



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 4 July 2021



CRT's licence T and Cs
Vegetation management
(again)
Heritage update



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Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images in JPEG format please. Please email your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk or post to the Editor by September 11th 2021.

Cover photo

This month's photo is a the Huddersfield Narrow Canal through the centre of Slaithwaite taken by Val Fletcher.

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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Two aspects have dominated NABO's work since the last issue: CRT's new licence terms and conditions and the threats to the waterway heritage.

The T&Cs continue to exercise people who realise the significance of the changes—unfortunately not the majority of boaters. I've included correspondence between Mike Rodd and CRT's Head of Customer Service Support, and David Fletcher gives a 'blow-by-blow' account of events over the weeks from the end of May. Anne Husar has written a

Time for a rethink?

Editor, **Peter Fellows**, considers an alternative to the present CRT structure

letter to members, outlining the four areas where NABO is unhappy and asking for your feedback. The new T&Cs made Mark Tizard look back over changes in CRT's enforcement policy for movement of boats without a home mooring, concluding that the vast majority of continuous cruisers are boating below CRT's enforcement radar.

I've been banging on about the loss of historic buildings from the CRT portfolio for years. In this issue, Anne Husar calls on CRT to better care for our historic canal system and its structures. Several members share their disquiet at the loss of heritage: Mark Sullivan and Peter Caswell write letters concerning the Toll House at Pontymoile and the multiple small losses that go unnoticed until their cumulative effect hits you by their absence, and Allan Richards clarifies what is a protected operational asset. The two most recent proposed sales—Pontymoile's toll house and the Stop House at

Braunston—seem different: CRT withdrew the former from auction and is looking for a tenant for the latter. Let's hope this is some sort of epiphany for CRT and from now on it will take its heritage responsibilities more seriously.

Elsewhere, Ken Hylins recalls his own experiences of needing help from medical and care providers while living on a boat and he looks at the impact of moving around on finding care. Matthew Symonds, National Boating Manager, has written to clarify CRT's support for disabled boaters and those with access requirements.

In Techies' Corner, John Devonald looks at some of the reasons that boaters give for not installing solar panels on their roofs. David Fletcher has updated his article from last year on CRT's mowing regimes, asking you to use mowing maps when out on the cut so that we can recommend improvements to specific areas. Ian Hutson also offers some views on towpath vegetation in his own idiosyncratic style and a letter from Ann Street describes the lack of vegetation management on the Llangollen.

This month's Rewind recalls that, despite BW's 'veg pledge', lack of vegetation management was still a problem 15 years ago. Howard Anguish also finds that in 2006 the world was in the grips of the highly contagious Bird Flu disease, triggering fears of a pandemic—plus ça change!

Finally, I've included nomination forms for the autumn AGM—if you want to keep your paper copy of NABO News intact the forms can be photocopied or downloaded from the NABO website. Covid permitting, we look forward to being able to meet you in person for the first time in two years at the AGM.

Happy summer boating.

I must be terribly naïve! In my simple mind, if I were applying to the Government to continue/extend a multimillion ongoing annual grant, I would want my most influential and committed customers to be supporting my application and giving it as much positive publicity as possible.

Not so, CRT or EA, it appears.

As will be known from previous editions of NABO News, both CRT and EA will be applying for further government funding in the next five or six years. In both cases, however, they seem to be hell-bent on ignoring the views of most of the boater representative organisations.

The present situation regarding CRT's current revisions to the Terms and Conditions for boat licences is a classic case. Yes, there was a public consultation—well, sort of, as long as you had good internet access (which of course many boaters don't, denying them the chance to comment—but hey, they are only boaters, so why worry?).

We—and most other boater representative bodies—responded to the consultation with a series of suggestions, as well as some positive support. Much of our response had been validated (at our own expense, of course!) by our legal advisors. Then CRT, without even formally responding to our submission, published their updated T&Cs with a starting date only a few weeks ahead. The document was not only full of silly editorial mistakes, but also ignored most of points we (and others) had made, and suddenly introduced new conditions that had not been in the original consultation document. Bizarre, and absolutely arrogant! All this could have been avoided by simply asking a few organisations like ours to look at what was being proposed. We not only have Councils comprising highly committed canal

users, but also include many highly professional people, with extensive experience in large organisations, and some with useful editing skills!

Since then, after we and others had screamed blue murder, some changes have quietly been made, including the sudden withdrawal of at least two of the ridiculous new clauses that hadn't been part of the



Has any notice been taken of us? Of course not...

Chairman, **Mike Rodd**, compares and contrasts the BSS with navigation authorities

initial consultation (they were inserted "in error", you see). Some editing has also been undertaken on what was previously an embarrassingly shoddy document. However, some serious issues still remain—some of which are, in our legal advisor's opinion, illegal to the point where any appeal would probably be upheld in court.

The London 'Mooring Safety' Consultation

It is interesting that CRT's London consultation, again after ignoring all expert inputs, suddenly resulted in new mooring restrictions on the River Lea.

This time, though, the reactions among the boating fraternity were (not entirely unexpectedly) angry, and many of those boaters who might be directly affected staged a mass demonstration. A review by an independent organisation was speedily set up and, almost as it was reporting back, the changes were put on hold. Again, all this could all have been avoided by talking to appropriate representative organisations. So, has any notice been taken of us? Of course not—CRT knows

Why can't organisations like CRT and the EA behave in a more mature fashion?

better, you see!

On the EA's side, too, we see a similar situation whereby the prime user groups are ignored—including once again NABO. Here, a group of all the boaters' representative organisations on the non-tidal Thames are working closely together, calling for, amongst other things, a change in the way users are represented and hence work alongside the EA. We have also all been fighting the issue of a car parking company being awarded—by way of what we believe to be a very dubious process—the contract to monitor and enforce restrictions on the EA's moorings on the non-tidal Thames.

So, has any notice been taken of us? Of course not—the EA knows better, you see!

As counter-examples, however, there are sectors of both organisations that do really take us seriously, and which welcome—and, indeed, depend on—our involvement. The Boat Safety Scheme is a perfect example of how government-funded organisations like CRT and EA and other navigational authorities can and, indeed, should work. At all levels in the BSS structure, we see boaters, inspecting bodies and national representative bodies represented on all the key committees and, where appropriate, forming expert working groups. From my own personal experience, I know that this is not just a notional involvement, but an active role, in which we are expected to undertake extensive background work: contributing to and then checking and, where nec-

essary, critiquing, any documents that will ultimately go public and form the basis of the whole process of securing safety on the waterways. Of course, we don't get paid for this, but we do it gladly, through our commitment to the betterment and continuing maintenance of the waterways, and the protection of boaters. I can 'sell' the BSS operation to anyone; it's a wonderful model of what can be achieved by co-operation!

Why—I have to keep asking myself—can't this 'grown-up' approach be adopted elsewhere? Why can't organisations like CRT and the EA generally behave in a more mature fashion? Or is their mindset just too irretrievably rooted in a conviction that they alone know what is good for us all?

We are all painfully aware that, given the demands currently facing our government, the future funding of the waterways will be low on its agenda. We thus need to form a unified approach to support CRT, the EA and the other navigational authorities, in taking a united message to each and every MP and publicly demonstrating how valuable we believe the waterways to be. Not just for providing fun for (allegedly) well-off boaters, but also for wider health and wellbeing, and as a unique tourist attraction—both for its beauty and outdoor amenities, but also as a celebration of our culture and a reminder of the heritage that allowed this country to lead the industrial revolution.

Nevertheless, and turning away from these infuriations, we can always hold on to the thought that we are almost out of lockdown, we've had some wonderful sunny days, the fields are lovely and (except for the higher than ever number of canal closures) at last we can get out on our boats.

Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at the June Council meeting

There was a full house at the last Council teleconference meeting before a summer's break. Some councillors had done a lot of work behind the scenes on CRT's revised terms and conditions, but the word from the canals is that most boaters don't know about the changes or don't think they are important.

