



# NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners  
Issue 3 May 2020



**THE EFFECTS OF LOCKDOWN**

**A PASSAGE TO THE NORTH EAST**

**THE FUTURE OF BOAT PROPULSION**



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## The NABO Council

Chair, Legal Affairs and BSS Rep.

**Mike Rodd**

07831 860199 nabochair@nabo.org.uk

Vice Chair

**Mark Tizard**

07818 757676 mark.tizard@nabo.org.uk

Treasurer

**Helen Hutt**

07831 682092 hontreasurer@nabo.org.uk

NABO News Editor

**Peter Fellows**

19 High Street, Bonsall, Derbyshire, DE4 2AS  
01629 825267 nabonews@nabo.org.uk

Webmaster, NAG (Operations) and BSS Rep.

**David Fletcher**

07719 276659 web@nabo.org.uk

Media Officer

**Alison Tuck**

07450 108659 alison.tuck@nabo.org.uk

Communications Officer, Moorings Rep.,  
Continuous Cruising Rep.

**Phil Goulding**

01271 865340 cc@nabo.org.uk

Promotion and Recruitment

**Ken Hylins**

07852 911539 khyllins@hotmail.co.uk

Minutes Secretary

**Vacant**

General Sec. (External Relations)

**Mark Tizard**

07818 757676 gen@nabo.org.uk

## NABO Online



**Mark Tizard**

facebook.com/master.nabo



**David Fletcher**

Twitter @NABO\_Official

## Regional Representatives:

Anglian Waterways

**Vacant**

East Midlands Waterways

**Vacant**

London Waterways

**David Williams**

07813 496208 london@nabo.org.uk

Middle Level

**Vacant**

North East, Yorkshire and Humber, Shared  
Ownership Rep.

**Howard Anguish**

01482 669876 yorks@nabo.org.uk, shareowners@  
nabo.org.uk

North Wales & Borders Waterways

**David Fletcher (details left)**

North West Waterways

**Ken Hylins**

07852 911539 khyllins@hotmail.co.uk

River Severn

**Phil Goulding (details left)**

River Thames

**Graham Paterson**

0118 986 3959 midthames@nabo.org.uk

River Trent

**Vacant**

South East Waterways

**Geoff Wood**

07968 491118 se@nabo.org.uk

Southern Waterways, Welsh Waterways

**Mike Rodd (details left)**

West Midlands Waterways

**Alison Tuck (details left)**

## Additional Contacts

Assistant for the Disabled

**Ken Hylins**

07852 911539 disability@nabo.org.uk

Administration

**Vacant**

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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 27<sup>th</sup> 2020. Our email address is [nabonews@nabo.org.uk](mailto:nabonews@nabo.org.uk)

## Cover photo

To remind you of what summer on the waterways used to be like, this month's cover photo was a scene taken by Helen Hutt in York. 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.



NABO News is published by the  
National Association of Boat Owners  
PO Box 7366, Wolverhampton, WV1 9GQ

For membership matters: 35 Williamson Drive, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 5GJ

Editor: Peter Fellows Production: Chris Pink

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The ramifications of the Coronavirus lockdown have dominated the waterway news for nearly eight weeks at the time of writing and these are widely reflected in this issue.

CRT's decision not to close towpaths to visitors initially caused an intensely negative response on social media by some liveaboard boaters. NABO's support for CRT's decision is explained by Mike Rodd

## Mostly, but not all about Coronavirus

Editor **Peter Fellows** has news of other developments, even though little is happening on the waterways

in his Chair's column. NABO also welcomes CRT's support: for high-risk liveaboard boaters who are self-isolating; for the extra month's licence offered to all leisure boaters; and its support for trade and hire-boat businesses, each reported upon in this issue. In his regional rep's report, Ken Hylins, who is self-isolating on his boat, describes the assistance he is being offered by CRT volunteers and local residents. However, many small waterway businesses do not qualify for the Government assistance on offer and there is a request for members to contact their MPs to rectify this with additional financial support measures. If nothing is done, there is a real risk that many boatyards, marinas, chandleries and hire companies will go out of business.



Like many of our members in self-isolation at home and unable to travel to our boats, it has really come home to us how much the canals and rivers are an essential part of our lives. It also reminds us how precious these waterways are, and how urgently we need to ensure that they are protected.

This will be especially important in the days ahead, when our economy will look very different from the immediate past, with governments facing many horrendous difficulties in recovering from the financial wrecking balls caused by the pandemic. And—of vital interest to all of us—at the same time as the Government will be trying to sort out this mess, CRT and EA will be bidding for at least some essential government funding. As I have said before, I just cannot see how either body will be able to continue without some level of government support, at least similar to that which has been received in the past. However, I really can't see such bids being high on any government's priorities. It is vital, therefore, that boater representative bodies, such as NABO and RBOA, get behind CRT's and EA's bids—even though we must also continue to be critical friends when needed.

I fear for so many of the waterways-related businesses who are facing a devastating year with possibly no income at all. I can also see that many boaters may be financially challenged and unable to pay marina fees etc. If this causes them to move their boats onto the towpaths, that will further compound the marina operators' financial position, as well as (in most cases) CRT's. If boaters are additionally unable to pay their licence/registration fees, this will add to the impact on CRT's and EA's finances. We welcome CRT's

extension of licences—but it is also understandable that they have asked those of us who can afford it, to donate back to them the savings we gain, and I encourage those who can, to do so.

I feel it is necessary for me, personally, to address the question of the towpath usage. I am deeply concerned that CRT has been seriously and often publicly abused for its approach to the use of our towpaths during these days of self-isolation.

## Mindful of the needs of others

NABO Chair **Mike Rodd** considers some effects of the pandemic

To me, it seems that there are two sides to the debate. For the many (6,000 plus?) folk living on their boats, it would seem logical that, with most towpaths less than two metres in width and right up against their moored boats, CRT should simply close the towpaths to all but the boaters. A logical argument, but, what about the many folk who live in tower blocks in a city where there are no local parks to exercise in? Where else can they go to walk the kids—except on the safe, local towpath? Or, what if your shortest route to (possibly essential) work is along the towpath and the alternatives are much longer walks or rides up steep hills (like those around Bradford-on-Avon and Bath) on some cyclist-unfriendly roads? These folk have legitimate needs too. So, personally, I agree with CRT's current policy (at the time of writing) of limited but shared and considerate use of towpaths, to comply with social distancing restrictions.

Unfortunately, of course, there will always be a small number of

folk who then selfishly abuse the situation—and go screaming down a towpath on their racing bikes trying to beat the latest STRAVA speed record. Or those whose exercise is a 20 km run, normally with their mates, along a lovely flat and well cared-for towpath. Unfortunately, CRT's approach to handling this situation seems to have been to just tell its boating community what its policy is, and then put up signs. This is instead of going public and stating clearly, through the national press and other media, that towpaths should be used by non-boaters ONLY where absolutely essential, and then laying out the conditions under which this may be done, so that those who have no choice but to moor against the towpath can also

Photo: Helen Hutt



be kept safe. This crisis has brought home to us all just how interlinked we are—and the use of towpaths is just one more example of how we ought to be mindful of the needs of others, together with the vital need to keep everyone as safe as we can. I should add that the reports we have received from liveboards with special needs have been very positive regarding the support they have all received from CRT staff.

Naturally, meetings with the senior management of the EA, relating to their navigational responsibilities becoming less dependent on government funding and exploring how to become more commercially viable, have ground to a halt. This also appears to have happened with evaluating the tenders to oversee the management of all the EA's Thames moorings. We know that there were two experienced bidders for the contract, and they await a decision. While this will only immediately affect boaters using the Thames, the underlying concept of outsourcing moorings management is of vital interest to all of us, as I am sure CRT will be looking very closely at this approach!

Your NABO Council continues to meet regularly via teleconferences, and the sessions have proved to be very productive and well-attended. As in so many other areas where we are being forced to operate in different ways, I do wonder what we will be able to take from these experiences when the situation changes back. Whilst face-to-face meetings are valuable, these teleconferences are less costly and can be very productive. Food for thought!

Finally, despite these strange times for all of us, I wish you everything of the best and, for those unlucky ones who are not living on their boats, I hope we all see our boats again soon!

## Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at the Council meeting in April

With everyone still in lockdown at home, I again listened-in to the Council members' teleconference call.

Councillors welcomed CRT's support for boaters by extending their licences for a month and also developing payment plans for boaters who are experiencing difficulties paying their licence fees—the indications suggest that a lot are having difficulties. CRT is also giving support to the hire industry with a three-month licence rebate as an emergency measure.

The Council agreed that boaters should continue to pay their licence fee in the short-term, even though they are unable to use their boats, but this could become an issue in the medium-term. For those who moor in a marina, the mooring fees add to their problems and a consequence may be boaters moving to towpath moorings to reduce costs. This will have a knock-on effect on marina incomes and CRT should be supporting marina owners to get government assistance.

