



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 6 December 2021

Three ages of the waterways Hybrid propulsion trial Built like a brick boathouse



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Contents

- 4 Editorial
- 5 In the Chair
- 8 Fly on the Wall
- 10 **Reports:** Welfare Officer. Social Media. Regions: Wales & South West; West Midlands.
- 12 **News:** Calor Gas supplies.
- 13 Licence and registration fees. CRT Annual Report
- 14 Thames User Forum
- 16 Changes at Boat Safety
- 17 Grand Union water transfer project
- 18 **Boating:** CRT privacy issues
- 19 Toddbrook update
- 20 **In my humble opinion:** Built like a brick ... boathouse
- 21 **Talking points:** Better by water
- 22 Cosgrove
- 24 The three ages of the waterways
- 26 **Techies' Corner:** Ortomarine trial
- 29 How to get our voice heard
- 30 Rewind: Issue No 6 2006
- 31 Letters, I name this boat

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 January 22nd 2022.

Cover photo

This month's photo was taken on the Kennet and Avon by Paul Kennard, while enjoying a hire boat holiday. 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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New Year, new Council roles

Editor, **Peter Fellows**, has a varied selection of articles for the last issue of the year.

A bag for life
Photo: Peter Fellows



At the last Council meeting of the year, councillors thanked Mark Tizard for all his efforts to promote NABO over many years, welcomed Anne Husar as the new Vice-Chair and John Devonald the new General Secretary.

New Council member Carolyn (CJ) Green will now be looking after our Twitter account. Mark's contribution to this edition summarises what he thinks boaters should be 'shouting from their cabin tops' about.

As Mike Rodd says in his annual report to the AGM, NABO continues to maintain its membership, where some other boating and waterway organisations are losing members. Certainly, the letters that I have received from members during the year strongly support what NABO is doing. We think that this may include the stance that the association is taking on CRT's terms and conditions, the loss of waterway heritage, and more recently the problems that boaters are experiencing with Calor Gas supplies. David Fletcher gives an update on the Calor situation, with a complaint being sent to the Competition and Markets Authority. Anne reports on yet more sales of listed waterside properties by CRT and Ian

Hutson provides his own inimical take on how CRT could earn an income from quirky holiday lets.

Mike has been reporting on the deteriorating relationship with the EA and, when he was unable to participate in an online meeting about the Thames, Andy Soper of the DBA stepped up and sent me his report of the meeting—clearly showing the frustration that he and other organisations are feeling about the EA. Fortunately, not all organisations are so uncommunicative and David gives a summary of changes that have recently been introduced by the BSS to its examination check procedures.

Elsewhere, Paul Monahan reflects on what he sees as the three ages of the waterways, with a call for present-day boaters to actively resist any attempts to set one group of waterway users against another and inn Techies Corner, John Devonald reviews a trial that compared traditional diesel engines with different types of hybrid electrical propulsion and the use of hydrotreated vegetable oil instead of red diesel.

I have also included a report from Ken Hylins on his work as Welfare Officer to counter discrimination against disadvantaged boaters, and regional reports from Mike on the K&A and Peter Braybrook in the West Midlands. I would like to wish Howard Anguish a speedy recovery from a recent illness and, although I have stepped into his Rewind shoes for this issue, I hope he will return to the fray very soon.

Finally, you may have spotted the yellow 'bags for life' that have recently been appearing on broken paddle gear around the system. Of course, they should read: "It might get repaired when we get round to it" or "I'm here until the other one fails".

Enjoy a very happy Christmas and my best wishes for 2022.



This has been a particularly interesting year and especially a real joy to be working with so many new members of your Council, even if the bulk of meetings have had to be via the internet. It has also been encouraging to see a small increase in membership—largely, I am sure, because of the issues we have been tackling, which have a direct impact on most boaters.

What has been the most worrying development, however, has been the seemingly growing feeling that both CRT and the EA are actively ignoring the views of their prime customers, us boaters. Yes, at times we have publicly opposed some of their actions and/or proposals, but we have consistently said that we aim to fill the role of—and indeed must always remain—their 'critical friends'. And with both of their agreements regarding government funding coming up soon, they need more friends than ever right now—and especially the boaters, who care more than anyone else about the waterways!

