubbish found in or around the rivers and canals. Source: CRT

NABO is conducting a survey of waste disposal facilities that have been closed, so, if you know of any, please send details to the Editor, who will pass them on.

The location of a nearest non-canal-side recycling point can be found using [www.recyclenow.com/local-recycling](http://www.recyclenow.com/local-recycling).



with the sentiment of the plastics drive, but CRT need to put their money where their mouth is and step up too. If you want to remove plastics from the canals, where are the refuse and recycling facilities?”

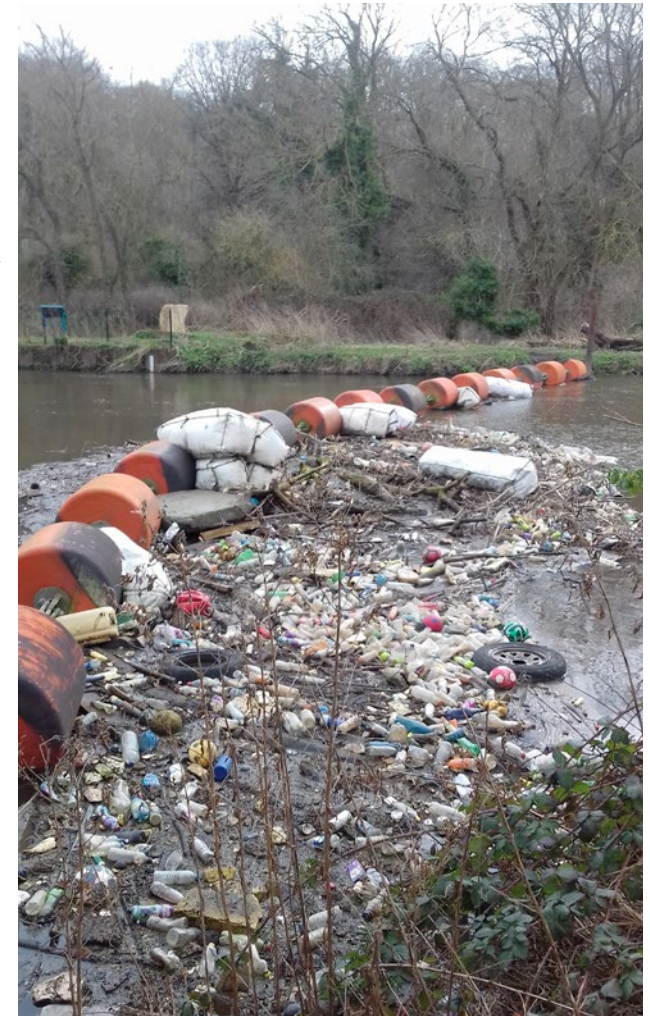
“Are these people [visitors] to take the rubbish home with them?”

“You took away the recycling bins at Great Bedwyn. I discovered that you’d been duping boaters into recycling, and then one of your employees would come along and empty the recycling waste into the normal bins. The upshot was you never paid the local authority to take away the recycling. Rather than reinstate proper recycling facilities, CRT’s answer was to remove the bins. Great initiative and it shows a real desire to get that plastic waste dealt with. I think not!”

“Such a good point, unfortunately as the wider bins are often overflowing, the recycling bins are used as general bins, which in turn means they are removed because they are abused. It’s just a PR stunt, I suspect, by its timing.”

“There are so many gaps between utilities now that it is no wonder that plastic ends up blowing into the canal!”

*“CRT need to put their money where their mouth is and step up too. If you want to remove the plastics from the canals, where are the refuse and recycling facilities?”*



# The silent killer

## Carbon monoxide latest

It's not just for exam day, it saves lives, says NABO's BSS representative **David Fletcher**

**T**he requirement for a CO alarm in all boats with accommodation became a BSS requirement in April. This applies to all boats immediately, even if your examination was as late as March and you will not be checked for another four years. The BSS office tells us that the examinations taking place since April are recording less than 10% failures on CO alarm requirements. This is a really good result when the estimates were that perhaps a third of boats did not have them.

Of course, alarms are not just for the day of the examination; they have to work every day. So there is a job to be done, checking them by pushing the button. There are businesses that sell testing gases to check the function, but there is no need for these in a boating environment—pushing the test-button is perfectly adequate. If you really must live-check it, find a petrol engine and put the alarm in the exhaust gas plume.

Remember that any BSS requirement is designed to meet the need of a navigation authority, which should be satisfied that a boat is safe enough that it will not be a risk to other users or the authority's own facilities. It is not about protecting a private boat user. So BSS is a minimum requirement for the navigation authority. There is no requirement (for example) to service the engine, but that is something that the owner will have to consider.