CRT has made recent alterations to the published T&Cs and there are now different versions with the same date and no indication of which one is current. Councillors agreed that NABO needs to engage with other boating organisations and publicise this issue more widely in the waterways press and on social media.

Despite (or because of?) cavaleries of boaters objecting to the loss of moorings on the River Lea on 'safety' grounds and publicity in the national press, the plans seem to have stalled. But there is little evidence of there being a problem. The number of notified incidents is contested by both local boaters and CRT, but they seem to have involved rowing boats, not moored canal boats.

It seems that there is little interest from anyone to rent the stop house at Braunston for £15,000 p.a. NABO had suggested to CRT that it could be offered to the Landmark Trust but has yet to receive a reply. CRT's newly formed Heritage Advisory Group has no contact details on the Trust's website and the group has given no indication of when it might meet. The Trust also says it doesn't have a list of the heritage buildings that it has sold. All this does not

bode well for the remaining heritage assets that CRT is responsible for.

The high number of unplanned stoppages that were evident after boating resumed in April appears to have eased slightly, with passage now possible on the Trent & Mersey north of Anderton. But problems remain on the Rochdale canal, in the north-east, and restrictions now introduced on the Grand Union. Councillors queried why lock closures are taking place at Hillmorton and on heartbreak hill in Cheshire—some of the most frequently used locks in the country—at the busiest time of the year. But they acknowledged that because these are paired locks, the stoppages should result in fewer delays.

The EA is still ignoring boating organisations and the wheels seem to have come off the organisation, with no-one having any idea of what is happening. Reports are coming in that EA lockkeepers are working to rule and volunteer lockkeepers have become totally disillusioned. Councillors have yet to hear of any members being hit with the newly introduced mooring overstay charge of £150 per day.

The easing of Covid restrictions meant that councillors were able to plan for the first face-to-face meeting in almost two years at Tamworth Boat Club in September. Fly will be off to enjoy some summer cruising until then.

Byeee...



The next Council meeting will hopefully be face-to-face at Tamworth Cruising Club in September (Kettlebrook Road, B77 1BS). Members are welcome to join in the meeting; please just let the Secretary or Chair know in advance (contact details inside cover).

The remaining dates for Council meetings in 2021 are: September 4th, October 9th and November 13th (includes AGM).



NABO's response to CRT over the revised Terms and Conditions

The new terms and conditions in full

canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/original/43839-general-terms-and-conditions-for-boat-licenses-june-2021.pdf

The consultation report

canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/original/43840-boat-licence-terms-and-conditions-consultation-report-final.pdf

FAQs from CRT

canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnaill/43841-boat-licence-terms-and-conditions-consultation-faqs.pdf

We are naturally disappointed that, in the six months since our submission, the Trust has made no effort to respond to the detailed points raised by NABO. Our submission reflected not just the views of NABO's Council but was prepared after consulting our membership.

We are forced to conclude that the Trust finds it easier to ignore a group of its customers than engage with them.

We note that the revised terms and conditions are materially different than the 2015 terms as well as those that were consulted upon. The fact that these revised terms have not been consulted upon and were introduced with six days' notice is insulting to boaters.

The announcement of the revised terms offers no explanation of the legal basis of some of the more controversial changes. In particular NABO remains concerned over the Trust's continued attempt to give itself powers not granted to it by the 1995 Act and yet boaters have no choice but to agree to them. The '95 Act makes clear the responsibilities of boats with or without home moorings. The Trust's revisions would appear to agree with only one

aspect of this with no clear explanation as to why the Act should not apply in its entirety.

The '95 Act refers to one licence yet the Trust has now created two distinct licences dependent upon whether you have a home mooring or not. This has many potential implications but was not consulted upon nor fully explained. Could you confirm whether any of the boating associations or the Navigation Advisory Group was consulted and that they agreed with these new licences and the potential implications? Your commentary accompanying the implementation of the revised terms suggests that this was the case.

In conclusion NABO is disappointed that the Trust has chosen not to respond to our original comments and ask that it now do so promptly. We cannot support the introduction of the amended revised terms until the Trust has explained the legal basis for them. In the meantime we would urge a delay in their introduction until the Trust has consulted upon them.

*Dr M G Rodd FIET CEng
Chairman, National Association of Boat Owners*

NABO Received this reply from Jon Horsfall, CRT's Head of Customer Service Support

The Trust responded specifically on the concerns NABO raised regarding GDPR and we have taken specific action on the readability issues raised during the consultation.

I have a copy of the submission made on the 8th December in which NABO make specific comments on a number of the proposals including the comments on GDPR and readability.

On the matter of licences, the Trust is not creating two distinct licences. The standard licence is taken on the basis of a craft with or without a home mooring. If a licence is taken without a home mooring they are referred to as continuous cruisers. We have used that language in the revised T&Cs to be consistent.

We are understandably sorry you feel disappointed. The intention of this most recent review was to bring clarity to a number of Terms and Conditions to make them substantially clearer for Customers and the Trust.

I can assure you that your comments haven't been ignored; quite the opposite, the response to and the Trust's action on NABO's comments on readability and GDPR are evidence of this. I'd expect you to have (or have received) a response to each of the other points and if that hasn't been addressed throughout, you will have one in writing. Please let us know if there is anything in addition to the comments submitted in December.

A blow-by-blow account of the terms

David Fletcher explains...

In mid-2020, CRT commenced a consultation on the private boat licence terms and conditions. They did not invite comment on the whole document, but limited the consultation to nine items of change.

NABO made three submissions: on the consultation; on the privacy policy and a third on the readability of the terms and privacy documents. The consultation closed in December 2020. We chased CRT on several occasions for responses to our submissions. CRT did not ask us for other assistance on revisions to the wording.

On 24th May 2021, CRT announced the publication of the results of the consultation. This comprised a press release, a close

out commentary on the consultation and a first version of the 2021 terms document. CRT said: 'The consultation received widespread support, with 78% of respondents in agreement across all nine proposals, ranging from 63% to 88% for individual proposals. The consultation was completed by over 3,300 individuals, around 10% of our boat licence holders. The changes will come into effect from 1 June 2021 and will be applied to renewals and new licences from that date.'

On 27th May 2021 NABO Council met to review the documents and consider our immediate responses.

On 28th May, we received a response letter from CRT covering the privacy policy issues. This successfully resolves a number of

issues about the CRT documents, with a commitment to modify them. On the same day, CRT published the revised documents and some but not all licence holders have received emails. The changes could not be identified and were not reported.

NABO made our first response on 29th May, noting the fact that the revised terms and conditions are materially different than the 2015 terms as well as those that were consulted upon. Also the introduction of the terms and conditions with just six days' notice is insulting to boaters. We noted that there is no explanation of the legal basis of some of the more controversial changes. We urged a delay in their introduction until the Trust has consulted upon them.

On 4th June, NABO made a second response to CRT highlighting the poor quality of the document and raising concerns over clause 10.10 ('The boat must not display an association with, or advertise, any company, business or service without our express consent in writing').

Around 5th June, we noticed a second version of the terms on the CRT website, with some, but not all, of the typographical errors corrected. The changes could

not be identified and were not reported. Boaters were not informed.

On 7th June, CRT said that it would not apply some part of terms until 16th June, following legal correspondence with NBTA.

On 15th June, CRT sent an email to boaters on revised terms. It said: 'The Trust has made changes to its new Leisure Licence Terms and Conditions. Two conditions (previously 4.3 and 10.10) included in error have been removed.' Many other changes were made but could not be identified and were not reported. This version is marked General Terms and Conditions. 15.6.21 v.2, but the file name is unchanged.

On 15th June, we received a response letter from CRT covering the terms and readability submissions.

On 19th June NABO Council met to further review the final documents and agreed the following action plan: first to write to members with our key concerns and ask for their views. Secondly to respond to CRT's recent comments on the consultation response. Thirdly to approach other organisations to identify areas of agreement and agree a joint approach to CRT and media to publicise our concerns.