A key issue with CRT has been the introduction of changes to the Terms and Conditions related to our private boater licences. We were, to say the least, horrified by some of these proposals and immediately said so, supported by external expert advice, as did many other organisations. In the end, some of our objections were accepted, but there are still some issues that need addressing.

We were also very disturbed by the slipshod way in which these and many other CRT documents were produced; their readability was appalling! CRT's initial public release of the 'final' T&Cs was worryingly farcical, for example, having an editorial error in almost every sentence! Some action was taken by

CRT to improve this, but we are still deeply concerned by their almost total disregard for the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in terms of meeting the legal requirements for the collection and processing of personal information from individuals. Again, we are still unhappy with their response to our input and we have now sought higher-level support by officially bringing the matter to the attention of the Information Commissioner.

Another fascinating year in the life of NABO

Chairman, **Mike Rodd**, delivers his 2020-21 Annual Report to the AGM.

To our disappointment, the EA has proved to be as intransigent as CRT and we joined with six other boater representative organisations on the Thames to present a united front. As with CRT, the EA appears determined to ignore the input from its prime customers—the boaters. A major issue has been its proposals for changes to the licensing of private boats, with the EA claiming that it was trying to simplify and unify these across their various waterways (and, of course, increase their income in the process!) The timing of a consultation on these proposals, comprising over 100 separate points, was abysmal, coming right in the middle of the popular cruising months—and in violation of its own recommendations about the timing of such discussions! We tried to urge our members to submit responses, but most simply gave up. However, it is interesting to note that many of the EA's proposals will bring them into line with CRT's Terms and Conditions—it's very clear what is going on there!

Many of the EA's proposals will bring them into line with CRT's Terms and Conditions—it's very clear what is going on there!

In addition to CRT and EA, of course, we continue to represent the views of our members on most issues that might affect them, which often involves us in lengthy submissions to government and other statutory bodies. One issue of importance is CRT's apparent keenness to sell off many of the assets that (in theory) they own as part of their present government contract. Many of these are of major historic interest and NABO has been very active in bringing such cases to the attention of local authorities and other interested bodies.

We were naturally aware of the issues related to the non-availability of Calor gas and—given that the company has an effective monopoly over the gas supply to most boats—we have raised the matter with the Competition and Markets Authority (the competition regulator).

We remain active in NINE, the National Inland Navigation Forum, led by its General Secretary, the indefatigable Michael Stimpson, which brings together representatives of most inland waterways organisations on a regular basis. A particularly useful activity this year has been a shared legal enquiry into the proposed Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, HL Bill 40 of 2021–22. The concern was whether this bill would apply to boats as 'vehicles'. The reassuring legal advice was that it would not.

Another aspect of our work that is much appreciated by many members, is that undertaken by Ken Hyllins. He has developed a deep un-

derstanding of the requirements of boaters who have personal problems and the need to ensure that they are treated—by CRT and others—with respect, dignity and, when necessary, within the Equalities Act. This is, regrettably, not always the case and his advocacy is much valued. Ken's excellent report in this issue of NABO News illustrates this work and shows NABO to be proactively supporting boaters, as a great counter-argument to those who claim that all we do is criticise CRT.

We are, of course, closely following the decisions and the (often ignorant) statements about the need to move away from fossil fuels. Yes, we understand the important issues but, given that the majority of boats use diesel or petrol, not only for propulsion but even more so for on-boat and boater heating, the insistence (for example, by the Mayor of London) that all boats must switch to being electrically powered is a real bit of ignorant nonsense.

Our line is simply that the only short-term answer is to shift to HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil), which is a completely renewable diesel alternative, based on vegetable oils, grease waste, or residues from the food industry, etc. This is now available from many sources on the canals but at a seriously higher price when compared to our usual red diesel. This issue needs to be urgently addressed.

On the BSS front, we continue to play an active role in the management and technical contents of the scheme and we are most supportive of the recent changes as they affect private boats. We are also presently actively supporting the suggestion that smoke alarms be required on all boats (most of us have them anyway!) Also, given the massive increase in the on-board use of higher-voltage electricity and the fact that the BSS

presently covers only some of the safety implications of this, we are supporting a proposal that the IET produces guidelines for electrical installations on inland waterways boats (the Institution of Engineering and Technology, previously the IEE when I was a director, is responsible for our electrical wiring regulations).

So, another fascinating year in the life of NABO and what a pleasure it has been to lead our very active and supportive Council.