This is not the end of the CO issue in BSS circles. For some time, a small number of examiners have

been carrying sensitive CO monitoring recorders while working on board. There are two issues: one of protection for examiners who are entering boats with no idea of the condition of stoves, water heaters and cookers; and secondly, to see what is happening while the examination is in progress. And results from the monitoring recorders are showing how widespread the incidences of low level CO are. These levels may not be enough to set off an alarm, but they are of concern for long-term exposure. Do you get headaches on board?

### Ventilation considerations

BSS has been considering what is happening in boat cabins with regards to ventilation, air changes, the dispersal of toxins like CO and also tiny propane gas leaks.

The most recent live trials were done at Mercia Marina and involved releasing sample gases outside a boat to look for the effects as they were blown through cabin spaces. It was this evidence, together with the horrific fatal accident on the Broads, which led to confirmation of third-party risk and the introduction of the alarm requirement.

The BSS also has a number of CO monitoring recorders deployed in residential boats in London, so that data can be gathered about low levels of CO in cabins, when there is a group of boats together. All this is about the risks to boaters, not from on-board stoves etc., but from the gases blowing into a cabin from another high-concentration source

nearby and threatening life. The usual high-level sources are petrol engines, used for propulsion or with generators, and solid-fuel stoves. If the boat next door puts a load of fuel on the fire and smoke is blowing into your boat, what do you do? You shut the window. But if you are asleep, you need a CO alarm to do its work. Diesel engines and Webasco-type heaters are not very high CO sources, if well maintained, but the noise and fumes are not pleasant.

The BSS ventilation requirements for boats have long been a source of contention. Historically they have required an air-gap based on how many appliances or burners are present, and a presumption that they are all working at the same time. This is rather typical of conservative engineering assumptions, when safety has to be engineered into design and is not dependant on users' actions. For hire-boats, this ventilation is a requirement but, for private boats, it is advisory because it is a first-party risk. About 20% of private boats do not meet this recommendation. But fixed ventilation is an important element in keeping us safe. There is no minimum requirement for private boats because it is not of concern to a navigation authority, but why would a prudent boater not comply for their own safety?

### CO in the galley

All combustion produces some CO but a well-maintained cooker generally produces very little, and the ventilation allows air changes so that fumes disperse.

The CO alarm manufacturers say not to place the alarms over the stove, so that there are no nuisance alarms. But this doesn't mean that there is no CO: the examiners' monitors have shown that gas grills give off a high level of CO when they are first lit. This is because the metal is



cold, causing incomplete combustion. It can also happen if a large kettle or pan of cold water is placed on a hob. There is nothing to worry about if the ventilation is good. The latest CO leaflet talks about keeping a window open, but if your fixed ventilation is substandard, the weather is poor and windows are shut, there will be detectable CO in the galley. The concern about this is the effect of long-term, low-level exposure, and little is known about lower safety thresholds.

So, there will be an on-going debate about the ventilation requirements as we understand more, but they are unlikely to be changed soon. They are conservative but not unreasonably expensive to comply with. The concern is about low-level CO from onboard appliances, although a first-party risk, which could be adversely affected by a reduction in ventilation area. What can you do? Make sure your alarm(s) meet the BSS requirements and test them often by pressing the button. Think about what to do if an alarm goes off. If your ventilation does not meet the requirements, get extra ventilation grilles put in. Maintain your stoves, cooker, heater etc. If you are getting persistent headaches when on board, think about what is going on and check, check and check again; it could save a life.

# Share the space

## What happens if there is conflict?

Mark Tizard reviews NABO's recent legal advice

As part of CRT's drive to ensure continued Government funding, its intention is to increase the number of people visiting the towpath this year from 4.3m to 4.5m per fortnight. Towpaths are being upgraded and resurfaced, from grass to graded pathways, and millions of pounds from Sustrans support the development of a national cycling network. The number of cyclists using towpaths for leisure and, increasingly, for commuting, is growing rapidly and this has led to increased potential for conflict between cyclists and other towpath users. CRT's reaction has been to introduce a 'share the space' campaign, but idyllic photos showing a young family cycling along a deserted towpath are not the reality for many. This is better summed up by a recent post on social media: "Another incident at accident hotspot, Bridge 38 on the Regent's Canal. Two cyclists met coming from opposite directions in the very narrow space under the bridge and the cyclist heading towards City Road lock went into the canal with his bike, hitting a moored boat on his way in. Thankfully no injuries, but not a nice experience and a ruined phone and laptop. One day there will be more than just hurt pride and ruined possessions."

This year, NABO has been contacted for the first time by boaters who have been threatened with legal action by cyclists who have suffered injury or damage as a result of colliding with mooring pins or ropes. CRT has passed on the boat owners' details when approached by solicitors.