NABO also supports CRT's decision not to close towpaths, despite the uproar on social media and abusive emails being sent by some boaters to CRT's Customer Services. Towpaths are important for local residents to get some exercise and fresh air, especially in urban areas, but CRT's promotion of towpath use at the start of the lockdown smacked of a 'wellbeing' PR exercise. There are problems in physical distancing where narrow towpaths are being used by large numbers of people,

and it is not enough to put up signs advising people to avoid moored boats with liveboards, with too much text for passers-by to stop and read. One liveboard Councillor reported people fishing next to his boat and groups of long-distance walkers stopping nearby for a rest, which he blamed on people being confused by lack of clarity in the signage. Councillors agreed that a simple message, such as 'stay away from here', and diversionary routes around liveboard boaters, where possible, should be devised. But the real problem is not local residents out for a stroll or a cycle-ride along a towpath; it is the lycra-clad runners and speeding cyclists, panting as they approach unsuspecting walkers from behind, who, if infected, are potentially spreading the virus to large numbers of people. CRT should crack down on such selfish activity by banning running and high-speed cycling on towpaths—after all, the roads are now almost empty and perfectly safe for these activities.

CRT is using the 'Boaters' Update' to communicate its distancing requirements, effectively asking boaters to enforce these. It should be using the local and national press to inform land-based residents of what they can, and cannot, do on towpaths. It has also advised liveboard boaters to move to a quieter mooring if they consider themselves to be at risk, but other boaters see them moving and think 'if they can move, so can I' and lockdown restrictions are starting to be ignored.

Byeeee until happier times.



### NABO calendar 2020

Council meetings are normally held at boat clubs in the Midlands area.

However, with Covid-19 they will be held by teleconference in June, September and October. Members are welcome to attend meetings and to join in those held by teleconference; please just let the Secretary or Chair know in advance (contact details inside cover).

The remaining dates for Council meetings in 2020 are as follows: June 20th, September 5th, October 10th and November 14th (includes AGM).



## Wales and the South West

### Mike Rodd



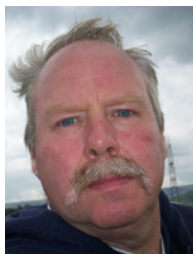
With many boaters safely self-isolating, there is little movement on the canals.

It was reported that there were scores of dead fish spotted in the Kennet & Avon in Devizes. The EA said the coronavirus lockdown has resulted in a drop in traffic and activity on the canal, and this has created a series of stagnant pools between locks—resulting in the fish suffocating through a lack of oxygen. However, a local fish expert (also a medical professional) commented that there had probably been a toxic leak as the distribution is quite localised. Also, the fish involved are stillwater animals and could cope. A local boater said there had been a large diesel spillage in the area, which may have led to the deaths.

There have been reports that, on the K&A, there have been some unfortunate conflicts where liveaboard boaters, who are understandably very unhappy with the folks cycling or running along the towpaths, have taken matters into their own hands. However, there are a significant number of people who have almost no alternative but to use the towpath to get to work—including some working in Bath hospitals and care homes—perhaps a case of a small minority of thoughtless people spoiling things for the majority?

## North West

### Ken Hylins



I am at Appley Bridge, a suburb of Wigan on the east Lancashire border. There have been signs put up about the limited use of the canal towpath close to me.

They have had little effect on towpath footfall as, in my estimation, there is a three- to four-fold increase in its use. A policeman walked along the towpath last Sunday afternoon, but nobody was

challenged about their presence on the canal. I have moved to a more secluded spot and I am now getting almost no people coming near the boat. There have been six boats that have passed me, but their direction of travel is possibly to return to their home moorings. I have had three emails from CRT, asking about my position and what services I need to be open. A CRT volunteer has called three times to see how I am. The local community has offered to help with a free

## Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

electric hook-up and several local people have offered to shop for me (I must be getting old!), and I'm told that, if I need assistance, I should just ask.

**David Fletcher adds:** Following a wet February, both March and April have been very dry, particularly in the north. Due to this and some lower levels in reservoirs post-Toddbrook, the Peak Forest, Macclesfield, Huddersfield and Leeds & Liverpool canals are closed for the foreseeable future. The aim is to save water so that, when the system is reopened, we have some water to play with. There has been some comment on social media about a blockage on the feeder to the Peak Forest from Coombes Reservoir. I understand that, although there is a blockage, this is not the only problem and it could take some time to get this flow going again. The stoppages mean that the coal boats cannot pass and support those liveaboards on these waters.

*As we went to press, we heard that Ken is scheduled to have major heart surgery; we wish him well for a speedy recovery*

## Membership matters

David Fletcher and the Membership Team

### Renewals and Covid-19

Our May membership renewals have all gone out to those with an email address. Some members do not have standing orders in place and action is required by them to pay by direct transfer or PayPal.

The only paper documents being sent are to those very few people for whom we have no email address. We have also changed our correspondence address for all, to a personal one in Nantwich, so that we can better respond in these difficult times. If you get a paper letter, and you have an email address, please let us know so that we can use it in the future.

We ask for members' cooperation by avoiding payment by bank cheque if at all possible. It may be very convenient for you to write a cheque and post it, but that just transfers the problem to the membership team. A cheque is of no use if we cannot go to the bank and, with the membership

team already under restrictions, we must avoid doing this. Bank standing orders are our preference, but direct transfer or PayPal are good too. Perhaps someone could make the payment on your behalf? Please use your membership number so that we can identify the receipt.

Having said that, if there is no alternative, we ask that you give us a call, and we will sort out something, perhaps extending membership for a few months until this is over.

Please be sure that we remain committed to supporting all members who don't use the internet and similar systems, but we need to use time-saving technology wherever possible so that we can concentrate our efforts on those who really need a paper reminder.

The membership team will really appreciate your cooperation to keep things going in these difficult times.

## NABO Review of GDPR regulations

### An update on progress over the last year.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was introduced in May 2018, following the Data Protection Act 2018.

We concluded at that time that the regulations do apply to ourselves, as we hold information about people for a 'business or other non-household purpose'. The law applies to any 'processing of personal data', and therefore covers all organisations, whatever their size. '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 that is

public knowledge or is about someone's professional life can be personal data. Almost anything we do with data counts as 'processing'; including collecting, recording, storing, using, analysing, combining, disclosing or deleting it.

We must regularly review our processing and, where necessary, update our documentation and our privacy information for individuals. We must review and update our accountability measures at appropriate intervals. This is done in April each year.

### Our current position

- Review of the processing activities. There are no new activities and the procedure still applies.



## *After extensive chasing, we are now down to five members who have not agreed the privacy policy*

- Privacy policy adequacy. We have a policy in place and no amendment is proposed at this time. There have been no challenges.
- Review of the accountability of Association officers. These are set out in the procedure and no changes are recommended.
- Review of access to data by Association officers. Access to data is limited to membership team members.
- Procedure adequacy. The procedure has been checked against the Information Commissioner's Office' requirements and is considered adequate. The latest version is out for comment by Council.
- Review of data holdings. We have completed a data survey to identify what we hold. There were no surprises. The most significant data is held on the website and on membership team members' computers. We have completed an impact assessment on data loss.
- Statement on data minimisation. We have completed the disposal of historical paper holdings and now concentrate on web-based data.
- Statement of storage limitation. We have had no requests for deletion of members' data. We have adopted a routine of data deletion from the live database in the year following a resignation. Backups are retained.
- Statement of members' acceptance. After extensive chasing, we are now down to five members who have not agreed the privacy policy. These are all longstanding members without email and may have limited understanding of GDPR. They have been written to several times, and phone calls have been at-

tempted. It is possible that they have moved house without telling us. It is proposed to write again after the virus lockdown is over, using recorded delivery. We have records to demonstrate that we have attempted to get agreement. Council may wish to consider the best course of action should we be unsuccessful.

- Statement on data security. Web security and theft of computers are the prime concerns. These issues are addressed in the procedure and will be further considered in the risk assessment.
- Review of complaints. There have been no complaints.
- Review of data loss or disclosure events. There have been no losses of data in the year.

### Main action items identified in 2019

- Continue with initiatives to complete agreement by membership (to be continued).
- Write to life members and share the data we hold (completed).
- Document the responsibilities of officers and approve in Council (completed).
- Document the data that we hold, including the archives. Say why we keep these and address actions (audit completed and results in procedures, completed).
- Make further efforts to retrieve archives held by Richard Carpenter (completed).
- Write simple procedures and approve in Council (completed, further version with Council for comment).
- Carry out a risk assessment and impact assessment on data loss, and address actions arising from it (risk assessment outstanding).
- Consider in Council whether we have enough expertise on this issue (no action taken, to be considered).

### Proposed actions for 2020

- Continue with initiatives to complete agreement by membership (five persons only).
- Update the procedure and approve in Council.
- Complete a risk assessment on data loss and address actions arising from it.
- Consider in Council whether we have enough expertise on this issue.

## Dear Richard

### An open letter from NABO to Richard Parry

Dear Richard. Following NABO's recent Council meeting, I have been asked to write to you to raise the following concerns: we appreciate the efforts that CRT is now making to limit the use of the towpath for exercise, specifically in areas where there are moored boats, but we feel more needs to be done.

We are hearing of instances (Nantwich and New Mills, to name but two) where speeding cyclists and serious runners are putting the rest of the towpath population at risk. Because they are exercising strenuously, they are inevitably exhaling more forcibly than a gentle walker or leisure cyclist; and this is why we feel that this particular group should be **told**, not encouraged, to use alternative routes such as dedicated cycle paths, roads and wide pavements where 2m distancing can be guaranteed. It is often too late if they happen to see a poster once they get to the towpath. We suggest a local radio campaign or a press release sent to the relevant outlets and posters within the nearby communities.