A letter to our members—CRT's T&Cs

Anne Husar finds key issues not consulted on, which could negatively impact boaters.

Terms and conditions
canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/original/43839-general-terms-and-conditions-for-boat-licenses-june-2021.pdf

As many of you will be aware, there has recently been yet another revision of CRT's Terms and Conditions (T&C's) for private boaters.

This latest publication follows their admission of 'errors' in previous drafts which has now led to two of the more contentious conditions being removed. There are now, we think, three differing versions of this document in circulation with the

potential to cause much confusion. For our purposes here we are referring to the document referenced by CRT as 15.6.21 v.2.

As many of you are also aware, NABO Council has been carefully scrutinising these developments and, as a result of NABO's comments, significant changes were made to the readability of the Privacy policy and the corrected GDPR

document. It has been reworded to make it easier to understand but there remain some parts that could be improved. Certainly many of the typos and much random use of capital letters throughout the T&Cs document that made it such an annoying read were quickly removed when we pointed out what a shoddy publication they had produced.

So, where are we now?

We feel that there remain several key issues, some of which not consulted on, which could impact negatively on boaters.

First, the creation of a new continuous cruising licence. CRT insists that there are no changes, simply a 'clarification'. If this is so, why the misleading heading that states 'The following types of licence can be applied for'? Why has CRT felt the need to do this unless it is to commence a process of licence changes and charges in the future?

Secondly, the conditions for home moorers have changed in Clause 5.1. Boaters with a home mooring are now required to be on a 'genuine cruise' when leaving their mooring and not remain in one general area. This is ill-defined, but elsewhere in the document 'genuine' is equated with 'bona fide'. This requirement gives CRT powers not

granted in the 1995 Act.

Our third concern is with Clause 11.2 where it states that boaters must follow the instructions of volunteers. This is a new inclusion that could invalidate boaters' insurance, as many policies stipulate that the owner or skipper must be in charge at all times. An escalation of a resulting difference of opinion could then lead to our fourth concern.

Clause 10.16—open to abuse?

NABO wholeheartedly supports zero tolerance measures and totally condemns abusive or threatening behaviour, which can of course be suffered by boaters as well as CRT staff and volunteers.

CRT has existing powers under current by-laws and the police have the powers to deal with this and should be the appropriate authority to involve if necessary.

However, by threatening to 'take action against your licence', CRT has added a new condition that is open to abuse. After all, without a recording of the event, who is to say what actually happened?

Now it's over to you, our members. Do you agree with our concerns? Have you some concerns of your own that you need to air? We look forward to your comments, responses and a lively debate.

Join in the conversation and add your voice on the NABO Facebook Group;

www.facebook.com/groups/26001922752/permalink/10158738057852753/

Changes to Thames mooring terms and conditions

The EA has changed the mooring terms to remove the requirement that boats register on arrival at a mooring. Stays of up to 24 hours can now take place at each location without any further action required. The EA will retain the existing 24-hour only rule at non-designated mooring sites and not allow longer stays for a fee.



Does CRT need to change?

Peter Fellows tasks whether a proposal could improve waterway management

What do you think?

Please let me know your thoughts at nabonews@nabo.org.uk or by post.

In my last editorial (NABO News 3, May) I broached the idea of using the upcoming review of CRT’s Government grant to split the Trust into two parts; a navigation division and a well-being division.

This has led to a good discussion within your Council. One suggestion is to follow the model that is used on the Norfolk Broads. First, Government should make the canal network a National Park recognising the growing individual and environmental benefits of being by water. CRT would set up a national park management team that would receive a grant from Defra in respect of ‘general’ Park activities such as conservation, planning, recreation and tourism. The Defra grant could be supplemented by the Friends scheme, grants from local authorities etc. Separately there would be a Navigation management team

who would be solely charged with maintenance of the navigation. This would be funded by boat licences, moorings, boat-related businesses, plus the existing CRT investments supported by Government and external grant aid, together with other commercial activities.

Each division would have its own group of trustees with relevant experience. The two management teams could be overseen by a small board who would apportion central and shared costs. One view is that this new structure would create a new focus, leading to targeted improvements in the management of both the ‘Park’ and the canal infrastructure. It would also lead to wider engagement with boaters and the general public. The counter view is that this would just lead to another layer of management with political infighting for funding between the two teams.

John Devonald comments: “We lost this particular game as soon as Sustrans got involved. Now cyclists are more important as far as local and national governments are concerned.

Their agenda is more people on pushbikes and fewer in cars—and the towpath is ideal as far as they are concerned. Looking at the towpath in the picture, it’s smooth, totally paved, and no places for mooring pins and no rings to trip up the lycra chappies or the promenaders getting their infusion of ‘well-being by the water’.”



CRT falsifies annual report

Following a tip-off from a CRT employee, **Allan Richards** has discovered that the Trust is under investigation by the Charity Commission for deliberately altering its annual report approved by its Trustees on 24th September 2020 and filed with the Charity Commission on 22nd December.

Tom Deards, Head of Legal & Governance Services and Company Secretary, said changes were discussed with Chief Executive, Richard Parry on 24th November 2020. The Chair, Allan Leighton, and Deputy Chair, Dame Jenny Abramsky, were notified orally. Allan notes: “Perhaps

concerned about its performance review and Defra latching on to heritage asset data, which showed a substantial fall in condition from previous years, CRT then proceeded to mislead Defra by claiming that part of the Publication Data (already published!) was not available.” CRT has told the Charity Commission that it will remove the altered annual report from its website and replace it with the approved annual report. It has also asked the Charity Commission if the altered report on the Commission’s website can be replaced with the approved version shown as filed on 22nd December.

First published in Narrowboatworld.com

Before (below) showing a 13% fall in condition and after (right) claiming this data was not available.

69	Canal & River Trust Annual Report & Accounts 2019/20	Publication Data — required under the Defra Grant Agreement
Percentage of towpaths in conditions A to C*	The Relevant Standard is no less than 60% aggregate in conditions A to C.	Aggregate percentage of towpaths in condition classes A, B and C was 81.24% as at 31 March 2020 (2019: 80.84%).
Flood management*		
Percentage of principal culverts and embankments in Class D and Class E	The Relevant Standard is for the aggregate of flood management assets in classes D&E not to exceed 4% of the total flood management assets.	Aggregate percentage of flood management assets in condition classes D&E was 0.75% as at 31 March 2020 (2019: 0.96%).
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)		
Percentage area of SSSIs under Trust management in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition	The data is available only for sites in England and is obtained from Natural England. It covers a total of 718 hectares of SSSI sites under the Trust’s management.	Favourable 38.3% (2019: 38.3%) Unfavourable recovering 34.2% (2019: 34.2%)
Heritage		
Percentage of Heritage Assets assessed on completion of work as good or adequate with double weighting given to good assessments	This measure includes work on several assets that have heritage qualities and is not limited to waterway infrastructure assets only.	83.78% (2019: 87.2%)

69	Canal & River Trust Annual Report & Accounts 2019/20	Publication Data — required under the Defra Grant Agreement
Percentage of towpaths in conditions A to C*	The Relevant Standard is no less than 60% aggregate in conditions A to C.	Aggregate percentage of towpaths in condition classes A, B and C was 81.24% as at 31 March 2020 (2019: 80.84%).
Flood management*		
Percentage of principal culverts and embankments in Class D and Class E	The Relevant Standard is for the aggregate of flood management assets in classes D&E not to exceed 4% of the total flood management assets.	Aggregate percentage of flood management assets in condition classes D&E was 0.75% as at 31 March 2020 (2019: 0.96%).
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)		
Percentage area of SSSIs under Trust management in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition	The data is available only for sites in England and is obtained from Natural England. It covers a total of 718 hectares of SSSI sites under the Trust’s management.	Favourable 38.3% (2019: 38.3%) Unfavourable recovering 34.2% (2019: 34.2%)
Heritage Assets		
Percentage of Heritage Assets assessed on completion of work as good or adequate with double weighting given to good assessments	This measure includes work on several assets that have heritage qualities and is not limited to waterway infrastructure assets only.	83.78% (2019: 87.2%)

Due to the effect of Covid-19 on the year end heritage assessment surveys due to be undertaken in March and April 2020, causing most to be cancelled, no result is recorded for this measure for 2019/20 (2019: 97.2%)

Time to cut the grass

One man, **David Fletcher**, went to mow his meadow and now hopes you'll all help too

Ways to send your feedback

canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us/ways-to-contact-us

This year, CRT is experimenting with a mowing trial, cutting less in some places to allow for wildflower displays. The mowing trial is applied to areas on canals previously fully cut to edge, but not in the critical navigation areas.

canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/maintaining-our-waterways/vegetation-management/mowing-the-grass/national-mowing-trial-2021



An update to last year's long article about towpath mowing, *'One man went to mow'*, Issue 4, July 2020.