NABO Council subsequently sought a decision from our legal advisers to get some clarity. We asked the following questions and received the detailed reply below:

**Q1. Is a boater liable for a claim for damages for any injuries or losses incurred if cyclists (or any other towpath users) injure themselves as a direct result of contact with a mooring pin, or the mooring lines from the pin securing a boat?**

Advice: "The definitive answer is that any liability will be dependent upon the individual fact specific circumstances of each case. However, some guidance can be given that can inform generally. The first point is to determine the status of the individual towpath in question. CRT guidance explains most towpaths are not public rights of way but 'permissive paths', where they permit the public to use them.

In the event that a towpath in question turned out to be a public right of way and assuming it had been properly maintained then injury for any towpath user as a result of contact with a mooring pin or mooring lines will boil down to who can be seen as negligent and is ultimately to blame for any incident. For instance, if bollards and rings are available but not used and instead lightly coloured lines are tied across a towpath that a cyclist cannot reasonably see/anticipate, then a boater would likely be found to be at fault. Whereas if say a boater has utilised bollards or rings or has used a highlighted mooring stake in accordance with CRT guidance and a cyclist crashes into that highlighted

pin having not paid due care and attention, then the boater should not then be liable. In short, where there is a public right of way any liability will boil down to who was reasonable and who is the ultimate cause of any accident. It may be that a boater is the main cause but that the cyclist say has still contributed to his own downfall in large part (say lines are left out dangerously but then a cyclist comes too quickly and without proper attention) and then a liability might follow against a boater but reduced with contributory negligence against the cyclist.

The basic position as to whether a boater would be liable to another towpath user would start from the same principles as if it were a public right of way, but would then be further informed by the rules CRT had imposed in granting access. The CRT guidance dictates that cyclists do not require a permit to cycle on their towpaths. They are simply asked to cycle with 'great care'. As to speed limits CRT says none is dictated but they ask that 'everyone uses common sense, with primary consideration for pedestrians and those handling boats.' Thus in our view this places a higher duty on cyclists on a CRT permissive route to act with care and consideration, such that whilst a boater could still be found liable for causing injury if say creating an unreasonable hazard, these circumstances would be remote, as a cyclist would be expected to be going at a speed such that they could slow down to stop/avoid any properly visible hazard created under CRT guidance.

In summary a boater may be liable in theory for injuries to another towpath user but if they can show they have acted reasonably in relation to their mooring and highlighted the same, it is extremely unlikely that a claim against them can properly be

borne out.

The best guidance for NABO to maintain in our view is to reiterate the CRT guidance to members and to ensure that common sense use of the towpaths is employed as far as possible with moorings being made as visible as possible to other users."

**Q2. What liability does CRT have in these circumstances, given that the cyclist is on a permissive path and there are no notices on entering the towpath, warning towpath users of moored boats and to be aware of mooring pins?**

Advice: "It is unlikely that any lack of signage will create a position where CRT would be more likely to have a liability to a boater or a cyclist say in any accident between the two."

Many will have read the much publicised case of the cyclist who was successfully sued for damages by a pedestrian who walked into his path while looking at her mobile phone. This was largely on the basis that the cyclist should have been aware of his surroundings and the likelihood of pedestrians stepping into the road, and he should have been cycling at a speed that allowed him to safely stop.

NABO's advice to its members is first to ensure that your insurance has a legal costs option, if this is available. When mooring, we strongly recommend that members follow CRT's mooring guidelines: "If there aren't any bollards or rings, use your mooring stakes if the ground is suitable ... if the ground is soft, check the stability of the bank. Position the stakes as far from the bank as you can, but don't tie your ropes across the towpath. Knock them in to about three-quarters their length and make sure they're firm. Mark them with a piece of light-coloured cloth or a white plastic bag or bottle, so that other towpath users can see them clearly."

# The widebeam saga cruises on

Helen Hutt has some thoughts on recent incidents

In his article 'Nowhere to turn' in the last issue of NABO News, Kevin McNiff talked in depth about the issue of widebeam boats using narrow canals, and the inconclusive responses from both CRT and the Waterways Ombudsman to the problems which could—and surely will, before too long—arise.

In the interim, NABO sought a legal view on the question "If a member's boat sustains damage caused by a widebeam boat travelling on a narrow canal, does CRT have any liability for permitting this?" In short,

the answer from our solicitor is "No. CRT cannot actively police or stop such travel . . . and thus the liability of any accident caused as a result of a boat being too wide must rest with the particular boat owner that has chosen to travel along that particular stretch of waterway."

So, the only advice NABO can give to members is to plan and know routes to be taken, particularly when using widebeam boats, and to maintain insurance in the event of unexpected issues.

