



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 6 December 2019

CRIME ON THE CUT

**PROTECTING YOUR
STOVE**

**TODDBROOK
RESERVOIR LATEST**



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The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

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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 January 25th 2020. Our email address is nabonews@nabo.org.uk

Cover photo

This month's cover photo is on the Grand Union between bridges 78 and 78A, taken by NABO member, Elizabeth Boxall.

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





As 2019 fades into winter with deluges raising river levels across the country, NABO says farewell to Chair, Stella Ridgway and East Midlands Rep., Joan Jamieson, who we thank for all their work over the years.

I have also said goodbye to NABO News proof-readers, John and Marion Pearse and Janice Steckerl, who I thank for all their help in correcting my wayward grammar.

New Year, New Faces?

Editor **Peter Fellows** has a plea for members to help the association operate effectively.

If you are able to spend a couple of hours, three times per year, proof-reading an issue of the magazine in the comfort of your favourite armchair, please get in touch.

Reading Howard Anguish's Rewind from 15 years ago, support

The River Avon in flood
Photo: Helen Hutt



for NABO Council by members was an issue then—and it still is. The Council needs more support for its work in 2020, outlined by Mark Tizard and Mike Rodd as they look at what is likely to arise next year, especially with CRT and the EA. As you will see from the new list of councillors on page 2, many have multiple roles and need help to share the workload.

There are also four vacancies for regional reps., to keep an eye on what's happening in a particular waterway area. The role involves attending local forums and letting the Council know when something important is happening. Again, please consider helping.

In this issue, David Fletcher asks for help with research into the causes of carbon monoxide 'spikes' inside boats and he reports on a visit to gather the latest news from Toddbrook Reservoir.

There is also an article on taking care of your wood-burning stove and preventing it producing CO. I give my impressions of the River Wey after my first visit to a National Trust waterway and Helen Hutt describes what it was like to live on board when the River Avon flooded.

Helen is also standing as a candidate to be a boaters' rep. on CRT Council and I hope that members will come out in force to support her in the January elections—she will be an excellent voice for boat owners.

Finally, I've been enjoying 'Canal Boat Diaries' on BBC4, in which Robbie Cumming is an enthusiastic and amiable video blogger, who, unlike some of the recent celebrity TV efforts, actually paints an accurate picture of the joys and tribulations of being afloat.

Enjoy your Christmas, whether you are on board or thinking about next year's cruising.

Best wishes for the New Year.

Mark Tizard

Thank you for coming. Stella Ridgway, our Chair, unfortunately can't be with us as she continues to recover from her kidney transplant. Stella is standing down from our Council and, on behalf of NABO, we would like to thank her for her service. She will be missed both by her NABO colleagues and also as a boater's representative on CRT's Council. During the year, our Vice-Chair Paul Howland passed away unexpectedly; his wise words are greatly missed.

Last year has been a challenging one for NABO: your Council has been spread thinly, seeking to establish contact and relationships with the new CRT Regional Directors, and the first meetings have taken place.

On top of this, the latest major reorganisation has seen many experienced managers leave the Trust. During the last couple of years, with constant management changes, it is perhaps not surprising that communications with CRT have been sporadic. They certainly have not been proactive in wanting to engage with us. Your Council has recently taken steps to set up regular quarterly meetings with the Head of Customer Services and Head of Boating.

In addition, we continue to be represented on the Navigation Advisory Group and the Boat Safety Scheme committees. The new CRT organisational management structure continues to bed in and we have concerns that in some areas core engineering and management experience have been lost.

The summer Toddbrook reservoir near-disaster at Whaley Bridge continues to absorb senior management time and it as yet unclear what

the financial implications of this will be for future maintenance activities; recent costs have been met from reserves.

Last year, Stella commented in her annual review that boaters are still not being included in decisions being taken, resulting in some of them feeling even more disenfranchised. CRT's executive team wants and needs boaters and their organisations to get onside with the 'wellbeing' agenda to encourage the Government to continue the grant.

Council Report for the AGM

At the NABO AGM **Mark Tizard** and **Mike Rodd** presented their review of 2019

I am afraid that this year the alienation of boaters has been rather more successful and it will take a great deal of work to make this right.

Unfortunately, your Council believes that little has changed over the last year to change this view. This year's CRT annual report made difficult reading: boaters' satisfaction down 10 per cent; visitor numbers down; accidents and incidents up; unplanned stoppages up; employee engagement down etc etc. Only the number of volunteer hours is increasing.

We believe that it is in our members' interests that CRT succeeds in negotiating a renewed grant. To this end, we have suggested that CRT be more communicative by proactively engaging with us and informing boaters of more of the good work



Mark Tizard
Incoming Vice-Chair

that goes on behind the scenes. For example, the expansion of the customer services help-desk hours to a seven day operation is a big step forward.

The elections for the boaters' representative on CRT Council will take place early next year. Stella has done an excellent job during her tenure and your Council is pleased to an-

nounce that our Treasurer, Helen Hutt, has decided to stand and we would urge members to vote for her.

Lastly, your Council needs your help: we need eyes and ears on the cut to keep us well-informed. We would urge you to help us protect the lifestyle we all love. If you could spare a couple of hours every so often, please contact us.



Mike Rodd
Incoming Chair

Mike Rodd

The next few years will be very challenging for NABO with both CRT and the EA working to ensure that in five or six years from now they are both adequately funded, and in the case of CRT, have their contact to run the canals continued.

As Stella has said many times, and Mark highlighted in NABO's Towpath Talk column, one of the keys to supporting both organisations in their bids has to be for us boaters to feel that the two organisations acknowledge that we have an important role to play, and they should stop ignoring us.

In the case of EA, over the past few months I have been happy to represent NABO at a series of EA workshops and meetings, where it has been clear that their new management see us and the other representative groups as really key to their future. CRT is starting, via Jon Horsfall, to accept this too, but we wait to see if his good words bring a change right across the organisation.

We also have to accept that there will be major pressure on the boating community to respond to the increasing environmental challenges. Yes, there is a lot of ill-informed nonsense being promulgated by politicians, who show that they

have zero understanding of scientific facts, but in our present world, when most environmental activists also ignore real science and rush to make emotional claims, the reality is that we are easy targets and we will be pressurised to become (allegedly) more environmentally friendly.

This is nonsense of course, as most boaters are already very aware of the need to protect their environment but, as we have already seen in the Netherlands, restrictions on what we use to propel and heat our boats will be imposed on us—regardless of the cost or real need. We thus need NABO to be in a position to provide advice to our members and vigorously participate in the various planning activities.

And finally, in a world now driven by access to free information, we have to find ways to extend our relevance to the broad boating community. An exciting few years ahead—it is so sad that Stella is unable to continue her excellent work representing and leading us, but I am pleased to be able to continue to play an active part in our important work.

Thank you, Stella, for all you have done for us and we wish you well in your shore-based life.

Damage to the Toddbrook Reservoir at Whaley Bridge made national headlines and there is a perception that all of CRT's resources are being used there and other jobs are not being done, but Council members agreed that safety issues should take precedence. Proposals for housing at Marple Wharf look increasingly likely to go ahead, which will cause difficulties for deliveries to coal boats.

There was then a debate about the future of NABO and the Council, following Stella's decision to step down. Helen will stand for election as a Boater's Rep on CRT Council.

So far, meetings with CRT's Regional Directors have not been very productive, but efforts are to be redoubled.