CRT and the Navigation Advisory Group (NAG) have worked on the mowing regimes over the last 12 months to improve the mapping on the towpath maps. These are the instructions to Fountains on what to cut and where. The need is to accurately record the knowledge of where to cut at:

- Approaches to structures, landings/moorings, winding holes
- At sharp bends or obstructions for line of sight.
- At visitor moorings
- At remote mooring places—a 100-metre length every 1 km to allow informal moorings.

The new maps are now available on the CRT website.

Please have a look at the mowing as you are cruising and provide feedback to CRT via the web portal. Please provide locations. General comments are useless.

Mapping of the approaches to structures has been very straightforward. Now all bridge holes, redundant structures and winding holes should be mapped for cutting to edge. The line of site for sharp bends and the like has been more difficult, but the CRT team came up

with a solution that enabled these to be mapped electronically. These need looking at this season, to make sure nothing is missing. The most difficult and least successful part has been for remote moorings - 100m (or equivalent) per km. The regions have been asked to finalise and map these places this year. You can help by telling the regions where you want them to be. If you don't tell them, they will do as they think fit, and that could well be to do nothing because it is not on the maps.

- The tests on all this are easy:
- 1 Are bridge holes (and redundant bridge holes) mapped 'cut to edge' for 25m either side?
 - 2 Are known line of sight situations, on bends etc. and at bridge holes mapped 'cut to edge'?
 - 3 Are visitor mooring mapped cut to edge.
 - 4 Are there long lengths of pound (more than about 1 km) and mapped unbroken 'not cut to edge' either red and yellow. If so where is a good place to have a mooring of 100m per km?

What can you do? First, look at the maps for your area and see what you think. Then run the four-point test above and see what you find. Then get hold of customer services and tell them. I suggest writing on the web reporting form, or it will get lost. If you are very keen, CRT does customer service inspections every year. Invite yourself and give your input.

Finally, don't mix this with offside cutting, hedge cutting or reeds in the cut. These are different issues, not covered by all this. Good hunting.

West Midlands Peter Braybrook



Since the last Council meeting, I attended the WM Regional Forum on 25th May. I have commented to Matthew Symonds about the constant spin that boaters only pay a fifth of the cost of canal upkeep.

I have noticed that there are more infrastructure failures than ever—Hillmorton locks and Factory locks are closed for unplanned gate repairs, apart from other repairs due to 'bridge strikes', 'vandalism' etc., and two lift-bridge failures so far this season. Paddle defects are not being attended to in a timely fashion. Apparently it is OK to leave a lock with only one paddle working for months. The mowing trial on the Oxford canal is at option three (i.e. one cut from edge to hedge at the end of the season) and hence this is a typical towpath at the moment. I have spoken to two CCers and a leisure boater (a NABO member) who told me they have received no notice of the T&C consultation. They were surprised that display of their 'KG' logo was being proscribed without express consent in writing. I have been engaged as part of a BSS AC sub-group in supporting the interim review of the BSS examination checking procedures of 2015.

We have been boating in the West Midlands and are heading for the BCN. I was not surprised to find that the infrastructure is not as good as the CRT management would maintain and has been suggested by the various meetings that I have been attending on Zoom. I was surprised by the simple errors that have even made in maintenance of the lock paddle gear on the Warwick and Napton Canal (GU) Calcutt flight. I sent a safety notice in about the over greasing of the gear that prevented the locking keys engaging with the spindles thus demanding that the paddle be held open by the windlass all the time it is being operated. There were also several locks on the South Oxford which were reduced to one bottom paddle and no sign of any attempt to repair. All this indicates a 'wait till it breaks' attitude.

Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

The towpaths I walked on the Oxford Canal were also overgrown and the canal had washed much of the bank away right up to the very narrow path that was left. It appears to me that the paths have been undermined, possibly by mink. The mining collapses leaving holes that are soon joined up to the canal as an inlet. I believe in being environmentally sensitive but think that towpaths should not be unsafe for walkers, boaters and cyclists. I spoke to a CRT inspector who told me he had reported the damage on two previous bimonthly reports and money had been set aside for repairs. I wonder what the hold-up is.

I am looking forward to the end of social distancing rules when I may get the opportunity to have a face-to-face meeting with the West Midlands management to find out what there maintenance policy really is. If you find areas of concern and decay I would really like to hear from you.



Now it's your turn...

The Annual General Meeting of the National Association of Boat Owners

Nominations must reach us by October 2nd 2021

Please send the General Secretary any **Resolutions** you wish put before the AGM meeting with the names of proposer and seconder by October 2nd 2020.

Please send to:
gen@nabo.org.uk

or by post to;

Mark Tizard

20 Oak Grove, Hertford,
SG13 8AT

Now is the time for you to join the dedicated souls that make up NABO Council and stand for election for 2021-2022, so you can have even more say in what we do.

The Council meets around seven times per year and the work is rewarding and interesting... and occasionally frustrating. You'll learn what goes on behind the scenes and make new friends into the bargain. If you feel you might be out of your depth, worry not; one of us will act as your mentor to help you with the few formalities.

Don't be shy!

Nominations

Please complete the nomination form, photocopy it if you would rather keep your NABO News intact, and then return it to Mark Tizard, General Secretary, by 2nd October 2021*.

Resolutions

Please send the General Secretary any resolutions you wish put before the AGM meeting with the names of proposer and seconder by 2nd October, 2021.

Depending on Covid-19 restrictions, it is intended to hold the AGM at Tamworth Cruising Club (Kettlebrook Road, B77 1BS).

Please email gen@nabo.org.uk for details of how to attend the meeting

In relation to nominations, the NABO Constitution states:-

Only full members are eligible to be nominated for election to, or to be members of, the Council.

Any member seeking election or re-election to the Council who is, or has at any time in the previous 12 months, held any position of influence or authority in any organization which is involved with the inland waterways, or has any personal interest which is likely to affect their dealings with outside bodies on behalf of the Association, shall declare their interest at the time of being nominated for the Council.

Any member seeking election or re-election to the Council shall declare the full circumstances and current status at the time of being nominated for the Council if he or she is, or has been at any time in the previous six years:

- convicted of any criminal offence,
- involved in or threatened with litigation,
- involved in or threatened with formal insolvency proceedings,
- or the subject of a formal inquiry.

Nomination form for the NABO Council

Nominee

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Email:

Boat name:

Signature and Date:

Proposer*

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Secunder

Name:

Address:

Tel:

In 80 words or less, please tell members why they should elect you to NABO Council and any declarations required by the Constitution:

Send to: MARK TIZARD, gen.sec@nabo.org.uk or 20 Oak Grove, Hertford, SG13 8AT

*If you don't have anyone to propose and second you, don't worry, just phone one of the Council members and we can sort that out for you.

Please use the space on the nomination form for necessary declarations, or include an attached sheet.