We welcome the extra month given to leisure boat licences. We suspect many boaters are likely to face increased financial difficulties in the coming months in meeting their licence and mooring payments and hope that CRT will keep this under review the longer the current restrictions remain in place. We are concerned that boaters will be tempted to vacate moorings and move to the towpath to reduce costs. Some marinas, already hit by loss of trade through chandleries, hire boats etc. will struggle to cope

and will be at risk of closure, with the resultant loss of facilities and moorings. We would support any attempt by CRT to help the marina industry, either directly or through Government. We would suggest that CRT considers temporarily forgoing its 9% mooring levy for marinas that are prepared to offer a mooring 'holiday' to those in genuine need.

We urge CRT to start talking to the insurance sector regarding the requirement for the BSS, to arrive at a general agreement that this requirement is formally suspended. Hopefully, there is an awareness and understanding that, once the lockdown requirements are lifted, there will need to be a substantial period of time, months not weeks, for surveyors to be able to deal with the backlog and for boatyards to be able to carry out any remedial work.

Finally, there is growing concern that the safety of some boats moored on the towpath may be at risk, either internally through the state of batteries, bilges etc., or externally through the possibility of damage and vandalism. Some insurance policies insist that boats are not left unattended for extended periods of time. Should the lockdown be further extended, CRT should consider granting permission for boaters to visit, but not move, their boats to enable batteries to be recharged etc.

In summary, our members are very appreciative of the steps CRT is taking to contact and protect vulnerable boaters and the steps already taken to cushion the effects of the lockdown on the trade and on boaters generally.

Regards, Mike Rodd

# Towpath Visitors

...swapping tourist hotspots for local towpaths

Since the start of the coronavirus distancing measures, CRT reports a shift in usage from busy tourist hotspots like Little Venice in London or central Birmingham, to local less-used canal towpaths in residential areas, increased usage by less affluent communities where green space may be at a premium.

The report gives data from towpath counters around the country, who noted that the largest percentage increases in numbers of visits were in Burnley, Sandwell and Blackburn and other inner-city areas. The three largest percentage falls in numbers were recorded in Paddington Basin,

Brindley Place in Birmingham and Camden.

However, these percentage figures should be treated with a degree of caution: the actual numbers of visits, pre-lockdown, in the top three inner-city areas are tiny compared to more popular locations and, even now, during lockdown they are comparable to many other locations; some other popular locations; Stratford on Avon, Brecon show increased numbers of visits; and other inner-city areas; Coventry, Sheffield, Leicester and Leeds show falls in visitor numbers, as towpaths are no longer being used for commuting or lunchtime breaks.

Area	Average Daily Count		
	Baseline before lockdown	Post lockdown 21st March	% Change
Burnley	97	350	261%
Sandwell	52	156	199%
Blackburn	194	555	187%
Milton Keynes	84	229	172%
Torfaen	416	1028	147%
Wolverhampton	125	291	132%
Walsall	89	205	130%
Birmingham (Inner)	463	1024	121%
Tottenham Hale	1051	2248	114%
Ilkeston	314	595	90%
Liverpool	236	440	87%
London (West)	948	1424	50%
Pocklington	126	171	36%
York	1557	2078	33%
Stratford-upon-Avon	361	471	30%
Brecon	495	585	18%
Nottingham	297	342	15%
Manchester	748	830	11%
Brent	1671	1740	4%
Stockton-on-Tees	623	584	-6%
Coventry	208	186	-11%
Devizes	431	373	-13%
Saul Junction	241	185	-23%
Sheffield	602	433	-28%
Leicester	570	409	-28%
Leeds	2438	1561	-36%
Pontcysyllte WHS	610	380	-38%
London (Camden)	5173	2729	-47%
Birmingham (Central)	2567	1241	-52%
London Paddington	11224	3094	-72%

# Impact of Restrictions on Waterway Businesses

Write to your MP

Please write to your MP to raise concerns you may have for the waterway businesses and organisations in your local area.

You may want to include some of the following points as part of your letter, but it is best if each letter is unique.

## The key issues

- The inland waterway leisure industry is worth approximately £1.5bn to the economy but waterway businesses are disproportionately impacted because the majority do not qualify for existing Government support. They have little or no access to the grants, loan schemes or rates rebates currently being offered by Government. Business owners are wary of taking on loans which would have to be paid back next year despite having lost this year's income.
- The high dependency on income during the spring and summer means that the Covid-19 crisis has hit at the worst possible time, with annual expenditure for maintenance and running costs having already been paid out over the winter.
- Most waterway businesses have had to cease trading while the current restrictions are in place. Some have already closed permanently, with many more at significant risk of collapse before the end of the year.

## What we want from Government:

- A financial package, similar to that offered to the fishing industry, to enable navigation authorities to underwrite licence and mooring fees for waterway businesses for this year. This would relieve businesses of a significant cost and allow navigation authorities to continue to maintain the waterways so that everyone can safely use them when the restrictions are over.
- Additional financial schemes for the businesses that are still falling between the gaps of the grants and loans already on offer.

## Please ask your MP to:

- Raise this matter with George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment Food & Rural Affairs, and Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer;
- Attend the next meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways on this important topic.



Photo: Bradford Wharf Services

You can find out who your MP is, and how best to contact them, by looking at the Parliamentary website: [members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP](https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP).



## NABO at the user groups

## Meeting with CRT's Head of Boating

Mike Rodd and Mark Tizard have a catch-up call with Matthew Symonds, CRT's Head of Boating, joined by his deputy, Rachel Haywood.

- Approximately one third of CRT staff have been furloughed and the Trust is topping up the 20% to ensure that all staff continue to receive full pay.
- CRT has given trade/hire businesses a three-month rebate/refund on trade licence costs.
- The trade rebate, the reduction in income from licences, friends and museums, and a fall in property investment rentals/values have resulted in CRT facing some financial constraints, which are difficult as yet to quantify.
- There are currently no plans to offer a payment holiday for leisure licence holders as it is unclear how many have been impacted. CRT is asking all licence holders who are in financial difficulty to get in touch to discuss a revised payment plan (note: this is a deferral not a withdrawal). Boaters are urged not to cancel their direct debits, as this would cause difficulties for both CRT and the boaters concerned, but to contact the Trust. CRT will also offer advice on how to access other support if it is able to. These plans will be reviewed should the lockdown continue for longer than is currently envisaged.
- With a few minor exceptions, the winter stoppage programme has been completed. There was some discussion about extending the boating 'season' by deferring winter stoppages to enable boats to cruise later in the year.
- Matthew reported receiving many emails re towpath safety, many of which had been very vociferous and often abusive. The issue had become more manageable with improved posters and banners, which seemed to be working, and with CRT's advice that liveboard boaters could move to quieter areas.
- The work at Toddbrook is to be planned over several years, and other similar reservoirs have been subject to inspection and lowered water levels. This is not currently expected to have a material financial effect on other engineering works, dredging etc.
- Matthew advised that it was too early to understand whether the current emergency would impact future Government grant funding, but it was hoped that the importance of the towpath for exercise and 'wellbeing', and CRT's management of its liveboard customers would be seen in a positive light.
- CRT will continue to maintain the Bridgwater and Taunton canal but give up the lease on Bridgwater Docks. There are ongoing discussions around CRT managing moorings.
- BSS discussions are also ongoing with all interested parties. CRT is concerned as a BSS certificate is currently a condition to obtain a licence (the same for most marinas and insurers). All agreed that there might be an impact on licence/insurance/mooring renewals if there is insufficient allowance made for boaters to obtain a BSS certificate and to get any remedial work done once the lockdown is withdrawn.
- Mike pointed out that the EA appeared to be adopting many of CRT's practices and Matthew confirmed that CRT is offering advice in many areas when asked. He was also aware that the EA was tendering for management of moorings and enforcement and he would look at the outcomes.
- Mark noted that the virus had shown how important towpath services are, given that many marinas had closed and some closures might be permanent. He hoped that CRT would take this into consideration in its thoughts about the future provision of facilities (the internal report on this, which was due to be discussed, has been delayed). The two tenders for removal of waste and maintenance of facilities are due to be awarded shortly. This should lead to improvements in areas such as recycling.

## NABO at the user groups

## National Inland Navigation Forum

Mike Rodd reports back from the meeting

The NINF met via a teleconference on Saturday 28th March, with most member organisations represented. This forum continues to be a useful platform for the various bodies to exchange views, bringing together the navigation bodies, CRT, EA and other waterways' organisations having current active members, including The Barge Association, the Association of Waterway Cruising Clubs, NABO, the Great Ouse Boating Association, the Historic Narrow Boat Club, the Commercial Boat Operators' Association, the IWA and the Residential Boat Owners' Association.

The meeting attempted to look positively toward the future, but recognised that the present crisis would both be with us for longer than presently anticipated and would inevitably impact on the years ahead. The situation regarding the future funding by Government for all waterways authorities meant that we, as the representatives of most boating organisations, needed to be seen to be joined together and getting behind the bids by CRT and EA.