## Issues on the North Oxford...

Some of you will be aware that a widebeam that had been on show at Crick this year was craned into the water on 6th June to make its way on the (narrow) North Oxford Canal to its destination marina, which had no craning-in facility.

When asked about this, CRT told NABO Chair Stella Ridgway: "The Trust was not aware in advance that this was going to happen. The craft was craned in late in the evening and was in the marina by early morning so there was little that we could have done at that stage. We're finalising our proposal to manage the issue of wide craft on the North Oxford and then will be discussing them with NAG and the marinas. Once I have more detail I'll let you know."

Another email from CRT added: "Our recently updated maximum craft dimensions make clear that the North Oxford is not suitable for general navigation by widebeam craft. There are some marinas on the North Oxford that do have widebeam craft moored in them. The



Trust does not have a problem if the widebeam craft remain in the marinas as they won't cause a navigational safety issue for other craft. However, I understand that, without the ability to crane in widebeam craft at these marinas, any craft heading to them has to travel by water. In this scenario we will be looking to put measures in place to manage any navigation of wide craft to/from the marinas."

On 20th June, in ensuing correspondence about what should happen in case of an incident involving a widebeam, CRT said: "The Trust has received very few reports about wide craft on the North Oxford (and none that have actually caused a collision or blocking of the navigation) so we cannot respond or address the issue if we don't get the information." Something about 'prevention rather than cure' comes to mind.

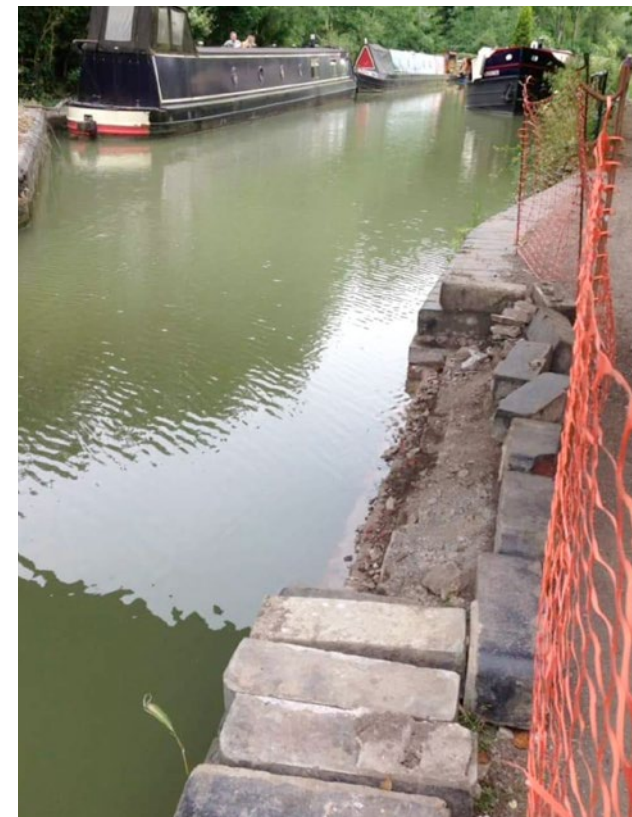
## ...and even on wide canals

And then, just a few days later, there was a widebeam incident which did block the navigation—on a wide canal!

An extra-wide, brand new boat arrived from a Warwick boat builder near the bottom of the Stockton flight on the Grand Union and promptly got stuck in Bridge 24. CRT's width guidance for the GU from Long Buckby to Camp Hill is 12ft 6in and the next bridge, Blue Lias, No. 23, is even narrower, 12ft according to Nicholson's guide, so what was this monster doing here in the first place?

CRT had to remove the coping stones and part of the towpath in order to free the boat and I sincerely hope that the owner has been held liable for the cost of sorting out this problem. To make matters worse, this happened when the nearby Bascote staircase was out of action due to a damaged cill, so one can

*The solution was for CRT to remove the coping stones and part of the towpath in order to free the [widebeam] boat.*



Coping stones removed  
Photo (and opposite) Joab Lawlor

only imagine the backlog of boats! Good business for the local pubs, no doubt, but very frustrating all round.

All this suggests to me that purchasers of widebeam boats are perhaps not being given the full story before they buy? It can only be a matter of time before there is an even more serious incident.

# Rewind

Issue No 4, 2004

Howard Anguish explores NABO News from 15 years ago

**Chairman's Column** Alcohol survey: A recent survey and a website consultation concerning alcohol on boats raised some interesting points—in particular, what about lock crew? The piece concluded: “Many people thought there was a case for apprehending inebriated steerers before they caused an accident, but others were fearful they may fall foul of the law after a couple of pints at lunchtime. Almost everybody had severe reservations about enforcement, particularly on the BW canals, where manpower is very scarce for enforcing anything, especially as, for safety, staff sent out to apprehend drunken boaters would need to be in pairs”.