I would especially like to thank Mark Tizard for his many years of service to NABO, especially over the past few years, when he has served as both Vice Chairman and General Secretary. His monthly articles in Towpath Talk have also been absolutely first class and have brought NABO to the attention of a far wider audience. Sadly, he has sold his amazing boat and decided to become a landlubber! Mark, we will seriously miss you!

Results of towpath mowing trial

The Trust spends £2.1m per year on towpath mowing and, prior to the trial, all towpaths were cut at the same frequency.

This meant that differences in soil nutrients, urban or rural settings and frequency of use were not accounted for. Following a six-month trial, CRT is introducing changes to its national mowing programme which are intended to meet the needs of boaters, anglers and other towpath users, and increasing wildlife habitats.

The trial collected feedback from boaters and towpath users, advisory groups and specialists, and undertook periodic spot checks in the trial areas, which covered 375 miles (around 20% of the CRT network). Most feedback was in favour of increasing the amount of habitat fringe, with amendments to the mowing specifications to ensure that towpaths are suitable for all, especially boaters.

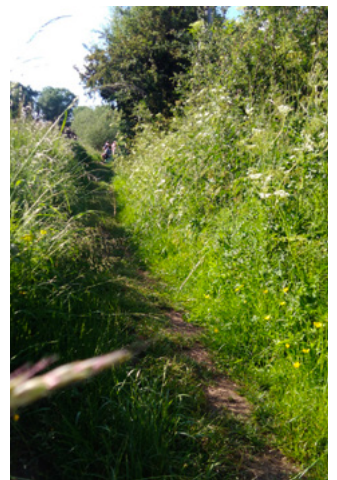
The new national mowing programme will ensure sightlines on the inside of sharp bends are mown to the water's edge, and vegetation at locks and moorings continues to be cut most frequently to meet boaters' needs. Where there are no formal moorings along a canal and the

towpath fringe is allowed to grow, informal moorings will be cut every 1 km. There will be a minimum width for the towpath walking area, so the fringe width will vary rather than the width of the towpath. The Trust will seek to break up long stretches of tall vegetation, and a full-width cut to remove the season's growth, including saplings, will remain. This will commence annually from August to replicate a 'hay meadow' style cut.

Peter Rodriguez, CRT's operational projects manager, said: "Seeking to increase the amount of biodiversity across the network doesn't mean letting everything grow; it's about providing a mix of habitats or trying to improve a section of towpath through a specific management regime. For example, keeping tall grasses shorter by regular mowing and collecting the clippings to reduce the amount of available nutrients encourages wildflowers. It is important that we continue to receive boaters' feedback, both positive and where improvements could be made."

Give the Trust any site-specific feedback, detailing the location and ideally a photo, at canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us/ways-to-contact-us.

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





Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at Council meetings in October, November and the AGM.

After the previous month's face-to-face meeting, October's Council meeting was by teleconference and was well attended.

Yet again, Council members kicked off with a discussion about CRT's revised Terms and Conditions. Should NABO accept that they are a fait accompli or should it continue to voice its concerns? They resolved to write to CRT and put on record councillors' concerns. The issue around CRT volunteers or staff being able to overrule the helm caused much debate. Using a car parking company rather than CRT's own enforcement staff to monitor and record boaters on the River Lea, including the proposed no-mooring zones, was a cause for concern. Especially given the revised clause regarding the abuse (physical or verbal) of CRT staff, leading to refusal of a licence, rather than using the existing bye-laws.

At long last, CRT has responded to a freedom of information request and released details of all the listed buildings it has sold in the last 10 years. The Council resolved to dig into this further. In addition, Anne Husar has been invited to attend the next meeting of the recently reconstituted Heritage Committee to air NABO's concerns.

Yet again, the EA's seemingly arrogant attitude to both boating organisations and its customers was raised. The ridiculous 91-page consultation contains licence increase

proposals of 10%+ was an example.

The poor condition of the locks on various canals, specifically the Staffs and Worcs and the Southern Oxford, was discussed and yet again there seems to be evidence of a deliberate policy by CRT to let the locks fail, causing a stoppage, before taking any action. It was reported that any staff inspecting lock gates were not allowed to lift paddles as part of the inspection.