Part of this had to be via direct contact with MPs and local councils and, once again, it was felt that all bodies should be invited to attend all meetings of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways, as it appeared that most had

not been invited to recent meetings. The General Secretary would contact IWA about this failing. It was also agreed that having a separate Parliamentary Group covering the Thames was not necessary.

The question of creating additional residential moorings was discussed in some detail and members strongly supported the view that this should be encouraged, especially given that the (only?) growth in the number of boats being purchased was for use as prime residences. Indeed, this was probably the reason why many boat builders were still in business!

It was agreed to support the recent changes promoting the use of smokeless coal and properly seasoned wood, by banning the sales of products that do not satisfy these requirements. It was also agreed to monitor the red diesel situation, noting that the proposed changes could have serious impacts for many users, including effects on commercial boats.

Once again, the issue of short-term boat rentals (mainly via Airbnb) was highlighted and it was agreed that NINF would support all attempts by the navigational authorities to regulate this, where possible. It was noted, however, that some marina operators were actually encouraging the present bad (and questionably illegal) practice!

## This is How Boaters' Reps Should Work

Having seen the poster that CRT suggested boaters should print out—a corporate blue background with a few white letters that is expensive in its use of ink and impractical, and obviously designed and approved by non-boaters—Mark Tizard contacted Helen. She passed the comments on and well done to CRT for taking them on board and changing it.





## April Updates by the EA and CRT

The strategic review of the EA boat registration charges has been postponed and a new charge scheme will be delayed until 2022. Boaters who are navigating rivers to access essential services or facilities should take care in case of unmarked hazards or obstructions to navigation, such as fallen trees and shoals.

Reduced operations by its staff mean that the EA is unable to respond to these as normal. EA staff will not provide assisted passage at locks that can be self-operated and they will only operate locks where they are obliged to provide this service. From 9th April until further notice, the EA has introduced lock restrictions at Abingdon, Marsh, Hambleden, Cookham, Bell Weir, Sunbury and Teddington Locks. Passage through locks at Hambleden, Cookham, Bell Weir and Teddington is by prior arrangement and on an exceptional basis only. This can be sought by emailing [WaterwaysThames@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:WaterwaysThames@environment-agency.gov.uk) or telephoning 03708 506 506, although there may be considerable delays in facilitating requests. Passage is not possible through Marsh Lock, which has a tree blocking boat passage, and Abingdon Lock, which has been damaged through misuse by a boater. Sunbury Lock has a sunken boat in the main channel above the lock cut. These locks will be reopened when the EA operations teams are able to recommence their activities.

CRT and the EA have extended BSS certification until 11th May for boaters whose certificates have expired or are about to expire. The situation will then be reviewed. Boat owners are advised to check any implications for their boat's insurance cover, linked to the temporary waiver of BSS certification, with their broker or underwriter. For more information, visit the BSS website at [www.boatsafety.org](http://www.boatsafety.org). On the matter of insurance and any clauses relating to leaving a boat unoccupied for a length of time, CRT subsequently suggested that boaters should speak directly to their insurance provider, believing it likely that insurers would not be unreasonable, given that boaters are following Government guidelines not to visit second homes or make non-essential journeys.

All CRT licences will be extended by one

month from their current expiry date. With the crisis affecting the Trust's income, it is asking those who are able to afford it, to donate the extra month's licence fee back to the Trust, using the 'donate' button on its website.

CRT has adjusted its mowing regimes, with cutting only at locks, landings and moorings (deemed essential for safe access). General towpath grass cutting will be deemed non-essential. Cutting from the nearest access point to towpath moorings, to ensure access is maintained, will be from the water's edge to 500mm behind the towpath. (Mowing regime maps can be found at <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk>, search 'Mowing regimes')

### Information for those living on their boat

CRT is continuing to maintain essential boating facilities, and services can be found at [canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/boating-services](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/boating-services).

Pump-out cards can still be purchased from CRT's online shop at [shop.canalrivertrust.org.uk/shop](http://shop.canalrivertrust.org.uk/shop). A list of privately-operated facilities can be found at [tiny.cc/fbmlz](http://tiny.cc/fbmlz). CRT will update the list of facilities that are open. If boaters know of facilities that are not listed, they should inform CRT via the online webform [canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us).

There are increasing reports of fly-tipping and pollution incidents and CRT has reminded boaters that, regardless of the usual method of disposal (pump-out, Elsan, composting etc.), under no circumstances should sewage be emptied into a waterway. If boaters see any instances of fly-tipping or pollution, please report them at [canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us/reporting-litter-weeds-and-pollution](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us/reporting-litter-weeds-and-pollution).

Self-isolating on a boat: CRT is proactively contacting boaters who are known to be in a high-risk group, including those with equality adjustments, those who are pregnant, and those who are over 70. Anyone who lives on their boat and falls into one of these categories should contact CRT to obtain support at [www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable). There is a Facebook group [www.facebook.com/Boaters-Covid-Support-National-Network-102792934713394](https://www.facebook.com/Boaters-Covid-Support-National-Network-102792934713394)

## Non-governmental agencies and charities that offer free help and advice

### Waterways Chaplain

Emergency contact through contact form at [www.waterwayschaplaincy.org.uk](http://www.waterwayschaplaincy.org.uk)

### Shelter

0800 800 4444  
[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

### Samaritans

116 123  
[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

### Salvation Army

0207 3674500  
[www.salvationarmy.org.uk](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk)

### Citizens Advice Bureau

03444 111 444  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### The Money Advice Service

0300 500 5000  
[www.moneyadvice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadvice.org.uk)

### Christians Against Poverty

01274 760720  
[www.capuk.org](http://www.capuk.org)

### Age UK

0800 169 6565  
[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

### Civil Legal Advice

0345 345 4345  
[www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice](http://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice)

### Silverline

24hr helpline for older people  
0800 470 8090

that is compiling a list of the help available to boaters around the network. There is also a range of support from the Government, available for

those who are experiencing financial hardship due to the virus, more information on the CRT website [tiny.cc/vlmloz](http://tiny.cc/vlmloz).

## Uncertainty in Bridgwater

The future of Bridgwater Docks has become uncertain as CRT will not renew the lease when it expires in July due to the cost of maintaining the docks in the long-term. It will work with Somerset County Council to find alternative ways of managing the docks to safeguard their future once the lease expires.

Volunteers already have a role at the site and a voluntary group or organisation taking a more active role to manage and maintain it is one possible option, particularly as they may be able to bid for funding that's not available to the County Council.

Bridgwater Mercury

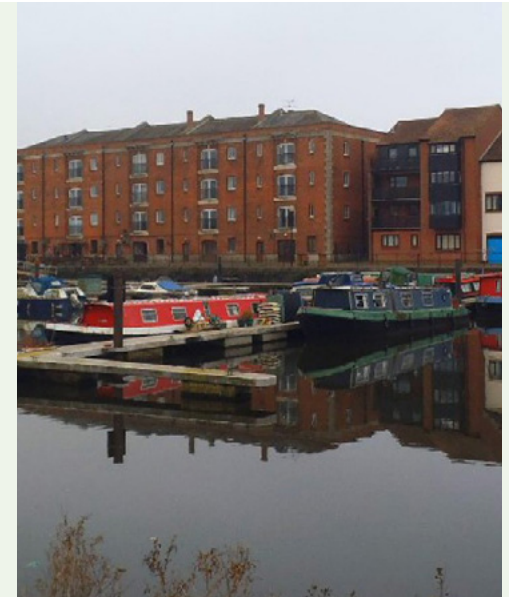


Photo: CRT

# The IWA looks into the future of boat propulsion

Peter Fellows reviews a recent report

The full report is available at [www.waterways.org.uk/blog/greening\\_our\\_waterways](http://www.waterways.org.uk/blog/greening_our_waterways)

**B**owman Bradley, the leader of IWA's steering group, has produced a report on his vision for more sustainable boating.

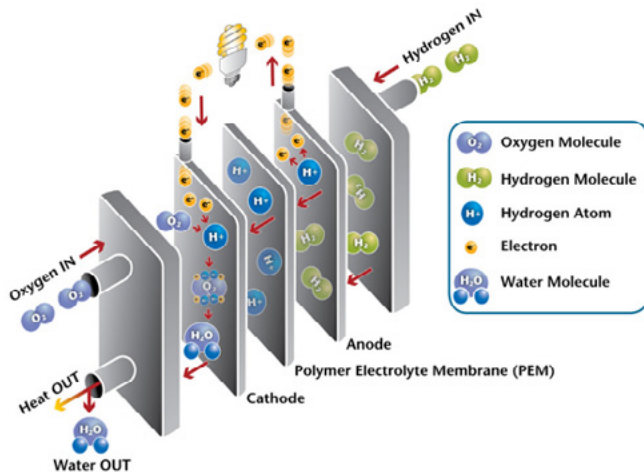
He acknowledges that the overall contribution of inland waterway craft to carbon emissions is small, but it will inevitably come under scrutiny and boaters have a social responsibility to 'do our bit'. His report examines technologies that are currently available, or close to being available, in three categories: new build; the existing fleet; and refuelling/recharging.

## New Build

Bowman believes that it is likely that canal boats in future will be driven by an electric motor; the technology exists and is mature.