**NABO policy review** As part of NABO's ongoing policy review, this edition dealt with British Waterways. A key policy was: “NABO believes that British Waterways should place its obligations as a navigation authority at the top of its duty priorities and only conduct other commercial activities as a means to further this aim”. A laudable aim but there is still a way to go in 2019!

**Cycling and angling identification** NABO opposed organised cycling events on the towpath, specifically on safety grounds, and suggested that cyclists (and also anglers) should display a number so that they could be identified in the event of an incident. It did raise an interesting question, however. Where to display the number?

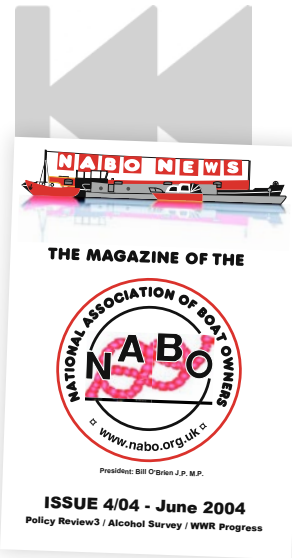
**Worried woman of the waterways**, a regular NN contributor, had concern about litter on the water, especially in urban locations, but raised

the point that, while being able to see litter on the surface, there is little mention of underwater obstructions and debris that can cause lots of problems—shopping trolleys or wheely bins among them. Not to mention, of course, plastic bags or bits of blue rope that necessitate frequent trips down the weed hatch.

**User group meetings** following the comments about underwater rubbish worried woman of the waterways asks whether User Group meetings do any good, or “are they just a public relations exercise and a good excuse for a chat while guzzling free food?” She asks: “Who attends meetings? Waterway users, of course, anglers, walkers, cyclists, botanists, entomologists (and goodness knows how many other '-ists’) and finally, those underdogs, the boaters, who pay the most so that all the others can also enjoy the facilities.”

**Leeds & Liverpool proposed extension**, described as “one for the ‘it will never happen’ section?” This edition announced that: “British Waterways has now formally applied for planning permission to extend the L&L canal by 3.5 miles from Stanley Dock, Vauxhall, to the Pier Head and central and south docks in Liverpool.”

This was only 15 years ago and in my mind this extension is now a very well established part of the inland waterway network and seems to have been with us for much longer. While still not perfect, it does show that progress can be made, so let's keep plugging away at CRT to keep our waterways alive for future generations.



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

## BOOK REVIEW

# Narrowboat Life : Jim Batty

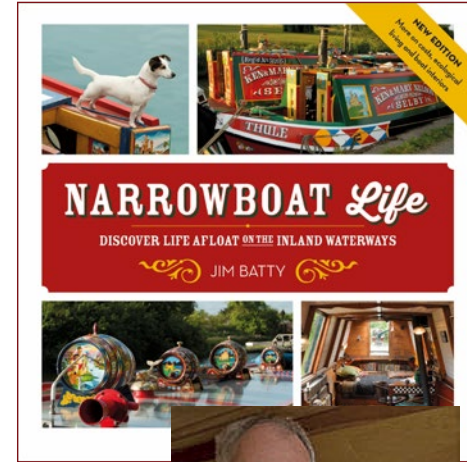
## Everything you need to know about living afloat

Reviewed by Peter Fellows

Approximately 6% of NABO members are live-aboards with a permanent mooring, or continuous cruisers, so this book is likely to appeal to the other 94%, some of whom may be considering a life afloat in a more permanent way. The 2nd edition of *Narrowboat Life* by NABO member, Jim Batty, is a distillation of answers to all the questions he has been asked since becoming a continuous cruiser ten years ago. The 224-page book covers everything you need to know about how to make a narrowboat (or a widebeam, cruiser, or barge) your home, with hands-on advice that answers such questions as: How much do you pay for a narrowboat? What's it like, living on a narrowboat? How do you receive post? How green is living on a narrowboat really? How much does it cost to live on a narrowboat? How do you see a doctor? How do you use the internet? How do you hold down a job?