The WWT Ltd are determined to get us all in the water

Ian Hutson shares some thoughts on towpath trimming

First published in dieselelectricelephant.com 16th June 2021



Her Maj's "government" handed CRT two-thousand miles of Industrial Heritage, an open-air museum vastly larger than Beamish, some parts of which still function commercially, the rest populated with eager, living, moving, self-sustaining, photogenic, tourist-pleasing exhibits ranging from "cute" to "downright peculiar, but I'm glad I've seen it". On top of the gift was a very large wedge of repeating cash, and a huge portfolio of land and property.

CRT sipped their latte, took a nibble at their courgette-compote-with-celery-dressing, and replied: "Hmm—we could grow daisies and buttercups and bunny wabbits on the more horrid bits in the wastelands between cities and towns, and elsewhere, where it's much easier to get to, we can pave the edges of the big long pond thing—the whatchermacallit—the canal—and then we can ride up and down it in skin-tight lycra with rolled up socks tucked where our nuts ought to be, trying for personal best times between Starbucks and Pret-a-Cucumber. The smelly boats and boaters and those horrid old buildings will have to go though. Yeah? Where do we get our lawyers to sign, and may we pleasey-weasy have some of that cash in advance, to pay the lawyers bill?"

No strimming, except in approved (time-restricted) mooring areas and one or two of the more cute lock thingies. It's for the wildlife, apparently. Let us be generous. 2,000 miles of canal, all rural, three yards from canal to hedgerow (!) 1,760 yards to a mile. 10,560,000 square yards. 3,097,600 square yards to a square mile. 3.4 square miles. A hugely generous assumption. In truth it's probably well under a square mile in total, in strips one or two yards wide. England alone, without the assistance of Wales, is 50,337 square miles. So, in order to give mating privacy to what? Three randy bees and a dandelion, some 36,000 boaters and gawds alone know how many holiday hire-boaters now leap off into the unknown. Is there actually a towpath under there? Given the state of repair that's hardly guaranteed. Am I about to plant my Gucci spangled sandals in some vast, hidden pile of dog-eggs?

Can I hold onto the centreline in a breeze long enough to get the strimmer out to then be able to see where I am kneeling down to attach a couple of mooring lines? It has been suggested that we each trim our own shrubberies, so to speak, and that's a most excellent idea—a lot of folk do just that. However, how the hecky-heck do I moor up safely in the first place, the later to trim the overgrowth?

Leap off the boat holding an open pair of garden shears? The Watery Wellness Trust Ltd (WWT). have just emailed me to say that yes, in my case, they'd love me to leap off my boat holding garden shears, just until something happens.

These are England's canals, not the Zambezi or the Limpopo.

There are already hundreds of miles where it is impossible for mortal man to moor. The towpath has crumbled, reeds have encroached, and in some cases because of the wild growth (much more than shown above, years of neglect) you can't even see the towpath from the canal and vice versa, let alone get the boat near to the edge (never been dredged, the glorious leader being on record as stating that he has no intent to ever dredge anywhere other than the time-restricted 'visitor' moorings). Call me a cynical old Hector if you will, but could this possibly, just possibly be a cheap and dirty tactic by those boat and boater-loading folk at CRT Corporate to reduce the options for boaters even further, and thus drive us away?

No, no—it's because we love bumbly bees and flatulent flutterbies and rare mothy-things and snails and bandylions and cutterbups. We is green! Yes, well, CRT may be thoroughly 'green', but I'm not so. Love wildlife on our little 3.4 square miles by not trimming under or near the hedgerows, by—and here's a revolutionary notion—planting trees on the hundreds of miles of totally neglected, utterly un-tended embankments and cuttings, to replace the ones that fall over from sheer old age, regularly blocking the cut and causing landslips. Love wildlife by not bunging tarmac on top of anything that SUSTRANS points at (...and just wait until SUSTRANS realises that all of the rural sections are now no-go areas unless you're on a



mountain-bike with a forward-firing flame-thrower...)

Rant over, and before anyone calls me a miserable old anti-nature duddy-fud, that English meadow-effect next-the-armco would look brilliant and be much appreciated—were it only on the opposite side of a wide towpath, under an equally rampant hedgerow. There's a time and a place for most things. Now, where may I purchase two machetes and one of those crossed-holster things that will keep the handles conveniently over my shoulders?

Dare I say it, what of walky-walky sticks? What of pushy-pushchairs? What of wheelchair users? What—horror of horrors—of a bumboid bee wheelchair user out with her family, enjoying the countryside, hubby struggling with the youngsters in a little double-decker bee-pushchair? What, more importantly, of miserable old farts who have to use a trolley to drag comestibles to their boat?

Chin-chin, chaps and chappesses.

Ian Hutson
Photo: sindebarnwell.com/category/writers/ian-hutson



Heritage and CRT

Anne Husar calls on CRT to care for our historic canal system and associated structures.

During the last century, British Waterways began the sale of canalside properties, listed or otherwise, and this has been continued over the years by CRT.

Although a recent Freedom of Information request asking how many listed buildings have already been sold was denied, seasoned boaters and canal enthusiasts could easily compile a list of exceptional buildings that have already been sold off, to the absolute detriment of the UK's historic and unique canal system.

At risk: Braunston Stop House and Pontymoile Toll House
So much has been sold that in reality only the really iconic properties are now left and they have become threatened too.

Two recent examples that illustrate CRT's lack of care towards the heritage it is supposed to be cherishing are the Stop House at Braunston and the Toll House at Pontymoile.

How shameful that the campaign group, Save Britain's Heritage, felt it could add the iconic Stop House to its 'at risk' register. The future for this historic canalside building remains uncertain. Social media pressure was such that the equally important Toll House has been withdrawn temporarily at least from auction, but again, its future has not been decided.

This really does not reflect well on CRT, which is of course tasked under section 2.2 of its Charitable Objects, and also under the DEFRA Grant Agreement, with conserving the UK's canal heritage for the future, not selling it all off to the highest bidder. CRT's chief execu-

tive, Richard Parry's assertion that CRT will: "find private owners who will give the properties the care they need" is simply disingenuous. How can that be possibly realised at an auction? Sadly, a statement like that coming from the top does not reassure in any way.

Should we be reassured by the recent appointment of a new Heritage Advisory Group after four years of not having one? The last group was ignored and disbanded and this new group has not had one meeting since being convened in April, with no contact details provided on CRT's website. There is so much that this group should be advising on and yet they do not seem to have even begun.

Abroad, our historic canal system and associated structures are regarded as a jewel in the UK's crown. It is uniquely ours; there is no other waterways system like it in the world. But sadly it is slowly being dismantled and what's left, barely maintained, with accurate reports of potential failures by boaters ignored until the assets finally break. Rather, the waterways appear to be in a process of transformation to a nationwide footpath and cycle track network that simply commemorates a once glorious canal system that built Great Britain's industrial past.

If the fabric of our history is important to CRT, these destructive actions towards our heritage that are putting the Trust into disrepute should stop. CRT should instead be seen to be safeguarding what was entrusted into its care. It is such a short-term policy to sell off everything possible. What will CRT do for funds when it has all gone and the UK's unique waterways heritage is

finally, exhaustively, plundered?

The whole nation should be alarmed at what is happening, not just boaters, canal enthusiasts and historians. The status of this uniquely British waterway system needs to be elevated to a national asset in its entirety. It needs to be recognised as the National Waterways, of rare and special importance to our country's inheritance. Maybe then it will get the protection it so deserves.



Above: Braunston Stop House

Photo: Mat Fascione (geograph.org)

Left: Toll house Pontymoile

Photo: British Listed Buildings

britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/30000313

And some good news...

Flapper saved

The attempt to build a 12-storey block of flats on the site of The Flapper Pub on Birmingham's Cambrian Wharf (NABO News December 2018) has been defeated. Owner Samantha Campbell-Whyte said: "When The Flapper closed in January 2020 everyone thought that was it and the venue would never open again. I'm thrilled to say that's not the case. The resurrection of The Flapper is so important for independent bars and grass-root music venues, as it shows that not all sites earmarked for demolition actually go ahead. After months of renovations we are looking to re-open in July."