CRT will ask the regions to specify vegetation cut to edge for bridge-holes, lines of sight and remote moorings and will no longer rely on local knowledge of where these places are. David's surveys of some rural canals during the summer proved to CRT that the regions were not doing what they are supposed to do. CRT knows they dropped the ball in some areas this year and supervision of the sub-contractor, Fountains, did not have the required attention during the staff change-overs. On offside vegetation management, CRT is five years into a seven-year programme of heavy cutting, but they know that they are struggling with the intermediate light cuts. Where volunteer groups are doing these, all is well; it is the other places that are giving trouble.

The running costs of CRT facilities continue to be an issue. Councillors debated whether CRT's provision of pumpouts could ever be cost-effective. It is unsatisfactory to rely on marinas due to their short opening hours. Provision of connec-

tions for self-pumpout is another option to be considered.

In November, Stella was sadly not able to attend the AGM and Mike and Mark produced a report of events and activities over the past year. These included the perceived 'alienation' of boaters and a plea for more input from members. Treasurer, Helen, reported an excess of income over expenditure, but she warned that this would probably turn to a deficit in the coming years. However, NABO has



Fly on the wall

Asked a stand-in to observe proceedings at the Council meetings in October and November

adequate reserves for a number of years. All Council members were re-elected and Mike agreed to step into Stella's shoes and Mark will act as Vice-Chair and General Secretary. A discussion considered NABO's long-term viability and the need to find more Council members to handle the complexity of situations, such as changes at the EA. Alison will set up a closed Facebook group for members only and NABO needs to produce a manifesto.

The key targets for next year include better communications and quarterly meetings with CRT, starting in January. Topics will include: vegetation management; ensuring that CRT lives up to its promise of keeping NABO up-to-date; helping to ensure that CRT gets further funding; the impact of 2050 Clean Air issue; better communications with members; and support for the re-introduction of annual inspections of all stretches of canal. Councillors agreed to revert to Saturday Council meetings.

Enjoy your Christmas.

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 Chair know in advance (contact details inside cover).

The dates for Council meetings in 2020 are as follows: January 18th (teleconference), March 14th, April 25th, June 20th (teleconference), September 5th, October 10th (teleconference) and November 14th (includes AGM).

Yorkshire & NE Howard Anguish

I attended the Yorkshire & NE Local Waterway Forum on 23rd October, held at Fearn's Wharf, Leeds.

National Issues: The introduction was given by Regional Director, Sean McGinley, who talked us through the Regional Structure Update, which included a map showing boundaries, together with an organogram showing role allocations within the region. Two of the seven managerial posts, Licence Support and the Regional Towpath Fundraising Co-ordinator, show a shared function with the NW.

A short section on boater reports drew attention to boater income and expenditure, which has previously been demonstrated using various pie charts and histograms at the CRT AGM, which I am sure most boaters are familiar with. Sean also pointed out that the Visitor Centre and general attraction of Standedge Tunnel was losing money and that this may be somewhere which requires a rethink to make it more attractive.

This was followed by a long and detailed review of the upcoming Clean Maritime Plan. We were advised to watch out for the consultation documents and call for evidence, which are expected to be issued in November, with an emphasis on the need to engage in it to put forward any views and objections. Although the plan is primarily aimed at commercial shipping, it was made abundantly clear that it will also incorporate inland waterways, including all craft, and will consider aspects such as emissions and pollution. This could have a direct and serious impact in the long-term on the changes required to boat propulsion—electric versus diesel—and to boat heating—electric versus gas and solid fuel. Present indications are that the national UK tar-



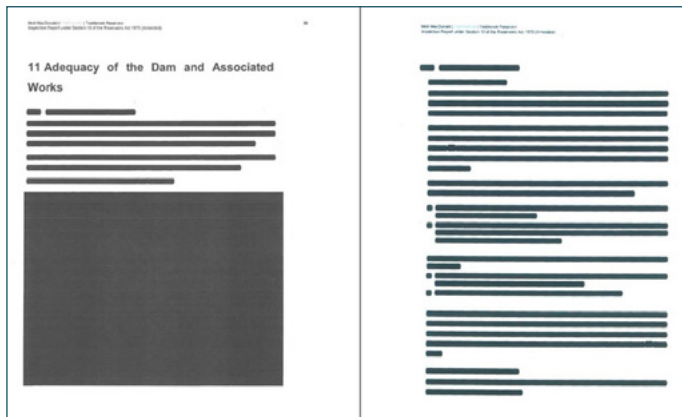
get should be zero emissions by 2050 and that plans to achieve that must be in place by 2025. This subject is obviously going to be of major importance in the coming years and, although we may consider that it is a long way off, we will have to give serious thought about what the future may bring and the repercussions to the boating community. We should also give great consideration to any historic craft exemptions and carbon offsets etc. that we would like to see.

Stuart McKenzie, CRT's local Harbour Master,

Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

spent a little while reporting on the progress (or lack of) in his attempts to integrate strong steam updates and current open/closed gate situation reports. He has been finding difficulty in trying to get different existing systems to speak to one another, but he will report back at the next forum with hopefully more positive news.

Finally, Sean McGinley gave a presentation on the recent Toddbrook Reservoir near-disaster. Although the event took place in the adjoining



Two pages of the 90% redacted CRT report on the Toddbrook dam breach.

NW Region, Sean was brought in to ease the pressure on the NW Director and so was deeply involved in the events as they unfolded. It was interesting to hear his report, although we didn't hear anything that hadn't been covered exhaustively in the press. He was asked about the many Freedom of Information requests which had resulted in around 90% redaction and agreed that this seemed to be a move which had only helped to raise concern about what had been blacked out, and he did say that he had raised this point with the CRT senior management.

The Kennet & Avon and Wales Mike Rodd

I met Jon Horsfall, the interim CRT Director in Wales & South West, on 2nd October in Gloucester.

Jon was appointed to take over from Richard Thomas, who left suddenly in July.

The meeting proved to be a most useful, frank exchange of views and resulted in an agreement to continue to meet on a regular basis. This is especially important as Jon develops suggestions on how best to bring the various boater organisations back closer to CRT. It was also agreed that I would take Jon on my boat on the Mon & Brec



Mark Evans has been appointed as Director for Wales & South West, taking up the role in January 2020. Mark joined CRT over four years ago as Waterway Manager for the K&A and is currently head of Waterside Moorings, CRT's directly managed moorings business and interim head of museums at Gloucester and Ellesmere Port.

Photo: Bob Naylor / Watermarx

and also on the K&A Canal Trust's trip boat, The Rose of Hungerford.

Sadly, though, the Mon & Brec's Boaters Liaison meeting scheduled for 6th November was cancelled, largely due to the retirement of Kevin Phillips, CRT's most valued Customer Operations Supervisor for Wales & South West. This was deeply regretted by those involved on the Mon & Brec, as it was felt that these meetings were the best working example ever of how CRT can work with its users.

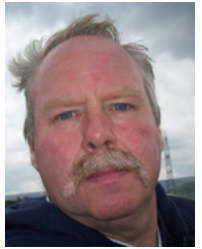
North West Ken Hylins

I attended the Regional Forum on November 19th, where the Regional Manager put forward his aims and projections for the coming year.

He has been heavily involved in the Toddbrook Reservoir issue, using up much of his time, and he reiterated that the repair would not come out of CRT's budget. The concern will be the loss of its water to the respective canals if we have low rainfall next year. Then there followed a presentation of all the sub-area managers' aims and responsibilities, stating with vigour their staff numbers and the skills at their disposal. However, my concerns are that there is a small number of staff per area of responsibility; staff are complaining that they are run ragged and any compound issue that I see would be a problem. The one thing that was apparent was that the manager wanted issues to be related to customer services so that, once raised, they could be dealt with.