In addition to being a graphic designer and writer, the author is a professional photographer and the book is lavishly illustrated with hundreds of images of the waterways, the boats that occupy them and 'every nook and cranny' of the interiors of a selection of boats. The writing style is relaxed and informal, making the book easy to 'dip into'. But the author is not shy of going into details. For example, when discussing water and fuel consumption: “The main reason you do your utmost to preserve water, electricity and fuel on a boat is because they require

work, time and inconvenience to replenish.” “... every person in the UK, on average, uses 150 litres of water each day. Now ponder the fact that our ordinary water tank under the bow holds 380 litres. It lasts the two of us a week—two weeks if we really stretch it. Life's too short to be tracking down water points and filling the tank every day or two. So by default, we use one fifth of the water of those living on land.” On energy: “... the average medium gas-energy home user consumes 12,000 kWh of energy each year .... which translates to about 860kg of LPG. On board we use gas for cooking, but not central heating, that over the years has ranged between 42 and 48kg annually. This is close to one-twentieth that of the average home gas user.” “When continuously cruising in winter, we burn about 35 bags of coal to heat the boat, or just over 7,000 kWh of non-renewable energy. This is ... fuel use that your average land-based home avoids completely, so, to some extent, counterbalances that stupendously low use of LPG.” The book also has detailed breakdowns of the costs of living afloat and much more, so, all-in-all, it is also a valuable and attractive resource for the 6% who already live on board.



*Narrowboat Life* is published by Bloomsbury Publishing at £20

ISBN:  
Paperback  
978-1-4729-6365-9  
Ebook  
978-1-4729-6364-2

If you have a book that you would like to bring to NABO members' attention, please send the Editor a review—maximum 500 words.

## Letters to the Editor

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

### Adieu

We plan to sell our boat, with both of us now ticking the 76-85 age group, so we will not be renewing our NABO membership when it expires this summer. We would like to thank you for the opportunity to proof-read NABO News for several editions. This has given us the chance to do something useful for NABO that is within our competence and easy for the older generation, as well as providing an interesting preview of a very worthwhile magazine.

We shall continue to support waterway causes, as we have since the early 1960s, by navvying and campaigning, or more recently by financial contributions to restoration or preservation projects. We recall the leadership of people like David Hutchins and Robert Aickman, among others. We are born optimists, and we believe that the waterways have an intrinsic ability to survive against the odds (and the jobs), as history has proved, and against an uncaring or ignorant officialdom in Whitehall and elsewhere. NABO members have one vital weapon, which will always help to convert the ignorant, namely the ability to take the uninitiated on cruises to show the amazing charm of rural and (most) urban waterways.

Having said that, we wonder if, for our generation at least, things are not the same as when we started. Our feelings are echoed in the two articles by Mark Tizard in the May issue, the early cruising restrictions, the contribution from Kevin McNiff, Howard Anguish's Rewind, and letters from Sue Merrett, and Peter Caswell. Altogether, it is another excellent read, if a bit depressing.

Some years ago, a lady compared the financial situation for boaters as being like a theatre where the unpaid actors coughed up all the costs themselves, while the audience was admitted for nothing. Nowadays, some of the 'stagehands' are also volunteers, and some of the audience behave very badly, with little appreciation of their privileged position; you know the sort, refusing to

leave when their time is up, or riding their bikes in unsuitable parts of the theatre. But we remain optimists.... "Nil illegitimus carborundum", as they say. So, perhaps for the final time, best wishes to NABO 'and all who sail in her'.

**John and Marion Pearse**

### More boaters' facilities lost

Until a few years ago, the boaters' services area in Hungerford included an important and convenient rubbish point; a large wheeled bin set just behind the pump-out and Elsan building. With little advanced notice, the rubbish point seemed to disappear overnight. As a result, there is no dedicated rubbish point for boaters between Kintbury, West Berks and Great Bedwyn, Wilts. This is massively inconvenient for anyone who cruises at a slow, exploratory pace along this section of the Kennet & Avon Canal, as there are so many interesting and peaceful places to stop along the way between these two points, including: Avington Estate moorings below Wire Lock; grassy moorings below Dun Mill Lock; 14-day moorings to the east and west of Hungerford as well as the various 24- and 48-hour moorings in and near the town centre; any of the moorings along and above the Froxfield flight of locks; and a stretch of wilder but hugely enjoyable moorings in and west of Little Bedwyn. If you wished to spend a couple of days to a couple of weeks at a number of these sites during transit, as we often do, it means having to carry and deal with weeks' worth of rubbish. What tends to happen is that boaters distribute bags of rubbish and waste around the public bins of Hungerford—do-able but obviously not ideal or convenient.