There are very few problems installing a battery bank in a narrowboat: weight is not a problem; space is more available than in a car; and power requirements are well within the range of the current technology. The main drawback is cruising range and recharge times, but both will improve. Batteries can be recharged using a shoreline, or by on-board photovoltaic cells or wind turbines. Batteries can also be charged by hydrogen fuel cells. However, there are environmental issues around the manufacture, recycling and disposal of batteries.

Hydrogen is converted into electricity in a fuel cell. The technology is well developed and the size of existing cells can propel a narrowboat. However, currently hydrogen is not 'green' as it is mainly manufactured from hydrocarbons, but it could be made 'semi-green' with CO<sub>2</sub> capture, or it could be manufactured from 'green' electricity. Like LPG, it can be used to power a conventional internal combustion engine, but there are some environmental issues with this, such as NO<sub>x</sub> emissions. The combination of a battery bank and hydrogen fuel cell gives flexibility and reduces the cost of the total installation because of the reduced size of the fuel cell. The cost would currently be higher than a diesel engine, but this will reduce and, in any event, the cost of a propulsion unit is not a high percentage of the cost of a new boat. Hydrogen would give the required range and the capability for fast refuelling.



Hydrogen fuel cell operating principle  
Photo: ASU Renewable Energy Center  
[energy.asu.edu.jo](http://energy.asu.edu.jo)

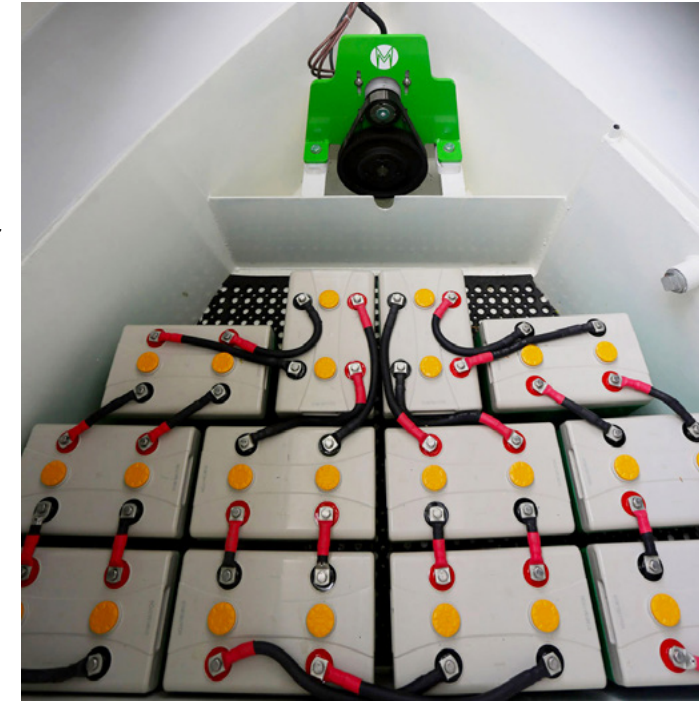
## The Existing Fleet

Boat diesel engines last a long time and owners are likely to be reluctant to convert from diesel to electric drive unless required by legislation to do so, which Bowman believes is unlikely.

So most existing diesel-powered boats will be with us for many years. If we don't want boats to be made obsolete by legislation or owners to be forced into expensive conversions, there needs to be a way of significantly reducing the environmental impact of diesel engines. One such way is to use biodiesel, which, while not being 100% 'green', is an improvement over mineral diesel. But using 100% biodiesel has a number of disadvantages:

- It is manufactured from vegetable oil, commonly palm oil, which makes biodiesel thicker at UK winter temperatures. This is currently not a problem when it is used at low percentages in mineral diesel, but it would be a problem at 100%. Some biodiesels are now being produced which can resist winter temperatures, using a blend of oils.
- Pure biodiesel burns at a lower rate than mineral diesel, which causes problems for high-revving road diesels, but canal boat engines are low-revving and so this should not be a problem.
- Some diesel engines have rubber seals in their fuel systems, which are not resistant to 100% biodiesel. This can be corrected at a cost, and modern engines are biodiesel resistant.
- Biodiesel manufacture requires the use of a small amount of hydrocarbons and so is not 100% 'green', but it is significantly better than mineral diesel.
- Vegetable oils to make biodiesel use land that could be given over to food production but the

amount of diesel used on inland waterways is relatively small, so this may be acceptable.



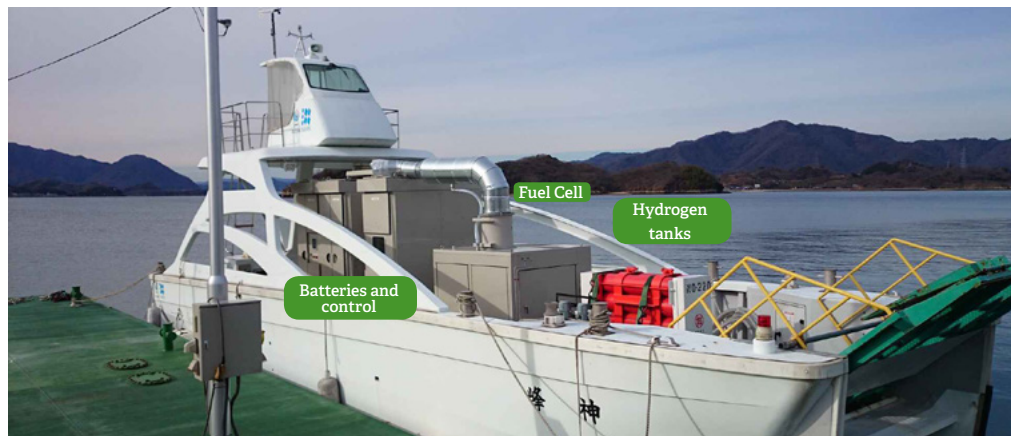
## Refuelling and Recharging

Significant capital investment will be required for refuelling with both an electric recharging infrastructure and a hydrogen refuelling infrastructure.

Commercial operators will not invest until the boats exist to use it and private owners will not invest in the boats until the infrastructure is available. It is unlikely that government will provide the finance. Electric charging already exists in most marinas and this is adequate for slow charging of batteries when boats are moored. It would require upgrading for fast charging, in a similar way to road vehicle charging stations, but it is difficult to imagine every visitor mooring being

Electric motor and battery bank  
Photo: Mothership Marine  
[mothershipmarine.com](http://mothershipmarine.com)





Yanmar trials a hydrogen-fuelled propulsion system  
Photo: yanmar.com

equipped with such charging points.

Hydrogen refuelling is more problematic and currently does not exist on the system. It needs a distribution system, probably tankers, and will be more costly than red diesel pumps, but the technology is available. It may be possible to develop a network of hydrogen refuelling stations at hire fleet bases, if enough hire companies could be persuaded to use hydrogen boats.

### The views of Mike Rodd CEng

Whilst I enjoyed the technical content of this article from the IWA, I am concerned about its implied support for the current barrage of emotionally-charged environmental initiatives, led (for example) by the Mayor of London.

The paper seems to imply how polluting our boats are, which simply provides the eco-warriors with 'ammunition,' while ignoring the fact that the overall pollution created by boats, compared with other forms of transport and accommodation, is minimal.

Indeed, in London the overall pollution caused by all the boats together is probably less than that derived from a handful of diesel-

powered buses!

Certainly—as NABO has said in the past—there are ways of cutting the pollution caused by boats. Applying smokeless zone control requirements to all boats in all areas would certainly reduce pollution. Also, including emission tests during the four-yearly BSS inspections would be very beneficial.

However, a blanket requirement to move from diesel to electric power isn't a catch-all panacea—particularly for existing boats. What is normally (and conveniently) ignored by the eco-warriors are the considerable ecological costs involved in extracting the required raw materials, many of them rare, that are needed to manufacture the electronics and especially the batteries, together with the environmental cost of transporting them and installing them. Also ignored is that boat engines have a long life, and that replacing them sooner than necessary would simply increase their lifetime pollution costs.

Boaters are amongst the most environmentally-aware communities, so it's senseless to attack them by encouraging regulations that will be meaningless in the long term.

## On-board induction cooking

Stephen Peters is in the galley.

Like most boat owners, my cooking requirements have until recently been met by using a gas cooker and/or microwave oven.

In my case, the cooker is an elderly Flavel Vanessa LPG stove with two burners, a grill and an oven. It still works well and is in good condition, considering it is over 20 years old. However, it does not have flame-failure protection on the burners (which is a requirement for all new cookers) and the pan-support grid was starting to get rusty until I had it re-chromed. Not being a fan of using LPG on-board, I acquired a portable electric induction hob, which now caters for most of my cooking requirements. And I would recommend anyone with access to 240VAC power to consider following my lead.

The model I have on my boat is a Tefal single-hob, which costs about £49. It is small enough to sit on a worktop and can be stored away when not required. It has a maximum power requirement of 2100W and nine power levels that draw less current. There are also a number of pre-set power settings for heating, stewing and frying. Most users will prefer the controllable manual mode and, once a pan has reached boiling point, you can select a low setting for simmering.

Experience has revealed a few minor drawbacks—the first being the shiny ceramic hob, which could result in a pan sliding off if your boat rocked. I consider this not to be a problem when used on calm inland waters but I could not recommend it on tidal waters. The second criticism

is that the lowest power setting, although satisfactory for simmering or heating-up soups, is too hot for heating milk, which burns and caramelises in the pan. The answer is to find a brand with lower power settings.