There was mention of canalside vegetation regarding offside and towpath maintenance. This was a tricky subject as there were many points raised by the canal societies. There was also a presentation of future areas of work, which can be obtained from the CRT website.

The recurring theme was that to get things done in the North West, report it, and if it does not get any attention, follow it up until the matter is attended to or acknowledged. I feel we have the necessary channels to raise our membership concerns within the North West region.



Membership issues

David Fletcher and the Membership Team

Of course, the number one issue for membership is enlisting new members. How many did you find this summer? Our Association can only survive with new blood and new ideas. Please help. One-to-one recommendations are the best recruitment method.

Another little worry at the moment is receiving subscriptions by cheque. For the last five years, I have asked members who pay by cheque to consider paying by standing order, direct transfer or PayPal. Many have not been inclined to change and we have respected this, but we are finding now that we are simply unable to handle this in an efficient way. Those who pay by cheque often have to be reminded once or twice and the



Thank you!

NABO Council would like to thank Joan Jamieson, who has stood down as the East Midlands Regional Rep after many years in the role.

Joan commented: "After 43 years of boating, we've made the decision to give up boating—age and mild infirmity getting the better of us, alas. We've sold our boat, so we're no longer boat owners and therefore no longer eligible to be members of NABO."



We are moving towards a time when we will not be able to accept cheques any more

members using cheques are the most frequent group with queries, wondering why mail has crossed in the post. We have also chased for renewal when cheques have been sent and not yet cashed.

It may be very convenient for you to pop a cheque in the post, but it is very time consuming for us, who are volunteering, to carry out the admin work. So we are moving towards a time when, like many other organisations, we will not be able to accept cheques any more. There are other systems that are safe and easy to set up, even if the member is not on-line. If you normally pay by cheque, we urge you to use another method next time your renewal comes around. If there are circumstances that prevent these alternatives, please get in touch.

We run an optional system of using email for renewal notices and many members are using this. Thank you. We have battled for the last couple of years with errors in email delivery, but with the change to a new provider and adoption of the latest technology, we now appear to have overcome these issues. The membership system sends out simple notices and reminders with the minimum of information, and we follow up with the full renewal document, in pdf format equivalent to the paper document.

We would like to grow the number of members taking email documents and automate this system. This is easier to administer and less likely to cause data errors. So, if you are a regular email user, please let us know and agree to this service. If you are not a regular email user, this is not for you, and we are very happy to send the paper document.

CRT Council Elections

The Council is responsible for the appointment of the trustees, helps to shape policies and provides guidance and perspective to the trustees. Election of 28 new Council members is now underway. Candidates and their manifestos were published on 25th November and licence holders will receive a link by email to enable them to vote from 20th January to 14th February. Posts run for four years from March.

Private boaters have a chance to elect just four representatives, so only have a small voice on the Council and little real influence. But it is a chance to interact with CRT directors and trustees and seek to get boaters' views heard, as well as hearing about CRT's latest strategic thinking. This, in NABO's view, is the most important aspect and why we would urge you to vote.

NABO is very disappointed to learn that the Association of Waterway Cruising Clubs (AWCC), essentially a mooring provider, was nominated to CRT Council as a 'boaters' representative', simply not the case. The IWA and the AWCC each have a nominated seat, yet their members also get a vote. This year, roving traders have been told that they are now to be treated as private boaters, which is also blatantly not the case. They are no longer businesses and must vote for, and be represented by, private boaters. Private boaters' representation is diluted by this and roving traders are marginalised for no reason. It appears that all this was not subject to consultation and is a big step backwards. It has since been confirmed that these decisions were made by the Trustees and not proposed by CRT.

For the last three years, only two Council members, Stella Ridgway and Andy Tidy, have used social media to inform boaters about the discussions at Council meetings they attended. We would urge you to vote for the candidate that undertakes to keep you informed and seek your opinions. NABO is supporting Helen Hutt, who we believe is an excellent candidate. Please give her your vote. **A full list of the 34 candidates standing for election to the private boater posts is available at canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/original/41025-results-of-council-nominations-for-private-boating.pdf**

Helen Hutt My CRT Council Manifesto



I have been cruising, single-handed, for the last 14 years with my narrowboat 'Pipistrelle'. I've covered almost all the navigable waterways in England and Wales (including the Wash, the Severn and the Ribble Link) and, on hire boats, some in Scotland and Ireland. It just remains for me to do the River Medway, maybe in 2020, and hopefully the Rochdale Canal.

Last year I acquired a mooring at Evesham, on the River Avon, but I plan to continue cruising CRT waterways for many years to come. If elected, I will campaign, as a live-a-board boater, for those things that I consider essential for an enjoyable life afloat.

That includes sufficient and well-maintained facilities, well-maintained and dedicated visitor moorings, trouble-free lock gear, good water supplies and so on—whilst accepting that CRT faces immense challenges to keep the network in good condition, and that boaters themselves can help in many ways.

CRT emphasises its commitment to boaters and I strongly believe that we boaters have much to offer CRT in terms of on-the-water experience. I have been Honorary Treasurer and Council Member of NABO for five years and I am a member of the RBOA, IWA, GOBA and ANT.

if you have any questions for me, I can be contacted at helenh@nabo.org.uk

NABO: WORKING FOR YOU

NABO Responds to a Network Rail Consultation

This response contains the comments and evidence provided by NABO in October 2019 for the Network Rail Consultation on the upgrade to the railway between Huddersfield and Westtown (Dewsbury).

General

NABO supports the principles of increasing the capacity of the railway lines and the provision of improved cross-country passenger services between canal towns and centres. We have reviewed the proposals and note that the works come close to and cross the canal in several places that we have identified. We comment on these alone.

There are four issues for NABO:

First, that existing navigation and towpath use is not inhibited by change in alignment, headroom or width in the proposed construction of crossings.

Secondly, that construction nuisance is minimised, which includes noise and light pollution, and that through-navigation is maintained during construction.

Thirdly, that use is made of the canals for construction work and that NR leaves a legacy of facilities, such as moorings and jetties that may be further utilised by others.

Fourthly, that long-term noise pollution is reduced for canal users.

1. Specific crossing issues.

Broad Canal Crossing at Colne Bridge

We note that the plan is to reconstruct the bridge over the Huddersfield Broad Canal to provide the wider track capacity. We comment that that existing navigation and towpath use should not be inhibited by change in alignment, headroom or width in the proposed construction of the crossing. The upstream canal lock is very close to the bridge and it is not possible to confirm that the intended orientation of the abutments will facilitate navigation.

The consultation is at consultations.networkrail.co.uk/communications/huddersfield-to-westtown-dewsbury

Boats are not articulated and are no longer drawn by horses. It follows that they need space to turn and cannot be assumed to run on railway lines. There are many badly aligned road and rail bridges over the canal system, and we ask for careful design and consultation with local boating organisations to confirm the suitability of the final layout. It is apparent that many design organisations do not understand the navigation of craft. The bridge is portrayed differently on the plans. We note that the plan for Deighton and Bradley shows unrealistic alignment for navigation of the bridge.

Calder and Hebble Navigation and River Calder Viaduct

We note that the plan is to reconstruct the viaduct over the navigation and river to provide the wider track capacity.

We comment that that existing navigation and towpath use should be not inhibited by a change in alignment, headroom or width in the proposed construction of the crossing. In view of the scale of this structure, it appears that this will be the lesser of the problems from the point of view of navigation, but again this should be designed to not impede canal navigation. We note the temporary bridge on the river and this should not impede navigation.