The reason given for removal of the Hungerford rubbish point was that new dust-cart/lorries couldn't cross the small bridge beside the service point (see image 1). This has always struck me as an extremely lame excuse for cutting such an important service. It doesn't seem to me that challenging to find a way of accessing a rubbish

bin set at the far end of the bridge. Why not use a smaller, lighter flatbed style truck, such as those used for recycling collections? Or fit larger wheels to the rubbish bin so it could be wheeled over the bridge? Perhaps easiest of all, certainly for dustmen, the local council and CRT, would be to position a rubbish bin on the opposite side of the canal at the foot of the bridge to one side (see image 2). The lane terminates in an empty cul-de-sac, with very few people who pass this way: boaters and a few train commuters crossing the bridge to their homes on the edge of town. There is LOTS of space for a bin in the area indicated on the photo. In fact, there is probably room for two or three wheeled recycling bins. If CRT put some effort into this (partnering with Hungerford Council), it could install a minimalist recycling station that would be the envy of the system and local councils, and hugely boost their green credentials. All it needs is a little imagination, a modicum of energy and friendly negotiation with the local rubbish contractors.

**Jim Batty**

**Mike Rodd adds:** *I totally agree with this: I have been trying for the past six or seven years to get this sorted. On the 'Rose of Hungerford' trip-boat we have to take the two bags of rubbish home after every trip—over 200 trips each year! I have discussed this with the local Council, the CRT waterways director(s) and anyone else I can find to talk to; all to no avail. Nobody accepts responsibility.*

### Boaters' report

So, in the May NABO News, we were told that CRT "would like boaters to become a Friend, to volunteer, or to help spread the word about the value of the waterways." Well I would like CRT to stop and reflect on that from my perspective. We were told that the boat licence review would be 'revenue neutral'. Prompt payment discounts have been at least halved, typically meaning licences have increased by £30-60 p.a. over and above inflationary increases. That represents somewhere around another £1.2 million a year to CRT. That's cumulative of course, every year you renew. Widebeam boaters presently face additional hikes relative to narrowboaters, starting next April. So the 'revenue neutral' promise was a blatant lie and consequently it could be said



the whole review was undertaken on a false pretence. Having perpetrated this lie on every boat licence holder a year or so ago, CRT now wants us to forget all that and be their friends and supporters.

This letter, of course, is being written in response to the article about the new 'Boater Report' for 2018, itself pretty unimpressive. The Boater Report only demonstrates one thing for me; that someone in CRT has managed to cut and paste from the annual report. I suggest that, far from being for boaters' wellbeing and benefit, the report is a bit of spin intended to try to persuade third parties, who know no better, how much CRT does for boaters! Like selling off the British Waterways' Marinas portfolio without preserving public access to previously free general boater facilities. Do you think CRT's boating team would really like to hear any more of this boater's views and comments and suggestions?

**Simon Robbins**

**Widebeam boats on the North Oxford**

I would not generally comment where complainants have put something into the public domain, because I accept that people have the right to disagree with my decisions. However, occasionally I am quoted as saying something which I didn't. In your recent NABO News article about the North Oxford Canal you stated that I had begun by suggesting that as widebeam boats had already ventured onto the pound, it must be 'suitable' for them. I feel I must point out that I did not say this. What I said in my report was that the canal can physically accommodate them, which is not the same as saying it is suitable for them. If that were not the case then no widebeam boats could be there and there could be no basis for complaint. Not only did I not state that it was suitable for widebeam boats, but I did state that CRT accepted that the canal was not suitable for widebeam boats. It may be a fairly small point, but I do think it is an important distinction.

**Andrew Walker (Retired Waterway Ombudsman)**

**Kevin McNiff replied:** *I accept that Andrew has the same rights to disagree with what has been reported and raise it. I only wish that the Trust had used the published maximum dimensions to disallow the construction of the entrance to the marina which, even as a casual observer, can only be described as over-generous for narrow-beam vessels. Then the issue would not have come to pass.*

**Speeding cyclists (again)**

I am moored on the Leeds & Liverpool between Plank Lane and Leigh and today there have been three separate times when I have nearly been run over by speeding cyclists, travelling at around 35mph. A most disturbing incident was a man travelling on the towpath on an electric scooter, again at around 35mph, nearly injuring an autistic child. I have registered a complaint with CRT.

**Ken Hyllins****The 'Boating Season'.**

NABO Council member, Helen Hutt had the following correspondence with CRT's Customer Service Team.

**First, Helen:**

"I write with regard to a misleading phrase which seems to have crept into CRT's vocabulary—the 'boating season'. It appears quite a few times on your website and, most recently, in a press release about new fishing permits, which implies that anglers can fish where they like outside the boating season. Surely, there is actually no such thing as 'the boating season'. I believe most boat owners buy an annual licence and many of those boaters are continuous cruisers, using the waterways all year round. That surely gives us the right to moor on designated visitor moorings, with absolute priority over anglers who, let's be clear, have far more available canal and river bank to fish from than we have to moor to! Even worse is the tendency to encourage, or at the very least not deter, fishing from lock landings. I'm told that, recently, some fishing taster days have been on visitor moorings, which sends out the wrong signal right from the start. So please, CRT, don't allow our licences to be squeezed by telling anglers that, effectively, during part of the year we don't matter. My licence entitles me to boat all year; there is no mention of any season when the rules are different. I believe that visitor moorings should be exclusively for boats, whatever the season, particularly given that they occupy a minute proportion of the advertised 2,000 miles available for fishing. I'm all in favour of Share the Space (a 2017 item on this, on the CRT website, also refers to the 'boating season'), but we all have to be reasonable about how big a share we take, and when we take it."