Much of the above was discussed at the regular quarterly meeting with Matthew Symonds, CRT's Head of Boating, but as usual little was resolved. While these meetings are useful as a way of maintaining contact and raising members' concerns, it was felt that more fresh blood is needed as there is a risk of perhaps all getting a bit too familiar. Hopefully the forthcoming AGM will spur people into action.

AGM and final Council meeting of 2021

Chairman Mike reported to the AGM that he'd found 2021 to have been a busy but enjoyable year in the Chair and thanked councillors for their support.

Membership numbers were holding up, whereas some other organisations were suffering a fall. NABO's media presence was an important factor in this. Mark Tizard's many inputs as General Secretary, including his regular column for Towpath Talk and items on the NABO Facebook page, both raised interest in current issues facing boaters and raised awareness of NABO.

NABO Council meetings October 9th and November 13th 2021

He noted Ken Hylins remarkable successes in getting CRT to implement the Equalities Act when dealing with disadvantaged boaters, David Fletcher's work with the BSS and NAG, and Helen Hutt's steady hand on the finances. NABO's reserves mean that there is no planned increase in membership fees.

CRT's revised terms and conditions have an unspoken plan¹ for a continuous cruising licence, despite constant denials from CRT. Then there is the nonsense about losing your licence if you insult a CRT volunteer and poor readability of the T&Cs, which NABO has referred to the Information Commissioner. But the EA has been no better: five years ago NABO and other boating organisations had a very constructive relationship, but staff changes over the last year have resulted in the new people ignoring boaters. Then there was the appalling consultation over the summer at the height of the boating 'season'—against EA's own recommendations. If changes in the EA seem designed to make it fall in line with CRT for a likely merger, they have even got this wrong, seemingly believing that CRT licence fees are based on boat area. NABO used to say that BW and then CRT couldn't manage the waterways, but the EA now makes CRT seem like a paragon of performance! With Mark standing down, Anne Husar volunteered to be Vice-Chair and John Devonald will be the new Gen. Sec. Other Council roles remain unchanged.

At the first meeting of the new Council, councillors questioned how the first incorrect draft of CRT's T&Cs could have been issued—who was involved in preparing the draft and who signed it off as correct? The policy of letting assets fail before repairing them was discussed: there may be a rationale in not fix-

ing the first paddle to break if there are scheduled repairs planned in the near future, but CRT should let boaters know that this is the rationale (the new covers that have recently started to appear over broken paddles are being called 'Bags for Life!')

There was a discussion of green energy for boats and it was agreed that hydrotreated vegetable oil 2nd generation biodiesel was the way ahead. It is now available in 20-litre boxes or larger drums from some fuel suppliers, although currently more expensive than red diesel. NABO could not support the IWA's stance on all-electric boats as electrification of the system to recharge them is impracticable and unaffordable. One wag suggested heat-source pumps could take heat from the canal to produce energy for cooking and cabin heating, but then realised that this could freeze the water around a boat. An iced-in boat rather negates any benefits of the green technology!

Councillors expressed frustration at the lack of action after the regular meetings with CRT managers and at CRT Council. NABO's views are well received and action is promised but nothing happens. They also questioned why some moorings on the River Lea that have been taken away in the new 'no-mooring safety zones' are being offered as winter moorings.

Finally, David Fletcher outlined some of the issues discussed at NAG: problems facing restoration and repairs to the Anderton Boat Lift, estimated be £10 million+, which are going to need serious consideration of the way forward; and end-of-garden moorings—potential property buyers can now apply for in-principle permission to have a mooring, which was welcomed as a good development.

Byeee....

¹ Although on 15th October, a CRT Enforcement Manager sent this email in response to a boater's question: "Continuous Cruiser Licences are intended for bona fide (genuine) navigation around the network, rather than for a boat to remain in one mooring spot, place, neighbourhood or area." canalworld.net/forums/index.php?topic/113246-continue-cruising/page/2/

The next Council meeting will be a teleconference in January, followed by a face-to-face meeting in March (Kettlebrook Road, B77 1BS).

Members are welcome to join in the meeting; please just let the General Secretary or Chair know in advance (contact details inside cover).

The dates for Council meetings in 2022 are: January 15th (teleconference), March 12th, April 23rd (teleconference), June 18th, September 3rd (teleconference), October 8th (teleconference) and November 12th (after the AGM).

Welfare Officer Ken Hyllins

The last 18 months have been like no other with Coronavirus and the expectations of the respective managing authority—I suppose trying their best but in many cases falling short.