I have recently done precisely that and bought a 'Tillreda' induction hob from IKEA, priced £39, which has lower power settings and is far more controllable and simpler to operate.

The only problem with this appliance is its larger space requirement, although it has provision for storing the cable and a handle which acts as a hanger for storage. I use this one at home for my everyday cooking requirements as I know it would take up too much of my worktop area on the boat.

Induction hobs will, of course, only work with compatible saucepans but this need not present a problem. Many pans are marketed as suitable for induction hobs and it is possible to buy quite cheap stainless-steel pans from many discount stores. Induction cooking is fast, efficient, clean and safer than gas and I can recommend it.



Portable induction hob  
Photo: Ikea

# A passage to the North East

Part 1: Evesham to Ripon, the top of the network east of the Pennines.

Helen Hutt recounts her greatest challenge after 14 years of continuous cruising.

To achieve this, the Trent had to be conquered. Tackling this great river single-handed had always filled me with trepidation, despite having cruised the Thames from Limehouse to Lechlade, and the Severn, Wey and Soar. I needn't have worried.

Two and a half weeks after leaving my mooring in Evesham, via the Avon, Severn, Staffs & Worcs and Trent & Mersey, I reached Sawley Marina, filled up with diesel and bought the Trent and Ouse guide books. Moored overnight in Sawley Cut, I hardly slept thinking of the adventure to come. But on a glorious May morning I set off down the river into new territory, through two locks and into Beeston Cut, and moored on the outskirts of Nottingham for a couple of days (sadly Nottingham Castle was closed for renovations).

On unfamiliar water, it's always comforting to buddy up with another boat, so I was delighted to see one pull out ahead of me towards Castle Lock. Despite acknowledging

my presence, the crew opened only one gate, at which point I realised they were novices. Waiting for them to sort themselves out and open the offside gate, Pipistrelle was dragged onto the weir overflow. After full throttling and two men trying in vain to pull the boat into the lock, I decided to back off and try again. I left them to it after the lock.

## On the Trent

On the Trent, there was an hour's hold-up at Holme Lock waiting for a tug towing a barge to come through.

That was my first encounter with a big barge on the river and I'm glad I didn't have any more! Then, an uneventful journey to Newark (where a tour of the Castle ruins revealed it wasn't built as a castle at all, but as a residence for the Bishop of Lincoln, in 1129) and on through Cromwell Lock onto the tidal Trent—and the potentially scariest bit of the journey. Turning off the river into Torksey Cut for an overnight stop was much easier than expected; re-

Leaving Cromwell Lock  
Photo: Helen Hutt



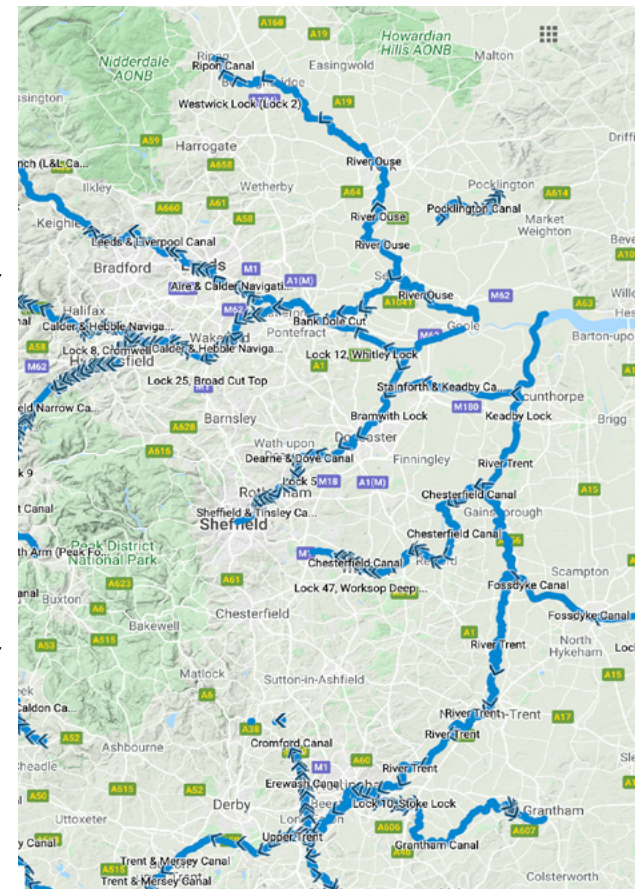
versing out onto the river less so—I did an elegant 360° pirouette before pointing in the right direction again and fought the tide for the first hour or so en route to Keadby Lock. So many power stations, pylons and turbines made the more than four-hour trip rather unattractive; then we had to dawdle for nearly an hour waiting for the lock because only one sluice was working. So, plenty of time to practise in my head that upstream approach and positioning for the turn into Keadby Lock—tricky but successfully executed.

The Stainforth & Keadby Canal, part of South Yorkshire Navigation, was a revelation. It is so wide that, even though moored on pins, one barely felt another boat passing—not that there were many! The scenery wasn't great, with Keadby power station seeming ever-present, but Vazon sliding railway bridge was fascinating. Built in 1925, it is one of only three in Europe, and clears the water by a mere 2ft. Controlled from a signal box, winches slide the bridge deck sideways to clear the navigation. Luckily, I went through with two other boats, whose crews took turns to operate the ensuing swing bridges.

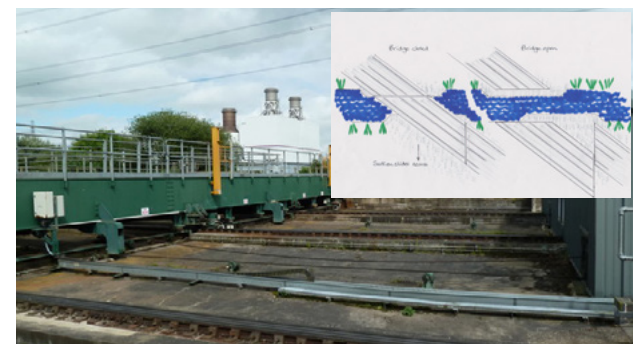
My first overnight stop was at Thorne. The engine had seemed noisy during the day, so I checked the fan belts etc., and found the bolts on the generator bracket had sheared. Fortunately, there is a boatyard right next to the visitor mooring, where I was able to get the bolts replaced the following day. But I'm not always so blessed—reversing back into the pontoon mooring, I got a jacket wrapped around the prop.

## Now for the Big Locks

Every one long enough to take an oil tanker and electrically operated, but the control box always seemed to be on the wrong side!



Waterways of the North East Map: [opencanalmap.org.uk/Google](http://opencanalmap.org.uk/Google)



To allow boats to pass, the whole deck of the Vazon bridge slides sideways on rails, pulled by steel cables.

Photo: Chris Allen/Geograph, Drawing by Helen





Rain on the River Don  
Photo: Helen Hutt

Then I held up the road traffic for ages while operating Barnby Dun lift bridge. After Doncaster (visitor moorings surprisingly limited) we were onto the River Don section, pretty but lonely, with very little boat traffic, and I found a very nice, quiet mooring just after Mexborough Low Lock.

After Eastwood Lock the navigation enters Rotherham Cut and the first manual lock appears, with its disconnected lock landing. I had to moor up overnight before doing

the Tinsley flight, for which passage had to be booked in advance. I was advised to stop on the upstream mooring at Ickles Lock (which was very vicious) and meet the CRT lock-keeper at Holmes Lock the following morning. We were penned up the flight and booked the return passage. It started raining just after the last lock, so I was completely soaked on arrival at Victoria Quay in Sheffield. There were rather limited 48-hour moorings here, managed privately, but I made the most of my

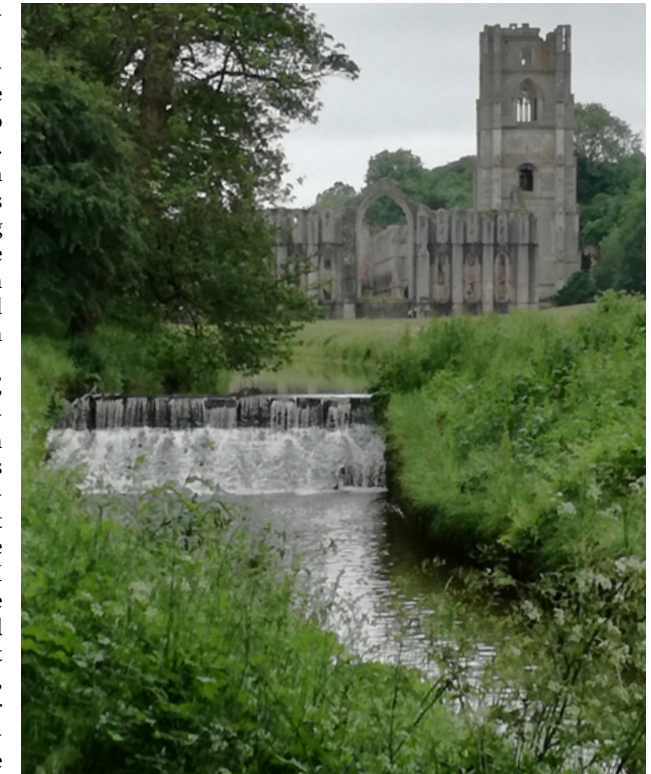
time in Sheffield despite the continuing rain.