Is your cruise a 'genuine' cruise or a 'bona fide' one?

Mark Tizard crunches some CRT numbers

What's the difference I hear you ask? According to the latest Terms and Conditions there would appear to be two clearly identified licences (although CRT now says there is only one really). Boaters who have a home mooring are now required to be on a 'genuine' cruise when they leave their mooring. Boats without a home mooring need be on a 'bona fide' journey which elsewhere CRT defines as 'genuine'. Simple.

Evidently, a small but stubborn number of boaters pay for a home mooring with no intention of staying on it

So what is the problem they are trying to solve? Evidently, there is a small but stubborn number of boaters who pay for a home mooring with no intention of staying on it (but on being asked, CRT says it is unable to quantify the problem, which in itself is strange). Apparently, this causes a problem as they remain in a small area. This evidently is the reason why the T&Cs must change for the 27,000-odd licenced boats with a home mooring that do not cause a problem. This is the reason that CRT seeks to overrule the 1995 Act.

The new T&Cs made me want to look back to the big change in CRT's enforcement policy and processes and see how they are working. In

January 2015, at a meeting between CRT and the national boating organisations, NABO was given a presentation by Denise Yelland, then the Head of Enforcement. This outlined the scale of the problem that CRT was having with boats moving very little or not at all and outlined a strategy to tackle this. The associations were all broadly in favour of this and CRT was seeking approval from the Trustees to proceed with this strategy. The headline figures were 16% of all boats without a home mooring moved less than five km and a further 50% between five and 20 km. So 66% of boats, some 3,240 of 5,400, cruised less than 20 km during the licence period.

CRT's new strategy came into force on 1 March 2015. One year later, in March 2016, we were told that the percentage of boats not moving in an acceptable pattern had dropped from 66% to 20%. 1,130 of 5,600 boats had been refused a full licence and offered three- or six-month restricted licences. Such a dramatic drop in non-compliance would tend to indicate that either the original headline figures offered a year before were inaccurate, or there had been a dramatic increase in movement—the answer we suspected lay somewhere in the middle.

Of the 1,130 reduced licences offered, only 103 boats entered enforcement or remain unlicensed, so only around 2% of the 5,600 boats without a home mooring. This is a lower percentage than unlicensed boats generally, which sits at around 4% of the total.

This demonstrates, as NABO has

This is why the T&Cs must change for 27,000 boats with a home mooring that do not cause a problem

often stated, that the vast majority of continuous cruisers happily go about their boating below CRT's enforcement radar. It would be interesting to discover how many of those boaters who received a reduced licence are not liveaboard but just move along the towpath to avoid paying for a home mooring.

What of the future?

We asked CRT to bring us up to date on how the system is working after five years. The 2019-2020 position is: 6,013 boats are registered without a home mooring.

Of these, 8.4% (505 boats) were moving five km or less during the licence period. 19.6% (1,180 boats) were moving less than 20km (including those moving five km or less). This is comparing like with like, but if we use the range of 20 miles (not km) which is the figure that CRT introduced then, the number rises substantially to 33% or 1,984 boats. To be fair, this number includes those that have an agreed reduced cruising range, believed to be in the range of 375—425 boaters (my estimate).

The percentage of continuously cruising boaters on a six-month restricted licence was 9.8%, (589 boats) in May 2020, compared to 10.45% (628 boats) in May 2019. 2021 is lower so far because the pandemic response that suspended the 14-day rule and has led to less restrictions.

This shows a clear and significant improvement in the position

since the introduction of the current sightings app used by CRT's spotters and the improved restricted licence process. Although the main improvement was in the first year, there has also been a steady improvement since. The percentage of boats on restricted licences has effectively halved in five years, so compliance has obviously increased. It's a concern that over 30% of boaters still cruise in a range of less than 20 miles, assuming the spotters' information is accurate. It would be interesting to be able to dig into this further from a social and geographic perspective.

NABO has always supported CRT taking enforcement action against boats that overstay or do not move. Beyond that, NABO believes it is for CRT as the navigation authority to declare what pattern of movement satisfies them as being used 'bona fide' for navigation.

With this in mind, we believe the current guidelines give a reasonable expectation of what is required and the expected minimum range of 20 miles should not present a problem to the vast majority.

Increasingly in popular areas, the issue is congestion. An increase in facilities, towpath mooring, and dredging to the edge could dramatically improve finding a mooring in popular areas. But that's another article in the making.



'Genuine cruising' (above) and 'bona fide' cruising (below), or is it the other way around?



TECHIE'S



CORNER

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

That solar power is popular with many canal boat owners is pretty much a given. In fact I'd say that if there is one group or community that has embraced it more than any others it is us.

You don't see many on house roofs although it is more common nowadays and I have no knowledge of them being fitted on caravans and only in small numbers on campervans. But, despite the UK not being the sunniest place in the world, certainly in summer solar can supply respectable amounts of charge to your batteries.

Solar: Green energy—so why wouldn't you have it?

John Devonald looks at some of the reasons that boaters give.



So why am I preaching the advantages of solar power to the converted? Well, despite it being popular I still see a large number of canal boats on the system that don't have solar panels fitted and I find that surprising given that, after the initial cost, it's basically free clean electricity. Most of us have a generator but if there is something that annoys neighbours and house dwellers it's the continuous buzz of one of those things. If we can cut the time needed to run one we should be doing whatever we can. Also if you run your boat engine to charge your batteries while moored you are on inefficient low load and causing wear and tear on an expensive inte-

gral component of your boat, so that doesn't seem an ideal solution.

If we ignore the initial cost for the moment, what reasons have boaters for not installing solar power? Ones I have heard from people include:

"I'm not a livaboard and I'm marina based and plug in to the mains most of the time so it's not needed". Well maybe not needed so much as if you live out on the cut. But if you go out for a couple of weeks in summer and stop in one spot for a few days, running all the normal electrical items, your batteries are going to be struggling. Solar could make all the difference between having to run your engine or a generator to top them up. Also, I don't plug in my boat all the time at the marina as my solar panels supply enough electricity to keep the batteries topped up, and therefore keep the auto bilge pump and the fridge running. OK, it's only pennies saved but better my pennies than the marina's.

"Roof space". Of all the people on boats who would benefit the most from solar power its people living on them, yet I see boats with the roofs covered with everything from sacks of coal to bicycles and wood but not solar panels! They are obviously residential boats so the only thing I can surmise is that if you are used to using your roof as a spare storage room you might be loath to lose that, but surely with a bit of organisation you can make space enough to fit at least some panels. Just think if the power supplied gives your leisure batteries another year of life how quickly the savings mount up.

"I use my roof to walk on when going through locks and don't want to have to manoeuvre around panels". Yes, I can understand that, especially with panels that sit on frames above the roof, but you can get flexible panels that you can walk



Photo: Helen Hutt

on as long as you aren't wearing hobnail boots!

"I don't want to drill holes in the roof of my boat". I have to agree with that; no one with a boat likes drilling holes in it, but it is in the dry side and sealants nowadays do a good job. Flexible panels can be stuck down and the only hole needed is for the cable gland.

"It's complicated and I don't know about electrics". Obviously if you are not happy doing your own electrical work you should get a professional to fit it for you, but if you are happy wiring up a plug, fitting a solar system is electrically very simple. You can get kits from reputable suppliers that have all the components needed for the installation: panel(s), controller, cables, glands and instructions. All you need to do is measure the size of roof space you have and get panels that fit. Decide on flexible or rigid panels and fit them. Follow the instructions for wiring up and that's it done, free electricity for your batteries.

So to the cost: no, it's not cheap. If you buy a kit you are probably

looking at £500+ with prices rising as you add panels depending on the amount power you want. However that isn't much more than a set of medium quality leisure batteries and the solar will help drastically in keeping them charged.