2 Construction nuisance

We draw your attention to the fact that the adjacent canal is in a residential and amenity area, and exposure to excessive noise and light during construction will blight the area, particularly at night.

NR is requested to ensure that significant noise abatement is applied to the work. It is important that navigation is maintained during the works, except for agreed stoppages. The canal system supports an industry for leisure and commercial activities, and long and unplanned closures will destroy this. It will need careful management.

3. Use of the canals in construction

In principle, NABO welcomes the use of the

canal for bulk transport. This will cause inconvenience and some risk to canal users, and it is important that this is recognised and that legacy benefits are realised after the project. Towpath improvements are not enough. There must be something for navigation too.

4. Long term noise abatement.

We draw your attention to the fact

that the adjacent canal is in a valuable residential and amenity area, and exposure to excessive noise will blight the area particularly at night.

There will be families sleeping on boats on the waterways. We ask that NR considers all aspects of noise, such as but not limited to, traction noise, rail squeal, rail joint click clack etc., both to minimise and abate these.

More on CO

David Fletcher requests help from members for some new research.

Last time, I talked about the new BSS requirements for carbon monoxide alarms. I explained that there is a good deal that we do not understand about ventilation and air changes in boat cabins.

A major new study is planned for boaters in London, looking at CO levels, particularly the low levels that come from sources such as gas cooking or wind-carried exhausts from adjacent boats. CO measuring and logging devices will be placed in many boats, so that both high and low levels of CO can be detected. The study is to find out the extent of these low levels, typically 1-10ppm, whereas alarms go off at 50ppm. The data-loggers are self-contained and battery powered, they plug in to a USB port to read the data with dedicated software. The recording device will produce a graph of the readings over time, showing the extent and frequency of spikes, but of course it doesn't show or record where the spike comes from. This second part is much more problematic; to relate peaks or high levels to actual events or causes.

We are interested to get our hands on some of these recorders

and run a small study ourselves with a few volunteer members to fast track this detail, to relate the spikes to known events. This would not be fully scientific, but could give us some insight into where any significant CO is coming from for further study.

So, we are looking for volunteers who are liveboards this winter in a congested boating area, like a residential marina, boat club or city moorings, and who are very computer literate.

The study will involve hosting a recorder for a short period, say two weeks, to take readings. Every couple of days, the data needs to be looked at to see what spikes there are, and then providing a diary of events. What events caused spikes? Clearly, if there are unexplained peaks, the volunteer would check more frequently to understand what is going on. In the meantime, the BSS is looking at the issues around requirements for the introduction of smoke alarms. The Fire Brigade are very much in favour, but that is not the only consideration. What is your view—nanny state or a sensible move? Cabin, sleeping area or engine room? Let us know please.



Can you do this for us? If so please send an email to web@nabo.org.uk

CRT Open Days

The following free open days are taking place between January and May, 2020. Check the CRT website for dates and times where these are not currently available.

canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/events/open-days



1 Heritage tour of the Stanley Lock Flight and Collingwood Dock, Leeds & Liverpool Canal
1st January until 31st March.

2 Toddbrook Reservoir, Whaley Bridge, Peak Forest Canal, SK23 7BW
1st January until 31st March



Dowley Gap Locks
Photo: CRT

3 Dowley Gap, Leeds & Liverpool Canal, Dowley Gap Lane, Nr Bingley, BD16 1TS (opposite the Fisherman's Inn)
19 January, 11:00am—3:00pm

4 Pontcysyllte Aqueduct & Trevor Basin, Llangollen Canal, Off Station Road, Trevor, Wrexham, LL20 7TY. Draining the aqueduct as part of a ten-yearly inspection.
between 1st February and 29th February

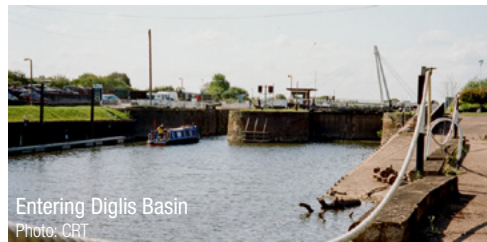
5 Foxton Locks, Leicester Line (Grand Union Canal), Foxton Locks Top Lock Cottage, Gumley Road, Foxton, LE16 7RA. A programme of weekend events and activities (guided walks, talks etc., plus a viewing platform in one of the drained locks to give a unique view of the lock flight)
1st February until 31st March

6 Bedford Street Locks, Trent & Mersey Canal, Stoke. The staircase flight will be drained with visitors able to access locks 1 and 2, where repairs are undertaken
1st and 2nd February



Sharpness Docks from Lydney Lock
Photo: CRT

7 Sharpness Dock, Gloucester & Sharpness Canal, Near Llanthony Warehouse, Gloucester, GL1 2EH. The National Waterways Museum will illustrate the history of the docks and CRT's #plasticchallenge will invite visitors to help tackle plastic pollution flowing from canals and rivers into the seas
1st March until 31st March



Entering Diglis Basin
Photo: CRT

8 Diglis, River Severn Navigation, Worcester & Birmingham Canal, Worcester. Tours of the construction of a new fish pass to allow the return of migratory fish to the River Severn, as part of World Fish Migration Day and the project 'Unlocking the Severn'
16th May

CRT improves handling of boaters' enquiries

An improvement in customer service support is promised with a new provider taking over and increased training, which should lead to a greater number of queries being resolved on first contact.

Matthew Symonds, CRT's National Boating Manager, contacted NABO's Mike Rodd

"From 29th October, our new customer service call centre hours (the 0303 0404040 number) are extending to 8am–9pm Monday to Friday, 8am–7pm on Saturdays and Bank Holidays and 9am–7pm on Sundays"

Mike replied with the following questions:

1 Do the new opening hours coincide with the new provider?

Yes, our new provider offers longer hours.

2 Is the expectation of the new provider that, as a result of a higher level of training, the vast majority of queries should be able to be dealt with at source?

In short, yes, but of course it will depend on the enquiry—some things will need input from other colleagues. We are working

towards a higher level of 'first contact resolution' as the jargon goes. So over the past few months, we've been working with the new provider on inductions for staff, training and building resources that will help them to answer as many customer enquiries at the first point of contact as possible.

3 The new call centre operation provider, together with extended hours, demonstrates CRT's commitment to giving a better service to boaters and it's not a case of cutting costs—is this a fair statement?

Yes, absolutely—and the call centre is just part of that. We're also working on improving how we manage customer contacts through our back office systems.

We've started the process of developing a better integrated 'customer relationship management' system. This, along with the new regional structure, which puts much more of the day-to-day decision making closer to boaters, is all about us improving the boater experience.

Updated short-term mooring framework

Following a review involving CRT's Navigation Advisory Group (NAG) mooring sub-group, the Trust has updated its short-term mooring framework.

This sets out the process that should be followed when changes are proposed to existing short-term moorings, or new short-term moorings are proposed. The updated framework removes the requirement for extensive data collection on the existing use of short-term moorings, but requires that:

- A clear explanation of proposals and the rationale for them is published six weeks before any change is made;
- Any changes are trialled for at least six months;
- There is an opportunity for people to send their comments on the proposals before and during the trial;
- The proposals are shared with the NAG mooring sub-group (although there is no formal comment required from NAG);

■ At the end of the trial period, all comments are considered and a decision is made by the regional director whether the change as trialled is made permanent, whether further tweaks are required, or if the proposals are not implemented.

If it is deemed that towpath moorings in a location are unsafe, or they cause a risk to navigating craft, the regional director may implement restrictions without recourse to the framework. The updated framework will be reviewed in October 2020.