Returning to Tinsley with another boat, Jubilee Bridge, the CRT lock-keeper was nowhere to be found. And it was still raining. Finally, we got on the move, through Rotherham, and then disaster! JB's accelerator cable broke on leaving Aldwarke Lock; I waited while the owner fixed it and we got off again at 5pm. It had rained heavily all day and the River Don was now in 'Orange'.

The next day it was just in 'Red', but a call to CRT to check the situation resulted in their local man helping me through all three locks to Doncaster! After a stop on the 72-hour mooring there, and another at Long Sandall, I continued onto the New Junction Canal. Before long I had a huge oil barge following me heading for Goole and was asked to tie up to let it pass. Turning left onto the Aire & Calder Navigation, the waterway seemed even wider and the wildlife was splendid: yellowhammers, goldfinches, little egrets and a stoat at Bank Dole lock at Knottingley, where the navigation joins the River Aire. After a pleasant run to West Haddesley Lock, we joined the very weedy and completely deserted Selby Canal.

From Selby Basin I had intended to turn south on the River Ouse to cruise the Pocklington Canal but was persuaded not to by Butch, a boater who had just tried it! Apparently, it was like thick pea soup, with nothing visible over the banks, so he had given up, winded with great difficulty, and returned to Selby. Here, the tide conditions have to be right before locking through onto the river. I was lucky but another boat in the basin, Tee Jay, had been waiting for five days.

I tied up on the Naburn Lock visitor moorings and caught a bus into



York to check out moorings there. The weather was now very hot and dry, so the river was unlikely to rise over the next few days, and I left Pipistrelle moored near the railway bridge for a few days. My next stop was Boroughbridge, before continuing through Oxclose Lock, with the aforementioned Tee Jay, onto the 2-mile long Ripon Canal to Ripon itself—the most northerly point on the network. It felt like a great achievement to get this far, and I stayed for two days to explore the area, including the glorious Fountains Abbey and Ripon Cathedral.

Fountains Abbey at Ripon  
Photo: Helen Hutt

I'll tell you about my return journey, via the Chesterfield Canal and The Wash, in the next issue of NABO News.

Ever present power stations  
Photo: Helen Hutt





## Yet more on CO

David Fletcher has news of a study to monitor CO in boats.

Carbon monoxide (CO) continues to kill several boaters every year. The BSS requirement for alarms was introduced last year, accompanied by a significant press campaign, but there continue to be incidents, and the number of boats failing examination on this point continues to disappoint.

The highest numbers of failures on private boats concern the amount of fixed ventilation. If this is your boat, you are at risk because there is not enough air movement to disperse the small amounts of CO contamination that are inevitable. Remember that the BSS is not about your safety; it is about the navigation authority discharging its duty of care to others.

Previously, I have talked about wanting to run some tests using CO monitors that record all levels of CO, so that we can see what the background level of this gas is in the normal living environment of our boats. There is a good deal that we do not understand about low levels of CO and the effects of ventilation and air change in boat cabins. We are measuring CO levels at parts per million (ppm)—50ppm can make you very ill. The high-risk sources are petrol engines and solid fuel stoves, but any combustion equipment can kill if it is misused or not maintained.

All combustion generates some CO, but a well-maintained cooker generally produces very little, and the fixed ventilation allows air change to disperse fumes. The CO alarms are typically set to go off at

70ppm after 1 hour, so that there is no nuisance alarm. But it doesn't mean that there is no CO. The concern is that little is known about the lower safety thresholds of long-term low level exposure.

Some BSS examiners have been carrying monitors during inspections for their own protection; they don't know what they are facing as they enter a boat. They have found that gas grills give off a spike of CO when they are first lit. This is because the metal is cold, and this causes incomplete combustion. It can also happen if a large kettle or pan of cold water is placed on a gas 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 and the weather is poor with windows shut, there will be detectable CO in the galley. Graph 1 shows CO in a galley using a monitor.

A major new study is to start this year with boaters in London looking at CO levels, particularly the low levels that come from sources such as gas cooking, solid-fuel stoves, or wind-carried exhausts from adjacent boats and generators.

CO monitors 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.

But we wanted to get ahead of this and understand what is going on. There is no use having a lot of graphs if there is no information on what is happening in or around the boats. So we need good feedback



CO data logger

Photo: Lascar Electronics [www.lascarelectronics.com](http://www.lascarelectronics.com)

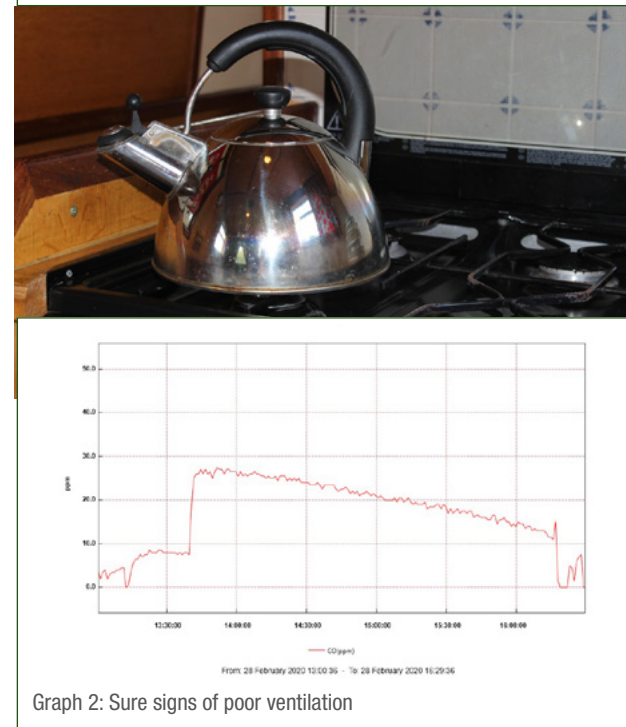
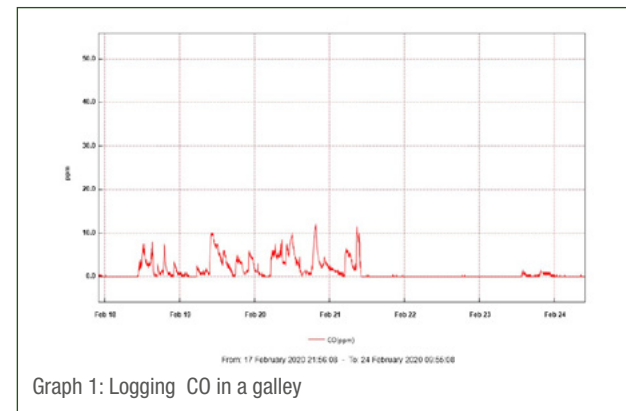
from the boat owner along with the reports, to understand the boat, the ventilation, the kit on board, and the environment around it. Then we can relate the peaks to real events. This second part, to relate peaks or high levels to actual events or causes, is much more problematic.

We have had a number of these recording devices in use this spring and we are learning how to use them, where to place them and the reliability of doing these tests. The devices record data and we can produce a graph of the readings over time, showing the extent and frequency of spikes and how quickly the spike drops. What we don't want to see is elevated levels of CO hanging around for hours. This would indicate a leak, where CO is getting into the boat continuously, or poor ventilation that prevents CO dispersing as shown in Graph 2.

### What can you do?

- Make sure your alarm(s) meet the BSS requirements and test them often by pressing the button.
- Think about and plan what to do if an alarm goes off.
- If your ventilation does not meet the requirements, get the extra grills put in. An easy way is to leave a top gutter window open, fixed open with a stop.
- If your ventilation is not up to standard, get it fixed.
- Maintain your stoves, cooker, heater etc.

If you are getting persistent headaches when on board, think about what is going on and check, check, check—it could save a life.





## TECHIE'S



## CORNER

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

## What needs checking when you get back to the boat?

**Tony Brooks** looks forward to cruising again



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

The answer to that depends upon two things: did you prepare it for winter thoroughly and did you get a chance to de-winterise it and get it ready for the 'season'?

If the answer to either of those questions is "no", then what needs doing will simply be that part of your normal routine that has been left unfinished. But if the answer to both is "yes",

then there will hopefully be little to check. Luckily, there has been no really cold weather since the lockdown started, so there should be no frost damage to worry about. But the recent string of really warm days and colder nights may well have encouraged condensation, particularly in the fuel tank. So, even if you drained any water from the fuel tank in the autumn, it would be a very good idea to check it as soon as you get back. I use a syphon or 'Pella' oil extractor to get into the lowest tank corners. While you are doing that, if you have a flush fuel filler, change the sealing 'O'-ring and dress the seal and thread with silicon grease to ensure that rain cannot leak into the tank.