One thing I feel I have to mention as we are discussing green energy is wind turbines for boats. I have to admit my knowledge of them is limited to what I have been told by other people. You would think they would be a good choice in the UK, but all I have heard is they are noisy, don't give much power unless they are howling round and are awkward to put up and down. If anyone has any experience of them, either good or bad, I would be delighted to hear from you.

I hope that if you haven't got solar you will look into whether it would be beneficial on your boat. Green energy is the way this country is going and there is already a spotlight on the inland waterways, especially on the boats in the cities. We might as well be as proactive as we can and, as they say, every little helps.

Rewind

Issue No 4, 2006

Howard Anguish explores NABO News from 15 years ago

INLAND NAVIGATION ISSUES, NEWS, AND VIEWS



Avian influenza briefing. In 2006 the world was in the grips of a highly contagious disease Bird Flu or Avian influenza (H5N1).

Originating in the Far East, it had been found that it could transfer to humans. It had spread to many parts of the world, triggering fears of a pandemic. Both Defra and British Waterways raised a warning to boaters following the case of a dead swan found in Scotland. They warned against handling carcasses and to wash hands and footwear. Sound familiar?

BW by-laws & licences. A timely reminder in this issue points out the obligations of all boat owners with regard to their licence, a subject which is probably even more relevant today. *“The chances are that although you pay to keep your boat on a BW waterway and sign the application form stating that you will obey all the rules and regulations you probably have no idea what the by-laws require of you.”* I wonder how many current licence holders can say with hand on heart that they have read them and, more importantly, obey them! I think that these days they are slightly more accessible than in previous years and can be found on CRT’s website.

Visitors to rivers—a warning. The rivers section also has advice in this edition which remains highly pertinent today and is worth repeat-

ing here for those owners who are considering venturing onto our navigable rivers for the first time.

“We have had reports that boats visiting rivers are mooring stern to the flow and thereby being swept onto boats moored downstream of them when casting off. Our Humber Rivers Representative warns that narrowboat users in particular are guilty of this on the Trent and raises two points: one—that river flow may increase after one has tied up; and two that the river flow can bring with it a load of debris which can foul the rudder and propeller. Remember also that mooring with spring lines (rigged to prevent fore and aft movement) is particularly important on rivers so breast lines can be left slacker to account for level changes and the relative movement caused by boat wash.”

Veg Pledge This comment from the letters section sounds familiar and it is something which seems to be an increasing problem once again.

“Here we go again! Vegetation up to your armpits, nettle stings, twisted ankles and dog poo hiding in the undergrowth. Yes we suffered all of these on our ‘trip’ up the Staffs & Worcs. Don’t know who works out the parameters of how mowing should be done and who does it, but could someone explain to us why they mow the pathway(earth) plus one foot either side, leaving vegetation to carry on growing on the side of the canal. Very illogical. The Prescotts.”

This complaint has been forwarded to BW who have acknowledged it and promised to rectify the situation. Ed”

Obtaining care afloat

NABO Welfare Officer **Ken Hylins** outlines the points to be aware of for this most important consideration of life and leisure afloat.

I have had much experience of the need to obtain help from medical and care providers over the last ten years whilst living on a narrowboat.

This can be at any day or at any time as I experienced last year. I was admitted to hospital for a major operation, after which I could not return to the boat for 12 weeks, as I was not able to do much for myself. I was lucky enough to stay with my daughter until I could return to live on my boat again. The sequence of events that unfolded as a result of my plight was as follows: CRT was notified at the first opportunity and was kept fully briefed of my situation and supported me. On my return to the boat, I could only do basic light tasks and I could not move the boat. I notified CRT again and again it supported me. Although I was more able to do things on the boat, I tired easily, meaning that I needed to apply for reasonable adjustments for a reduced cruising distance under the Equality Act. My doctor and CRT supported this successful application. I was lucky in many ways: the operation was a success; my colleagues at NABO were there to support me if needed and as the NABO Welfare Officer, I knew what to do. There was no trouble in transferring my medical records from three different areas to my new GP. This passing of care did not at times run smoothly but it did get sorted.

On behalf of NABO I attended a Zoom seminar on obtaining care while travelling, *Addressing inequalities in waiting lists for nomadic populations*, held by Friends,

Families and Travellers. The meeting, attended by NHS England, boaters, care providers and gypsy travellers, focused on care for the travelling community and how to address the different challenges in obtaining it. One thing that came to light was a person with cancer who had to wait three months to start cancer care as a result of moving to different locations. The NHS care system revolves around a static address or postcode or a geographical catchment area. Moving around can have the following implications:

- There can be a delay in obtaining both long- and short-term care.
- Moving could mean you lose your place on the waiting list, or not know if you are still on the list and at what point in the queue.
- Moving to a new medical practice can result in a delay in obtaining your medical records.
- Moving could result in losing contact with your care provider as a result of a poor phone signal or weak internet connection. In my experience it is not easy to get the NHS to email you, or to phone at times.
- Moving might result in travelling to obtain care becoming more difficult using public transport.
- Moving may mean you are no longer in your medical provider’s catchment area.

The advice I would give is that you notify your navigation authority and keep them updated at all times, preferably by email so you have a record. Then you can discuss your care needs and any difficulty that movements may create.

If you experience problems in resolving care issues or you just need advice, I can be contacted via NABO welfare@nabo.org.uk or by telephone 07852 911539

Friends, Families and Travellers www.gypsytraveller.org

NABO News back issues are available online at 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

To: The errors & omissions Dept.

Thank you for the new issue of the magazine and for including two articles from me. Unfortunately...

The cover photo is not of a GU 'River class' boat but shows the fore-end of the Royalty motor 'George'. This boat was built, together with the butty 'Mary', by the Steel Barrel Company, Uxbridge, as a prototype pair which was ordered in July 1928 by the Regent's Canal & Dock Co. Both boats are still extant as a pair and still on the Grand Union.

Notwithstanding, an excellent magazine as always and thank you for your efforts.

Regards

Paul Monyhan

Chris Pink replies;

The errors & omissions Dept? *That would be me. I admit to a lazy captioning without due research. I would apologise apart from the fact that it's good to see that some of our members, at least, are awake and paying attention.*



I name this boat ...

If you have spotted a boat name that made you smile while cruising, please let me have a photo to use in future issues. Here's one from Simon Angel, spotted at Claydon Locks. He commented: "the owner is a retired airline pilot, hence the rather lovely artwork and sky blue and cream paintwork".



Disabled boaters' forum article

I'm writing to clarify a few points from the disabled boaters' forum. First, all access information will be published online, free of charge. Our works already consider issues related to access

and improvements are made when it's reasonable and possible to do so. We're looking at increasing accessible moorings, which will cater to disabled boaters and others with limited mobility such as older people and pregnant boaters.

Our equality adjustment questionnaire asks a lot of questions so we can tailor adjustments to meet an individual's needs, rather than taking a 'one size fits all' approach. We worked with volunteers from the disabled boaters' forum to make changes to the form following feedback from boaters.

Where affordability is an issue we help where we can, for example not applying the widebeam surcharge to disabled boaters who need larger boats for adaptations or to store equipment due to disability. Our team helps boaters access support via organisations such as Citizens Advice: this does depend on boaters working with us to provide the relevant information and to speak to the services involved.

We are committed to supporting disabled boaters and those with access requirements and encourage boaters to get in touch if they need help or advice.

Matthew Symonds

National boating manager, Canal & River Trust

CRT investments

I have just had sight of the latest NABO News and thought I would comment on 'CRT investments' (page 20). What seems to have been missed is that CRT's grant agreement with Defra actually recognises the need for CRT to act in accordance with its charitable objects. The following is taken from the grant agreement:

- 'Infrastructure Property' means the permanent endowment of infrastructure property relating to inland waterways established by the Trust Settlement.
- Protected Assets' means the Investment Assets and the Protected Operational Assets (as defined in Schedule 8 (The Protector)) which will be transferred by Defra to CRT and the CIC to hold as legal and beneficial owners.
- Investment Assets' are all assets transferred to CRT or the CIC under the British Waterways

Board Transfer Scheme 2012, other than (a) those assets held in the Infrastructure Property and (b) the Protected Operational Assets.