NABO's Mark Tizard comments

Without any need for evidence, the whole thing is pointless. They might just as well just introduce the changes, as there is no point in the trial.

What will it prove if there is no-one there to gather the data? If someone is there to gather the data during the trial, then presumably this could be done before the trial to justify the change. A sorry change.

Going up in the world

... but not in a good way!

Helen Hutt on a flooded Avon

If you saw your boat on BBC News at Six, you might be quite chuffed. However, this was Friday 15th November and the top story was the flood which hit Evesham when the River Avon rose four metres and burst its banks.

I was aboard, on my lovely riverbank mooring, at the time and I can tell you it was no cause for celebration!

The Avon Navigation Trust emailed a Major Flood Warning on the Thursday, saying it was likely to peak at 4pm on Friday. Updates followed; I had a personal email from ANT to check if I was on board and a visit from an ANT man on Friday

morning to make sure I was well tied up and had sufficient supplies. And the river relentlessly continued to rise, and rise, until it actually peaked around 4pm on Saturday.

My phone constantly beeped and rang with messages from friends and neighbours asking if I was OK; I even had a call from a Worcestershire Highways man, with whom I'd been in touch over a drainage problem, and from a local fireman. Proof of how a community comes together in times of crisis, if ever it were needed!

It was certainly scary: were the ropes holding? What was that bump? When would the river stop rising? But the worst thing of all was the NOISE of the water rush-



When I bought my riverbank mooring, nearly two years ago, I got planning permission to install four five-metre, 140mm diameter poles with rising rings and an escape ladder/gangway structure for emergency use.

The work wasn't quite finished when I first arrived

in February 2018, held up by the infamous 'Beast from the East'. And, of course, the river came up, stranding me for four days: I was unable to get off the boat because I had no rungs on the ladder and no mesh on the gangway. And that was a mere three-metre rise!

ing past and under the boat, making sleep well nigh impossible. At its peak, water was ankle-deep over the escape gangway; the mains power tripped out; a few items came adrift and set off down river; some slabs on the staging were displaced; but otherwise the precautions I had taken paid off. By Tuesday morning the river was back below the staging, casually leaving some debris and a

film of sticky mud to clear up.

We must be thankful for small mercies, though; at least this flood, equal to the 2012 event, stopped short of the 5.5m all-time high of 2007, rated a 'once in 100 years' incident'. Given predictions that climate change means such events will become more frequent, I just hope I'm not around to watch an even bigger one on my TV!



After the Flood

At the end of October, River Canal Rescue was called out to assist six stranded or precariously positioned boats that were at risk of capsizing.

To stop a vessel drifting onto land when water levels rise, position a boarding plank and/or longshaft between the boat and the bank, fixed to the side of the boat. If you have the opportunity, moor in a lock as it provides some protection from flood waters.

If the boat has drifted, when the water level starts to go down, try to push the boat off the land back into the water before it drops too far. But be cautious as

this can be dangerous, particularly when you're unable to see under the water. If you do not live on board, visit your boat regularly to check that the batteries are fully charged and check that the bilge pump is fully operational and left on 'automatic' setting.

Check drain holes are clear and remove debris from the engine room hatch drain to stop water getting into the engine room. Make sure that canopies are secure to prevent them ripping and allowing water into the boat. If the mooring is at risk of flooding, run ropes to locations that can be accessed in a flood.

Boaters' Update, 15th November 2019. Photo RCR

A week on the Wey

Peter Fellows has his first cruise on a National Trust waterway

The NT publication 'Information for Boat Users' is at nationaltrust.org.uk/river-wey-and-godalming-navigations-and-dapdune-wharf/features/river-wey-information-for-boat-users

Main photo: National Trust
All other photos: Peter Fellows

Overnight moorings



The River Wey is one of the oldest river navigations in the country, completed by about 200 navvies in just two years, opening in 1653 and thus predating the canal age by 100 years.

The waterway is almost 20 miles (32 km) long, connecting Godalming with the Thames at Weybridge. It was funded by Sir Richard Weston, whose family had extensive estates in Surrey, at a total cost of £16,000 (around £1,656,000 today). Until the 17th century, the river's meandering course prevented it from being a practical means of transport, but Sir Richard adopted practices he had studied in the Netherlands and Belgium, where sections of canal were used to bypass river meanders and shorten a journey. His new route

required nine miles (14.4 km) of canals to link sections of the river, and 12 locks were constructed, along with weirs, wharves and bridges. Heavy goods were transported on horse-drawn barges, built to carry 30 tons, with oak taken downstream from Guildford to the Thames for use in shipbuilding and corn brought upstream to mills along the waterway, with the flour being returned to London. There was also a trade in gunpowder from the Chilworth Mills to London, with a return load of coal for gunpowder making and for blacksmiths. In 1760, work started on the four miles (6.4 km) of river from Guildford to Godalming, involving one and a half miles of canal, four locks and two wharves, which were completed in 1764.

When the Guildford to London railway opened, it took some trade from the waterway, but it remained more economical to transport bulk goods via the navigation, using larger barges, carrying 90 tons, towed by two horses. The new barges enabled the navigation to remain commercially viable until after World War I. Later, licence and mooring fees from pleasure boating provided some income, but, by the late 1950s, it was becoming difficult to balance the books and, in 1964, the Wey navigation was sold to the National Trust (NT), followed by the Godalming navigation in 1968.



A comparison with CRT waterway management

This was my first time on NT waters and there were some notable differences to CRT-managed canals and rivers. Clearly, at only 20 miles long and with NT having oodles of cash and volunteers, a direct comparison between CRT and NT would be misleading.

But you can see the results of an appropriate level of investment: no faulty paddles or lock gates; lock chambers and gates free of vegetation; clear lines of sight, with offside trees cut back; a well-maintained towpath along the whole length; and lengthsmen's cottages in a good state of repair (An aim of the NT is to protect its heritage assets, so these have not been sold off and the cottages are used for their original purpose).

It is perhaps an overstatement for the otherwise excellent 'Information for Boat Users' publication to say that: "In general you can moor anywhere suitable along the 20 miles of towpath" because towpath vegetation mostly prevents this. But there are enough cleared stretches of bank

for visitor moorings to be able to stop more or less where you want. The information also warns that: "Craft should not be left unattended overnight or for longer periods on the towpath", but there are attractive, secure moorings at Dapdune Wharf in Guildford and at Godalming Wharf.

Dapdune Wharf, Guildford

Godalming Wharf





Using the yellow spike for a stern rope going down

The River Wey at Guildford

low spike at the end of the lock to rope up to. This will stop the vessel being pulled forward by the force of water.”

- “Switch off boat engine”.
- “Open both gates on entry or exit”. (I was not clear why, as a gate was wide enough for a narrowboat to pass through, until a local boater said it was to prevent damage to the gates by boats).
- “Leave gates open as you leave the lock”.
- NT also loan visiting boaters the long-handled windlass needed for the Wey’s paddle gear.

As a family in a shared boat group, we were the second to buy a three-week visitor’s licence (the maximum on offer), but the next family was refused one because of a ‘no-return within three weeks’ rule.