Photo: Peter Fellows

Checking the accommodation bilge for water, from leaks or condensation, should be routine, but you may find more than you expect if you have not been on the boat since last year. One thing that does concern me is if the batteries have been left on a shoreline or solar charger for a long period without attention, especially if the batteries have been in use for a few years. The danger is that, if a cell has started shorting, it might now be very dry. If it is, there is a very good chance it will be producing hydrogen sulphide. If suddenly asked to provide current, it might actually explode. Hydrogen sulphide smells of rotten eggs, makes copper tarnish silver, and is very dangerous, so when you get to the boat, check for that smell and for bright metal that is tarnishing. If you find either, immediately stop charging and ventilate the battery area. Then, when the smell has cleared, check the batteries for one that is warmer than the rest and, if they are not sealed, look for any cells that are much dryer than the rest. Take the faulty battery out of use.

If you habitually store items on the roof, it may be a good idea to check the paintwork underneath them for micro-blistering, which is caused by water being held against the paint for long periods. This is more common when we have a few weeks of frozen snow on the roof, but it happens under carpets on open decks and under stuff stored on the roof, especially after the heavy rain in February.

## Rewind

Issue No 3, 2005

Howard Anguish explores NABO News from 15 years ago.

In his **Chairman's Column**, NABO Chairman raised a point—just as relevant these days as it was in 2005. *"Some BW managers still think they go to meetings (with boaters) to impart information rather than to acquire it"*. How true—especially at some local user forums—with notable exceptions. It was particularly true when BW started consulting, where impossible deadlines were set for comments.

During March 2005, **Tony Haynes** reported that the **Basingstoke Canal Watch Scheme** was launched to counter increasing vandalism and unacceptable behaviour on the waterway, especially from children, which was threatening the enjoyment of local people in such a peaceful place. The introduction of the scheme resulted in almost immediate success, helped in no small part by the suggestion from local police that, although they had no powers to pull in under-age children for finger printing, they did have them in for DNA testing. I wonder if this approach would still be considered appropriate—interesting!

At a **Boating Issues** meeting with BW, among other issues being talked about, including the 'Veg Pledge' and red diesel (yes, it was being discussed, even in 2005), were licence evasion, overstaying on moorings, and the lack of mooring availability. NABO had asked why liveboards were leaving marinas for life on the towpath and, specifically, BW would be advising on the percentage of boats taking up temporary mooring on the Kennet & Avon. BW also advised that new licence holders were now being sent guidance on

continuous cruising *"thereby giving the message that BW is not responsible for funding boaters' moorings"*. There was a general discussion on proposals for time-limited moorings and the implementation of any restrictions; there was even a suggestion that BW introduce parking meters at 'honey-pot' sites! Both NABO and the IWA strongly opposed any charging for the first 24 hours on any towpath mooring.

While discussing marina locations and congestion, BW confirmed that local authorities prefer the expansion of current marinas, rather than new builds—something that seems to have been neglected in more recent years.

There was also a discussion about troubled areas in the north west, and BW provided information about what they were doing to tackle this problem; still work to be done I'm afraid!

For the 'How things have changed' file: an excerpt from a discussion on xenophobia: *"In the past, BWB referred to us as 'Pleasure Craft Tourists' because, to call us 'Boaters' would have been considered a terrible insult!"* Boatmen were thought of as lower working class and a race apart! As the article makes clear, thank goodness things have changed.

Finally, the Chairman, writing in the letters section, initiated a debate on whether NABO ought to consider a name change; with specialist owners' groups springing up over the years, but with others such as share boaters being under-represented. This could be a useful way to expand NABO interests. As he said: food for thought!



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

## Letters to the Editor

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

### Ownership of CRT facilities

The letter from David Phillips, concerning the facilities provided by CRT, has raised several interesting questions, to which I think I know some of the answers, but others which leave me uncertain.

Back in 2006, I had the audacity to take BWB (as it then was) to a VAT Tribunal to question why it levied VAT on River Registrations under the BW Act 1971. The outcome was that I lost my case, as the Tribunal concluded that I was in receipt of services in the form of water points, sewage disposal, etc., along the waterways and that VAT was imposed as a result.

It appears from the response that Mr Phillips received from CRT that his licence fee does NOT pay for such facilities and that their provision is purely discretionary. That assertion by CRT throws a different light on my original contention and I would be delighted to see it in writing as it appears that BWB/CRT adopts two opposing views, depending on which argument they seek to support.

He raises other questions in his letter and, as a student of waterway law and trustee of two local charities, I believe I know some of the answers. Some years ago, NABO paid for Counsel's Opinion on a number of matters relating to the powers of BWB (now CRT) under the Transport Act 1962 and subsequent BW Acts. That advice is available to our members and Mr Phillips should avail himself of it. CRT is a company lim-

ited by guarantee and also a registered charity. Consequently, the trustees are 'directors' of the company. Charity law would not permit them to be paid for these services, but I would expect them to receive reasonable expenses for their duties as trustees. The paid executives of the charity are remunerated and details of their salaries and pension payments can be found in the Trust's 132-page annual report and accounts on the Charity Commission website [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission). As to who owns the assets of the waterways, the answer is the Waterways Infrastructure Trust, of which the CRT is the trustee! Again, the website gives details of this linked charity.

With regard to disposal of CRT charity assets, this can only be effected with the consent of the Charity Commission and has to be in the interests of the charity's objects and in the public interest. Ventures such as BWML, which has now been sold off to a Lloyds Bank subsidiary, and the CIC trading arm are commercial considerations not directly concerned with management or governance of the charity. If any conflicts of interest become apparent, then the trustees are duty bound by charity law to disclose them and to take no part in matters concerning them.

**Stephen Peters**

### Licence extension?

What is NABO's opinion on the possibility of a licence extension? I, and thousands of others who do not live on their boats, have paid for a licence and we are now no longer allowed to use our boats for an indefinite period of time. Like many boaters, I am in the age bracket, as well as having underlying health conditions, where I must isolate for 12 weeks minimum. I have therefore laid out in the region of £1,000 for a licence and for the foreseeable future cannot use the facility that the licence covers. Of course, I appreciate that the waterways and facilities still need to be maintained for those who live on their boats, but the

use of same is going to be dramatically reduced. CRT's 2018/19 accounts show an income from boat licences in the order of £21m, so the cost to CRT of extending licences for three months would be less than £5.5m (at 2018/19 prices). £5.5m, in the context of trillions that Covid-19 is costing, is very small fry, but does CRT have the balls to ask Government?

I have obviously ignored any costs to CRT or the Government for hire licences, traders (who I note are receiving a refund on their trader's portion of their licence) and the cost to businesses, such as boatyards and hire companies, that may be calling upon the Government's help pot, as my concern in this case is for the private boater. I think that CRT should look to extending licences by say three months (at present) and make a claim from the Government's Covid-19 fund for any financial loss to them by allowing an extension.

Looking forward to NABO's views.

Best regards and hoping all are well.

**Peter Caswell**

*General Secretary, Mark Tizard replied:*

Hi Peter, thanks for your email.

We have discussed this recently among Council members in the light of CRT's recent announcement of a three-month licence rebate for the licensed trading boats. After the initial panic, where we saw CRT issuing multiple press releases with mixed messages, we feel they have been proactive and have been managing this fast-moving situation well. We take on board that leisure boaters are likely to be prohibited from using their boats for a period of three months while, in the majority of cases, being required to pay for moorings and other ongoing costs. However, after the Toddbrook reservoir disaster and subsequent storms, CRT is already stretched, and the majority of its investments are linked to commercial property, which is also likely to be adversely affected by the current emergency. Finances are likely to be very tight for CRT as well as for many of its boating customers.

With the above in mind, our view is that CRT should continue to require boats to be licensed and boaters to pay as they currently do. However, NABO strongly supports CRT's declared intention to be flexible with payments for boaters in financial difficulties as a result of the current cri-

sis. This was confirmed in a recent email from Matthew Symonds, Head of Boating: "We have finalised a process that our licence support officers can use to support boaters who may be facing financial difficulties at this time. We're asking boaters in this position to contact us to discuss how we can help them. Support may include deferred payments, payment plans and help identifying support from Government schemes or other sources."

Should the boating lockdown continue beyond three months, NABO will certainly review this. We will be supporting CRT in any request to Government for financial support.

*Peter replied:*

Things have developed since your reply, and it is now looking likely that us extremely vulnerable folk are going to be locked up for 12 months. As sympathetic as I am to CRT's cash problems and the wellbeing of the canals, it is not within my financial means to fund a service I am not using, so I am glad you said NABO would review the situation if it goes on beyond three months. I really don't know what I am going to do: to have the boat craned out (and back in) and put on hard standing, with the cost per month of same, is going to cost as much as a licence probably, and then there are the logistics of actually doing this. I would guess there is going to be very little demand on the second-hand boat market for a long while, so selling the boat, which I really do not want to do, but may well have to consider, is a possibility.

Boats are like cars to the extent that if they are just left moored/parked without use they rapidly deteriorate. Already, there are issues such as not being able to go to the boat to charge batteries, check stern glands, bilge pumps, any water ingress, deal with any damage to paintwork, canopies etc. etc. I will be contacting my insurance company to seek their views on this.

Of course I am also aware that, compared to people losing their life or their livelihood in this crisis, one's leisure pursuit is of little consequence, but we all have to look after our finances, especially when they are fixed as in a pension. Lord knows what is going to happen to the value of them, and a boat being the second most expensive item that I own and the most expensive in maintenance costs.

### I name this boat ...

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





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