- 'Protected Operational Assets' are assets as defined in paragraph 6.1 of this Schedule, which reads:

6 Protected Operational Assets

6.1 The parties agree that the Protected Operational Assets include:

6.1.1 property (including offices, workshops, depots etc.) that may be conveniently used to facilitate the effective management and operation of the infrastructure held in trust by CRT under the Trust Settlement but which do not themselves form part of the Infrastructure Property; and

6.1.2 other property or assets of historical, architectural, engineering, amenity or environmental value or merit that, in accordance with its charitable objects (but not otherwise) CRT considers desirable to hold or retain for their preservation, protection or convenience of use without the need to provide an investment return to CRT.

6.2 CRT may, in its sole discretion, dispose or deal with Protected Operational Assets described in paragraph 6.1.2 in any manner consistent with its charitable objects and charity law provided the treatment of any disposal proceeds is in accordance with the Agreed Purposes. CRT shall keep records of any such disposal or dealing and shall inform the Protector of the application of disposal proceeds or whether it considers that the property or asset in question is no longer needed as a Protected Operational Asset and does not need to be replaced and accordingly that such property or asset is thenceforth to be treated as an Investment Asset. CRT shall inform the Protector by occasional aggregated report (such report to be made not less than annually), save in the case of disposals or dealings of property or assets of a value in excess of £10,000,000, in which case CRT shall inform the Protector at the time the disposal or dealing is completed.

Using Braunston Stop House as an example, this is a protected operational asset because it is (was) used as an office so is caught by 6.1.1. However, more importantly, it is very firmly caught by 6.1.2 which suggests that CRT dealings must be in accord with its charitable objects.

From the NABO News article: *'In a statement, it says that others were specified as investments*

to provide an income stream to fund ongoing maintenance. It also claims that it has to manage these investments commercially to generate as much income as possible as a condition of the Government grant agreement.'

This is simply untrue. The grant agreement recognises the need for CRT to act in accordance with its charitable objects.

Allan Richards

Email to CRT: Llangollen overgrowth

After a gap of many years we recently cruised up to Llangollen and back and I would like to draw the following to your attention:

- 1 There are overhanging trees on both sides of the canal;
 - 2 On the towpath side there are young trees getting established behind the piling and their greenery extends several feet over the water.
- Both were encountered in numerous places along the length of the canal. Both narrowed the navigation channel and restricted the line of sight to about a boat's length in places. This canal must be one of the heaviest used by hire boaters and I felt so sorry for them on possibly their first trip on a canal, having to contend with not being able to see approaching boats till they were very near to them. Then they got into a pickle (it takes time to learn how to manoeuvre a narrow boat in tricky situations) and the result was much toing and froing till the situation was resolved. I know, having spoken to several boaters on the canal, that this affected their enjoyment of what should have been a pleasant relaxing holiday. The young trees mentioned in (2), apart from affecting the line of sight, if not cut back or removed will probably affect the edge of the canal and cause a breach in the future.
- I gather that cutting back trees along the canal has been in the winter works schedule for the last two years but has not been done as other work was considered a priority. Could I please make a plea for the trees on both sides of the canal to be cut back or removed?

Incidentally, we moored overnight in the basin at Llangollen and saw the notice about paying £6. We would have been happy to pay this but where do we pay? The last time we were up that way, there were guys in the black hut beside the

towpath moorings who took your money but the hut was deserted both on our way up (about 2pm on a Thursday) and when we came back down at (9am on the Friday). As CRT needs all the money they can get to maintain the canals, I think you need to improve how you collect mooring fees in Llangollen!

I am copying this email to NABO (we are members) as I understand they have already raised the problem with you.

Ann Street

Toll house at Pontymoile

The following email was sent to CRT regarding their plans and recent news of the toll house at Pontymoile being auctioned off:

I have always been supportive of CRT and what they do, until now. With the plans submitted to TCBC (Torfaen County Borough Council) for a visitor centre, new cafe, and toilet facilities, along with an activity hub, what many can't and don't understand is why the old toll house is not being incorporated into such a project in keeping with the area and its strong historical links to the Monmouthshire & Brecon canal, especially when we have learned that the building will be auctioned off.

Surely, you have a moral duty to preserve, restore and utilise such historical buildings with such links to our waterways rather than build new. Surely the cost involved to renovate such a building, and utilise that as visitor centre and activity hub will have far less impact on not only the funding pot, the adventure triangle money, but will also help preserve the area which has so much character and already has an established business.

Why can't you use this money elsewhere and, yes I will say it, why not at Five Locks in conjunction with TCBC or on the new Taylor Wimpey estate in South Sebastopol. It annoys people when they see buildings sat idle, especially ones with so much history, ignored to be left, and then to hear of plans for brand new facilities in an area that really only needs new toilet/shower facilities.

Mark Sullivan

Water farce

I write in response to the article in the May 2021 issue of NABO News. The point that NRV taps have inferior flow characteristics is inaccurate. I fitted a new outside tap, after the frost cracked the old tap. I fitted a double check valved replacement tap, as it was only £2 more expensive than a standard one. Plus I thought, rightly or wrongly, that it was a now a requirement to fit the double check valved outside taps and it has Water Regulatory Certification Authority (WRCA) approval. The flow from the new tap is identical to the old one, so quite where the restricted flow as Andy Soper says, is questionable. I can only think he is referring to the ones that CRT use in some of their Elsan points which are fed direct from the mains; the remaining ones are gravity fed, from a high mounted cistern. The mains ones are devices with holes that are screwed on the tap outlet (CRT also solders them on!) Yes, those have a very restrictive flow, but that isn't an issue for rinsing out a Thetford cassette waste tank.

We have an expanding stretch hose that's 75' long; our boat is 57' so that gives extra flexibility, depending on how far the boat tank filler is from the water point tap. I fitted a tap at the boat end of the hose so that it can be turned on/off, thus can be shut off when the tank is full. Saves a mad dash back to the water point tap! I replace the tank filler cap and then take the hose boat end back to the water point tap and turn that off: then open the other end to release the pressurised water, as the hose shrinks back to its lightweight compact state and gets put away.

As for bacteria with these hoses, ALL hoses can harbour bacteria and other nasties. I run water through the hose for a good 2½ minutes before filling the tank. Said nasties, don't get the chance to corrupt the water, as the water runs through a typical hose at 2m/sec. Most hose manufacturers declare that they are not to be used for drinking water purposes—probably through fear of being sued, if someone gets a jippy tummy!

I have often wondered about the EA, using fire hoses to deliver drinking water but they certainly made very quick work of filling water tanks!—once getting a thorough soaking when it gushed out of the tank filler, like a fountain—much to the amusement of onlookers!

Simon Angel, Banbury

Heritage loss

I agree with your comments particularly regards the heritage aspect. It is difficult to believe that a partly public funded charity is refusing to disclose information on the disposal of heritage assets, it only leaves one to assume they are either embarrassed or, more likely, have something to hide!

This matter of loss of heritage is not new, I remember writing some years ago following an article in NABO News expressing my concern at all the little losses, which go unnoticed until the cumulative effect hits you by their absence. For example the little brick buildings of a few square feet complete with fire hearth and chimney for use by lengthsman in inclement weather or the storage place for stop planks built into bridge abutments. I can cast my mind back to another time and imagine a lengthsman sitting in one of the former in the midst of winter, perhaps taking the opportunity to light his pipe out of the wind, warming himself by a fire before continuing with his tasks. It is these small things which complete the whole picture of our wonderful inheritance of a unique transport system still in use 200 plus years later. Our government does not give the funding or respect it deserves and in today's headlong rush to go green; here was a transport system that was green 200 years ago.

Peter Caswell



Roundhouse at Beeston
Photo: Peter Fellows

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