We contacted the Waterway Manager to ask why and he replied, by return, as follows (in part): “I am sorry this condition has caught you out. The reason for the 21-day gap is that we found our 21-day licences

Other differences that I noticed, compared to CRT waterways, concerned use of locks:

- “When going upstream in a lock, it is best practice to use the yel-



River Wey Lengthsman's cottage at Stoke lock

were regularly being misused by a small minority of boaters, without a home mooring on the Wey, to visit and then stay until they could be persuaded to leave. A difficult situation taking up limited staff resource time. This was generally on the back of asking for a second 21-day licence immediately after the first had ran out. To try and curb this problem, we introduced the 21-day gap condition. We also introduced a restriction on when 21-day licences would be offered, which is now summer only. We were finding that the same small minority of boaters were coming on in the winter with the intention of getting stuck above our winter lock stoppages or by flood events, and using this as a reason to stay moored up without a bona fide mooring. We do offer winter moorings, but these boaters would prefer not contribute to the cost of operating the waterway. I must apologise that the shared boat ownership scenario did not feature in our thinking when working through this. I am, of course, happy to grant 21-day licences for your craft, without a 21-day gap, when different members of the syndicate are using the boat.”

I met some of the resident boaters and others who regularly use the river and all had nothing but good words to say about the NT: “If you let them know something is wrong or broken they come and fix it straight away”. “We don't want the river to change hands.” “I pay my licence and they leave me to do what I want with no hassle”. And there were no Lycra louts on the towpath—just runners, groups of walkers and cyclists, and dog walkers enjoying the tranquility of the river. This is how I remember boating years ago and it was a thoroughly enjoyable first experience of this navigation.

From rubbish to canal benches

CRT and 300 staff from Asda House removed 1.8 tonnes of rubbish, including 809 kg of plastic waste from a ten-mile stretch of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal over five days in September. It was taken to a waste disposal company in Leeds, Maltings Organic Treatment Ltd., where the plastic items are being recycled into nine benches, which will be installed next to the canal. As part of Asda's commitment to tackle unnecessary plastic, the retailer has removed 6,500 tonnes of own-brand plastic from across the business over the past 18 months. CRT's Plastics Challenge is at www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/get-involved or on social media at @CanalRiverTrust #PlasticsChallenge



Photo: ASDA

Crime on the Cut

Council members **Helen Hutt**, **Mike Rodd** and **Mark Tizard** offer advice.

NABO Council member, Ken Hylins, has recently lodged an official complaint with CRT and Lancashire police following the theft of two chained-up bikes from his boat, another attempted theft and a car break-in, which neither organisation appeared to take seriously when the crimes were first reported.

It's difficult to see what CRT can

ple continuously cruise, and have more valuable contents, including easy-to-sell electronic equipment, boats are being recognised as easy pickings, although we believe that boating remains relatively safe. A discussion of boat crime and vandalism on the Canalworld Forum seems to confirm this, with few people reporting problems. One commented: *"If you add up all the reported incidents and compare them to the number of boats on the system, it would be a small minority that have been attacked"*. www.canalworld.net/forums/index.php?/topic/756-boat-crime-vandalism

What if you are targeted?

Report all incidents to the local constabulary and get a crime number. It seems that, in urban areas, mugging on the towpaths is a growth crime, rather than break-ins and thefts from boats.

Best not to walk alone! Carry a torch at night. Some local police are more helpful than others. We hear that there's an informal group on the K&A who met with police and CRT, and the latter has printed 'beware of thieves' notices for the group to distribute. We believe that the group has bought some cheap air horns for boaters to use if they are unlucky enough to be attacked. There has also been a concerted effort to combat crime on the River Lea and in the West Midlands, with a proactive effort between CRT, local councils and the police.

If you have any other tips or local safety initiatives, please get in touch.



"Casually got his electric saw out of his rucksack and stole 2 bikes in 2 minutes—efficient"

Photo: Ilkan Tenekeci on London Boaters' Facebook Group

do to prevent burglaries on the cut; it's a reflection of society generally and perhaps a result of CRT's campaign to make people aware that canals exist and are accessible. Now that it's getting colder, there seem to be more reports of boaters stealing coal, diesel, gas etc. As more peo-

An external padlock advertises that you are not on board.

We on NABO Council have pooled our thoughts and have come up with the following suggestions, which are all more important in urban areas where the crime level is likely to be higher:



Following his visit to the CRT office in Leeds, a CRT Customer Support Administrator replied to Ken

The Trust does not find this type of behaviour acceptable. For the safety of yourself and others, please may I ask that you report the incident to the police using the 101 non-emergency number—which can be done anonymously. We would like boaters and members of the public using the canal and towpath to feel and be safe.

I have looked on our database for information regarding antisocial behaviour and I spoke to one of our Licencing team, who is an ex-policeman. He confirms that all incidents should be reported, as the Neighbourhood Officers will deal with escalating problems if everyone reports them

Unfortunately, this will not happen overnight as the police and local council must ensure that they have all the necessary evidence. However, as a member of the public, you could greatly assist the police by keeping your own diary of the behaviour, ensuring that you record as much detail as possible, including times, dates, types of behaviour, names and/or descriptions.

- When leaving your boat, put your bike and any other valuable items inside if possible.
- Don't advertise the fact that you are not on board by using an external padlock on the doors, which can easily be cut off with bolt-croppers. Get a deadlock or a latch-lock, like a Vachette, instead.
- Drill a hole in the runner of a top sliding hatch so that a padlock can be fitted to prevent forward movement.
- Ensure your side hatches are securely padlocked or bolted on the inside. Drill holes through overlapping side hatches and rear doors so that these can be bolted together from the inside.
- If you're out for a couple of hours after dark, leave a light and the radio on.
- In busy towns at night with drunk people around, there's potential for being untied. Two ideas: put a lightweight chain and padlock between the boat and somewhere secure on the towpath (e.g. around a bollard or metal piling), or use a cable tie around the ropes to 'lock' them onto a bollard. And always tie the loose end of mooring ropes on the boat, not on the bank.
- To prevent your diesel being stolen, as happened to Mike Rodd on the very safe Mon & Brec, fit a lockable cap—these are readily available and easy to retrofit to a normal filler point.
- Portholes are more difficult to gain access through and make a boat less vulnerable.
- On the K&A, there have been several reports of batteries being stolen; if yours are accessible from the outside, the probable answer is to make the engine hatch covers lockable.
- Whether you are permanently moored or cruising, tie up near other boats and, where possible, overlooked by residential properties. Make contact with your neighbours—safety in numbers! If you need to leave your boat for a lengthy period and you don't know the area, try contacting a local marina, who may have a spare berth at a nominal fee.
- Metal doors are more robust than wood. Padlocks and a metal security bar fitted on the inside of the front doors prevent easy break-ins. The main thing is to deter possible thieves by making it difficult to gain access to your boat.

What does the future hold?

Mark Tizard peers into his crystal ball

Now that, what CRT likes to call, 'the boating season' has ended (although for many of us it's just starting!), it's a good time to reflect on the past year. It's still not clear what the financial effect of the Toddbrook Reservoir near-disaster is going to have on CRT's finances, coming so soon after last year's Middlewich breach.

The recent release of the Middlewich inspection report, following a freedom of information request, was so heavily redacted (even the national press ridiculed the heavy-handed approach) it gives no clues. Let's hope that future maintenance and dredging budgets are not too badly affected.

CRT must persuade boaters to get behind it to support future negotiations with the Government

Recording contact with CRT

When contacting CRT, Jon Horsfall, CRT's Head of Customer Services and Support, confirmed that the preferred option is for boaters to either call the central Customer Services number or email using the 'contact us' form on the website.

This way, the contact is recorded and boaters should receive a response to their query. It is clear that Jon is passionate about the canals and not just a disinterested manager behind a keyboard, as some CRT

managers are portrayed in social media.