There have also been some positive outcomes of the virus in that I have been able to increase my level of contact, especially with higher management of CRT. Over the last year, I've monitored disability Facebook sites and the NABO website. I pick up current information relevant for my role and situation in my many friendly chats that I have with various authorities. I also monitor the gypsy travellers and boater sites. I attended their seminar via Zoom on obtaining care whilst travelling the country by whatever means. The particular advantage of this was that I developed contacts with NHS England and got a further understanding of the problems in obtaining care on the move, which I related to CRT. This has also led to a sharing of ideas between us and as reference point, as I help them, they help us with

Reports from NABO's reps.

many contacts.

I attend the disabled boaters' forum platform on behalf of NABO. The advantage to me in attending this is what I call the embarrassment effect, as CRT tells me the matters I raise don't exist till I prove they do, resulting in a hot-line to Matthew Symonds. I have also developed a good relationship with Sean Williams (CRT Welfare Officer). Usually I'm alerting him to malpractice or discrimination being exercised by various CRT support officers. Then we come to my work over the year: there has been a series of instances of discrimination against boaters, which is strange as I am reliably informed that these people have been trained and updated. The cases in



question have been lengthy matters, often with a lack of compassion from lower levels of management. This resulted in me bypassing them and thankfully getting the right results—reasonable adjustments and the continued wellbeing of the boaters concerned. I have had to represent myself again. The CRT operative was kept aware of my situation, but again displayed poor interpretation of the Equality Act.

I have been bringing to light the matter of dual enforcement to both CRT and in an article in NABO News. This is where a computer-generated email from CRT is sent to a boater to carry on moving and, if not challenged, remains on the boater's record, which can be a problem when the boater renews his or her licence. Sadly, in the last week I have been alerted to two more boaters who are experiencing discrimination from CRT, for which I am active yet again. I have developed a good working relationship with the Equality Commission and I have logged each case that I deal with, often getting sound advice from them.

Social Media Anne Husar

There's been much busy activity on social media, with daily items on Facebook that always attract comments and shares, and NABO's Twitter page is also very active. Often because of this, NABO is being mentioned elsewhere, notably on Narrowboatworld and Peter Underwood's 'News from the Water'. As they are regarded rather as 'CRT bashers', I try to counteract this by putting positive posts up on Facebook and Twitter, as well as the not so positive. Both sites are attracting new members every day. IWA has also been active on our Facebook page, the to and fro of comments on the post about the selling off of two London properties resulting in an invite from them to join forces about heritage issues. Talking of which, I had a long response from the BCN to my request to canal societies for perceived threats to 'their' parts of the system. They have much to be concerned about and it will be a valuable addition to our summary for the CRT Heritage group meeting in the New Year.



Wales and Southwest Mike Rodd

I attended the virtual meeting of the Wales & South West User Forum on 4th November, which concentrated on the K&A Canal.

I have to say that this was one of the very best CRT Forum meetings I have attended and the Director responsible, Mark Evans, really needs to be congratulated for developing a format which really works. Little about the glorious CRT, but hard canal information, led by two well-prepared reviews of present and immediate future work on the canal given by the lead operations team. The rest of the meeting was left open to questions from the 30 attendees. It is very clear that CRT is having much success in the involvement of volunteers in its work, some at the real engineering end. But of course this is not really surprising as they have built this approach right from the start, the K&A Canal Trust volunteers always worked closely with BWB/CRT. I hope Mark shares his approach with the other Directors.

West Midlands Peter Braybrook

When we arrived in Birmingham on our 250-mile cruise this summer, we moored in Cambrian Basin. We are Waterside Mooring customers and notified CRT of our intention to be away from the mooring for more than 30 days so had consent to moor at vacant long-term CRT mooring sites while cruising. Cambrian Basin is listed as a long-term mooring site. When we received news that my wife's nonogenarian mother had had a fall, we returned to ensure that she had the care she needed at home. While home, I received an email from CRT pointing out that we were overstaying on visitor moorings. I replied that, as a CRT moorer, I was entitled to stay on vacant long-term moorings. CRT enforcement replied that only four of



the eight finger moorings at Cambrian Wharf were long-term moorings and the rest were visitor moorings, so the T&C did not apply. There is no signage saying that. I told the Licence Support Officer our situation and negotiated an agreed overstay without any problem, but clear signage would have helped!