**Charlotte Roberts, a CRT Customer Service Advisor, replied:**

"I am sorry that you are unhappy by the use of 'boating season'. We use this as a reference for our busier season when we have more boaters, towpath users and fisherman on the waterways. By using this term we are no way dismissing boaters who are continuous cruisers all year round or for any other canal user."

**Helen replied:**

"Thank you for your response. 'Busy season' is a good and accurate description. I don't see mention anywhere of a towpath user season or a fishing season, or indeed a cycling season, so why use the phrase boating season? You haven't addressed my point about anglers using visitor moorings and lock landings."

**Customer Service Advisor, Hayley Warrenger, replied:**

"We use the phrase 'boating season' which describes the season, typically between March and October, when the canals are busiest for boating traffic on the canals. Generally, sections of most of the canals will be closed between the months of November and the end of February/start of March for essential maintenance. The towpaths are open for use by walkers and cyclists (unless closed for maintenance) year round, as are the canals and rivers for fishing (although there is a closed season between March and June for angling on rivers and certain SSSIs). This phrase is by no means a way to discriminate against the other users of our network, and harks back to a time where the canals were typically used predominantly by boat users. With regards to anglers, we do advise that fishing is not allowed; in lock chambers, within 25 metres (one boat length) of a lock approach, within 25 metres of a water point, and within 25 metres of a swing or lifting bridge. And that during the peak boating season it's a good idea to leave extra space at these locations as there may be boats queuing. You can find this information also on the link [canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/fishing/angling-strategies/fishing-faqs#location](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/fishing/angling-strategies/fishing-faqs#location). We have recently allocated some visitor moorings for fishing, as part of the 'Lets Fish!' programme, which helps teach small children how to fish. As I'm sure you will understand, safety is paramount, and we have tried to allocate visitor moorings where this will cause the least amount of disruption for boaters, allowing plenty of space for boats to moor also."

**Helen's reply:**

"Dear Hayley, I have been a continuous cruiser for the last 14 years, so I'm well aware of the content of your response. It's good to hear that you don't wish to discriminate against boaters, but you are missing the points that I was trying to make. You say you are not discriminating, but your PR/marketing material does not bear this out. Using the term 'boating season' is a mis-description, implying that we don't/shouldn't boat in the winter, and I would urge you to stop using this phrase. The fact that it has been used historically is irrelevant; it's not an accurate term to use in current times. What is wrong with 'the busy season'?"

**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 Helen Hutt



I pay for a 12-month licence and, apart from navigational restrictions/stoppages during the winter months, I expect to have use of facilities, including visitor moorings, the whole year round. Advertising visitor moorings to anglers during this period as 'first come first served' is plainly wrong. I've nothing against anglers, but have you ever tried to shift them off a visitor mooring (or indeed a lock landing) when you are approaching and needing to tie your boat up, especially if, like me, you are single-handed? I suspect not. All this does is lead to potential conflict and I believe CRT's directions to anglers should be 'do not fish from lock landings etc, or from designated visitor moorings'. They may well still ignore the rules, of course, but at least there would be absolute clarity as to what the rules are. I'm fully in favour of encouraging youngsters to engage with outdoor pursuits, including fishing, and I understand the safety issues you mention. But, unless you make it absolutely clear that these sessions are the exception, not the rule, it could send out the wrong message about the use of visitor moorings/lock landings for fishing. Please let me know you are taking my concerns seriously and are prepared to do something about them."

**Yet another Customer Services Advisor, Natalie Jones, replied:**

"Many thanks for your reply.

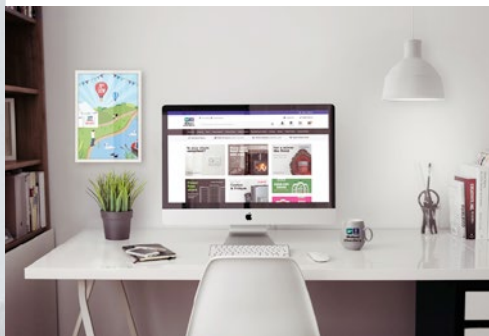
I will pass your feedback to the marketing team, who will take into consideration the points you have kindly raised."

We'll see!



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