He is keen for boaters to understand that the drive to promote the benefits of canals to the nation's wellbeing is essential to persuade the Government to continue its funding, when the current agreement expires. The original plan, which relied on the support of local councils and the Partnerships, has clearly struggled as they have had their own funding pressures.

Is there enough in the kitty?

The ability of CRT to fund the maintenance of the canal system will, without doubt, be called into question if the £50 million grant is withdrawn in 2027 after the Government review in 2021/2—and that is only a couple of years away.

For the majority of us, boating is a discretionary spend, so should licences increase much above inflation, we can pursue alternative leisure pursuits. CRT must therefore continue to persuade boaters to get behind it to support future negotiations with the Government.

CRT constantly says that boaters only contribute about 19% of its total income, but the bigger picture is that boaters make a financial contribution beyond their licence fee. This includes expenditure on moorings, insurance, maintenance, BSS, and the use of many canalside businesses, all of which pay individual and corporate tax. And, it's boaters who help to create the wellness experience for visitors at tourist hotspots like Foxton, Pontcysyllte, Stoke Bruerne, Anderton Lift etc.



Provision of services

Part of the campaign to win boaters' hearts and minds has to be the provision of services.

You could argue that it is not for CRT to provide services like laundrettes or showers, but the provision of adequate basic services for water, refuse and sewerage disposal is essential. There has been much recent discussion within NABO (and I'm sure within CRT) as to how these should be provided. Continued abuse, due to fly tipping and vandalism, and increasing costs of

servicing facilities are becoming a real issue for CRT.

Pump-out equipment is in need of constant repair/replacement and it's been reported that each CRT pump-out costs the Trust around £100, compared to around £20 in a marina. A simple answer would be to just move them into marinas. But NABO believes that canalside, non-marina based, facilities are essential and that more effort is needed to ensure that the location and security are reviewed, to ensure that further facilities are not lost.

CRT's record on rubbish is, well... pretty rubbish.

Photos: Clockwise from top left Mark Tizard, Brian Holt, Geoff Wood, Stephen Cross

Toddbrook Reservoir update

David Fletcher assesses the current situation

In August, the Peak Forest reservoir at Whaley Bridge, known as Toddbrook, over-filled and the main spillway suffered partial failure. This triggered emergency action to preserve the integrity of the earth and clay dam and, as a precaution, the town was evacuated.

CRT, with the great assistance from the EA, emergency and uniformed services and the community, managed to get the water level down to a point, first where the spillway was not being used, and then further to take the water pressure off the structure. So where are we now? I visited the dam in November with the Navigation Advisory Group and we were briefed by the engineer in charge, the Fishery Advisor and the Community Relations Manager. This summary is my words and not those of CRT.

CRT has a significant establishment at the dam site, located conveniently in the adjacent sports-ground above the dam. The reservoir water level is about two metres, down from over ten metres, and it now needs attention to prevent it from filling again. There are 11 pumps set up, floating on a pontoon in the reservoir, so that they do not draw mud. The incoming streams are dammed and controlled to bypass the reservoir, but they are so volatile that, after heavy rain, water does get into the reservoir and needs to be pumped out. Fish recovery is on-going, but the need to keep two metres of water in the bottom makes recovery difficult. Further work will take place in the winter when the

fish shoals are easier to catch. They are sent to another reservoir that can take the large influx. The site is an SSSI, because of a special moss that occurs in the shallow end of the reservoir, which becomes wet and dry when the level goes up and down and shows green on the mud. Fortunately, this is well away from the actual dam.

There is a high on-going cost of many tens of thousands of pounds per week, just to provide day-to-day support for the reservoir, and this must continue until a solution is agreed and implemented. CRT has been inspecting, taking core samples and testing the structure of the dam, to learn about the failure, understand what might be required for repair, and to support the on-going investigations. There are two of these; one internal and one Government-led. The reporting dates for these are not yet available, but nothing can happen until the reports are finalised and the conclusions considered. The reports may consider alternative dam construction, and it will be important for boaters to see whether clay dams are considered suitable for the future. This decision has a significant price tag attached, so it cannot be taken lightly and without the obvious question of who pays. We have to bear in mind that the failure was on the slipway protection of the dam and not a failure of the dam itself.

The reservoir is an important part of the water supply for the Peak Forest and Macclesfield canals. It has been the main quick-response water supply for day-to-day management. Doing without it for the short-term



depends very much on the weather, but indications are the other supplies are insufficient to provide the normal service levels and this would increase the likelihood of stoppages on these important canals. A lower capacity reservoir doesn't help much either. The reservoir also acts as a part of the flood control for the River Goyt, so doing away with it is not a simple solution.

The relationship with the community is very important and will form a significant part of determining the solution. The town has been disrupted, so it is only to be expected that questions will be asked about what is going on and what is best for the future. The site is very near to housing and access is not ideal. The temporary works occupy part of the public sports area and this also impacts daily life. On the other hand, the reservoir is in a beautiful setting and is definitely a local asset and source of wellbeing. CRT will have to work hard to maintain a good re-

This is all going to take time and good deal of hard cash to sort out

lationship with the community so that the solution is supported.

When a solution is proposed, significant permissions will be required and this will take time. The issues of selecting what to do, Trustee support, community support, and where the money is coming from are the first thoughts, but SSSI rules apply, and Reservoir Act permission, environmental impact assessment, traffic studies, and any formal permissions all take time. In the meantime, the money tap is wide open and running, just to maintain the current establishment. This is all going to take time and good deal of hard cash to sort out, but we have seen it all before and goodwill wins through.

TECHIE'S



CORNER

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

Maintenance and servicing

Most manufacturers recommend that you service your stove annually before the next heating season. Note that an annual stove service and the routine maintenance are different: you should clean the baffle plate and inside of your stove monthly.

Such servicing and routine maintenance ensures that the stove is safe to use and operates efficiently, and prolongs its life. Manufacturers regard the fire grate, fire bricks and baffle plates as 'consumables', which have limited coverage under the stove's warranty.

Protecting your stove (and yourself)

Although intended for household woodburning stoves, **Gr8fires** has produced an excellent guide to maintenance. Here's an extract by **Peter Fellows**.

You should routinely inspect these parts for signs of wear. When the stove is cold, remove the log-bar and clean out any ash and unburned fuel from the firebox. Check the fire grate is not warped (usually downwards) and does not have any cracks or broken bars. If the stove has individual log-bars, swap them around to even-out any wear and tear.

Stove liners and baffle plate

There are three types of stove liners: refractory clay fire bricks; heat-reflecting vermiculite panels; and steel or cast-iron liners.

Any holes or cracks in stove liners could lead to prolonged exposure of the bodywork to flames, leading to cracking of cast-iron side-panels

or warping of the steel bodywork. Cracks in clay bricks can be filled with fire cement. To remove the fire bricks, first remove the baffle plate (the metal plate at the top of the firebox) and carefully prise them out with a screwdriver.

Clean any soot and debris from the top of the baffle plate with a wire brush and check that it is not warped nor has any holes. If soot is left for long periods on the baffle plate, it attracts condensation and can 'cake', leading to corrosion when the stove isn't being used.

Soot on the baffle plate can also start a fire at the base of the flue and holes in the baffle plate can expose the body of the stove and the flue pipe to excessive heat. This will make the stove inefficient and potentially extremely dangerous, due to smoke or carbon monoxide entering the cabin. At the first sign of degradation, replace the baffle plate.

Rope seals

Rope seals around the stove door can become squashed and allow too much air into the stove, which causes losses in flame control and fuel-efficiency. It is therefore important to regularly check the air-tightness of the door seal. When the stove is cold, tear paper into strips about 2" wide and place them between the door and the stove bodywork. Check around the door every 3-4", closing the door and pulling the paper strip. If it is difficult to remove this part of the rope seal is working well. If at any point, the paper slides out, the door rope should be replaced. On stoves with double doors, both seals should be replaced at the same time. Buy stove rope with the correct diameter: if it's too small, the seal won't work; if it's too large, you could put excessive pressure on the door hinges or locking mechanism causing them to warp or break.



Burned out cast-iron baffle plate, about three years old. The owners used softwood, which has a bigger fuel load than hardwood, causing flames to be too close to the baffle plate, which caused it to warp and fail—the middle part is missing.

Photo: The Stove Yard www.thestoveyard.com

Remove the stove door, place it face down on a work-surface. Pull out the existing rope and remove any old adhesive with a wire brush to produce a clean rope channel. Measure the rope-feeding it around the channel, without stretching or compressing it, and cut it to the required length, allowing an additional 2-3mm for any slack in the joint. Ensure that the rope ends are cut at right-angles and use heat-resistant tape to seal both ends to prevent any fraying. Then apply rope seal adhesive and gently press the rope into place, with the joint in middle at the bottom of the channel and no air gap at the joint. When the adhesive is dry, replace the door and close it to check the new seal.

Stove glass and gasket

You should check the condition of the glass gasket/seal, which allows the glass to safely expand at a different rate than the metal door. Hairline cracks in the seal gasket can lead to the glass failing, so it is important to check the glass frequently.

Over time, the seals become compressed and lose their resilience, which may crack the expanding glass. Loose glass retaining clips also indicate seal failure and these should never be re-tightened on an old seal. If the stove is more than two years old, or if the seal looks to be in poor condition, it should be replaced.

Stove glass is affected by a build-up of soot and brown stains if the stove is operated inefficiently, or if wood contains too much moisture.

Check logs using a moisture-meter. To operate the stove efficiently, when wood is fully alight, completely close the primary air intake (usually the lower control) and adjust the secondary air intake (the upper control) to produce the desired flame pattern. If you restrict the amount of secondary air, no matter how much primary air you allow in, you reduce the effectiveness of the airwash system, leading to sooting and staining. Conversely, if the stove is operated at too high a temperature, it could warp internal components, crack the glass, or damage the flue. A flue thermometer allows you to check that the stove is operating at its optimum temperature.

Flue-pipe fire cement seals

Replace the fire cement seal between the base of the flue pipe and the stove flue collar if it has cracked or crumbled. Dried fire cement is extremely difficult to remove from the surfaces of the stove collar and flue pipe, so protect them with masking tape. Use a screwdriver to remove old fire cement and use a vacuum cleaner to remove any residual dust around the seal. Allow the new cement to dry completely before using the stove again.

Check that there is no condensate staining around the flue pipe. Condensate could be caused by an uninsulated flue, a poorly fitting cowl, or inefficient operation of the stove. If the stove is operated with too much 'slumber' burning, flue gases don't get hot enough to warm the flue, thus creating creosote and other condensates.

Chimney cowl

Heavy sooting around the cowl indicates inefficient combustion, due to damp wood or a cold chimney. Anything that clogs the flue system or cowl can be dangerous, leading to a build-up of carbon monoxide. Avoid continuous slumber burning and fully fire the stove for at least half an hour each day.



Stove pipe thermometer
Photo: gr8fires www.gr8fires.co.uk

Rewind

Issue No 6, 2004

Howard Anguish explores NABO News from 15 years ago

Membership Chairman, Stuart Sampson, commented about a recent National Rally. NABO had a small stand to encourage new memberships and, while there, he was surprised to learn that rather than increasing new membership, the previous Chairman had decided to leave NABO altogether, citing that a reason for leaving was the lack of help from members.

It is a sad fact that many members are quick to thank Council members for their efforts, but are very reluctant to offer help by joining the Council. A matter as relevant now as it was then, I suspect.

Review Carole Sampson reviewed a recent publication, 'Going It Alone', a guide to working a narrowboat single-handed, although many of the hints and tips would be just as relevant with a crew.

A quick Amazon search reveals that copies of this 32-page booklet are still available and the price is now around £5 or so, which is reasonable considering that it cost £4.50 in 2004.

Angry Anglers? A newspaper clipping makes interesting reading:

'I'm sick of argy barges.

I love fishing canals but always feel like a second-class citizen. Anglers are the only ones who pay for using the country's network of cuts, through day tickets or annual club fees. But it's the people who utilise the canals free of charge who seem to think anglers should not be there. Each year hundreds of anglers have their pole sections broken by moun-

tain bike riders roaring along the towpaths, while canoeists paddle right through your swim, and barges churn the waters into a muddy mess. Yet it's the cash British Waterways receives from angling that helps pay for the bankside erosion caused by boats. It would be a lot better if the money was used to stock some poor stretches of canal.'

'**The Great Gates Debate**' was a discussion about recent proposals to abandon the policy of closing all gates when leaving a lock, and some even suggested leaving paddles open too. Points for and against the proposals were debated and readers were asked to vote Yes or No on the NABO website.

I know that it is a subject that comes up from time to time, but it seems that no firm decision has been made so far and I don't recall it ever becoming a firm NABO Policy—unless you know different!

The British Waterways Veg Pledge attracted a promise from the BW Chairman, Robin Evans, that all tow-path vegetation will be cut once a year, or more often, and that offside trees will be curtailed, along with an invitation to report directly to him any evidence that this promise was not being fulfilled.

It appears that it took many attempts to persuade BW that there was indeed a problem, and it took BW's customer relations manager to take a BW boat along the Stratford to witness it first-hand. The article asks the pertinent question: 'Will BW now believe us when we say things are wrong?'

Have Your Say

Letters to the Editor

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

Hello NABOers,

Since Tug 'Kingfisher' has been sold and is no longer moored on the Yorks Derwent (her new home is a Wakefield boatyard), I now do not have an interest in, or ownership of, a boat, so I feel it is time to resign my membership of NABO. I would like to say I have enjoyed my long membership of NABO, which included a brief time of Vice-Chairmanship and NABO News Editorship during a difficult period of chairmanship with a dictatorial secretary, but we did our best for as long as we could until the 'Save Our Waterways' campaign took priority during its active days. I also appreciate all that NABO has done and is still doing to represent inland boat owners and would like to thank the present and past office holders for their hard work and dedication to the cause. My interests are now in local radio presentation, but I will always have a fondness for the waterways that began 70 years ago in Ricky, as an eight year-old 'helping' Dickinsons' boats through Walkers and Batchworth locks. Boaters may yet occasionally see me on the towing paths with an all-terrain mobility scooter (doing 4mph!).

Best regards

Tony Haynes

Not me, Guv

Thanks for this month's NN—always a welcome and good read. Just a point in relation to the page 22 article on the Oxford cycling consultation: I never put pen to paper on this matter. Possibly I forwarded this article written by someone else that was forwarded to me, and I possibly forwarded it on to someone in NABO. But I emphatically did not write the article, and would like to make that point clear, although I do agree with its sentiments. Thanks and best,

Graham Paterson

NABO, Mid-Thames on RUG3

(Editor's note: Mike Rodd has clarified the error: "It came from Mark and me! The original letter from the RUGs was addressed to Graham".)

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 regular contributor, Brian Holt.



CHILLY OUTLOOK

Scientists at University College London (and the Daily Express) are forecasting that the UK is likely to experience the coldest period in a decade, with only a 20% chance that temperatures will rise above 5°C in January/February.

Stay warm boaters!



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



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