Our trip up the Staffordshire and Worcester Canal was a story of lock gates, beams and paddle gear in very poor condition. At Stewponey I met the 'response team'—two CRT operatives covering Milton Keynes to Llangollen for breakdown maintenance! They told a sorry tale: they had one spindle pinion with them and were examining the worn out gear on the two bottom paddles to decide which one to repair. I commented on the number of balance beams that were cased in plywood to keep them together and one wrapped in gaffer tape. They were quite proud that this was their work: keeping things going until gate renewal can take place or complete failure brings things to a halt. The Bratch and the staircases at Stourport were unfamiliar to me and I had a good experience with CRT volunteers. They were knowledgeable, informative and interested in the canal and its heritage and history.

On the Trent and Mersey I came across the first of several paddle gears that were covered with tailor-made yellow tarpaulin covers indicating that they were 'under repair'. Of course this is not true. They are awaiting repair at a very much later date. A volunteer at Middle Lock told me that the one at Shadehouse Lock had been there for months. While defects can occur at any time, I feel we should campaign for timely repair rather than waiting until both paddles are defective.

I received copies of the legal advice that NABO has received over the years—very informative and interesting though nothing definitive concerning whether licensing is a duty or a matter of contract. I was pleased to find that there is consistent advice that the T&Cs made under the 1962 Transport Act S43(3) cannot alter the terms of the 1995 BW Act S17. The latter is the current will of Parliament. I have had no response from CRT concerning my complaint that the introduction of T&Cs 'in error' caused me much trouble and anxiety. I have asked how the erroneous paragraphs could get into an important legal document and get issued. I have asked at what level of authority they were signed off.

Calor gas supplies

David Fletcher tries to find a bottle of gas.

You are all aware of the shortage of refills for Calor gas bottles, particularly in the last year. Calor has put the shortage down to record demand for cylinders due to lockdowns, warm weather, the boom in staycations, and the associated shortage of cylinders.

Yet we also see that waterside Calor dealers have a stock of empty bottles that are not being collected. We are told of continuing concerns with the uncertainty of supply, and short or cancelled deliveries being the normal for some retailers. We don't think that Calor is doing enough to use the available bottles in circulation, and it is abusing its self-created monopoly position on the inland waterways.

We have written to Calor asking them to prioritise the supply of bottled gas to inland waterway stockists, but they have chosen not to reply. We have therefore asked the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) to investigate Calor Gas, and its imposed dominance of the waterways market. Calor has an effective monopoly because many boaters do not have transport to find alternatives. The CMA has found it necessary to investigate Calor in the past.

In our contacts with members, we have found that refill availability is patchy around the country. In the South, there has been little problem, but the North West has seen widespread shortages, which continue. We see Calor advertising for filling and driving staff, so the company is obviously in some

distress. More recently we have heard that:

- Contracts for new cylinder loans are not available.
- Users can no longer swap one type of bottle to another, only like-for-like refills.
- 6kg propane bottles (widely used in the caravan market) are becoming more available.
- Calor is not refilling. It is supplying the very small 4.5kg butane bottles for the foreseeable future. This may impact the small summer cruiser market.

Calor has recently announced a deal with the sports clothing retailer outlet, Go, for the return of unused cylinders, regardless of condition, for a shop credit of £10. We have tested this system and it works. If you have an old cylinder and no paperwork, it is a good way of getting it back into the system.

Rising prices

On price, we can see that costs are increasing. The current web price for 13kg propane is £39.99. With the world price rises of bulk gas, there is only one way this is going. So what are the alternatives? If you are a high-volume user for heating etc., and you have transport, it is certainly worth shopping around. Flogas has a good share of the market and there are many nationwide outlets. The other way to go is to get at least one bottle designed for user refilling. These have been unavailable, but they are coming back into retailers now that the caravan market is less buoyant. They are expensive to buy, but if you are using 13kg every month, the upfront cost is recovered very quickly. But you need an autogas outlet near to you, and transport to get to it.

Going forward, on current performance we cannot trust and support Calor as a sole supplier to the waterways. We encourage members to consider alternatives if your cruising patterns allow it. If you have, or have had, a problem with Calor, please write to the CMA. The more customer complaints that are made, the more likelihood is that it will act. And if you have a gas story to tell, please let us know.



Licence fees and registration charges

From All Fools' Day 2022, private and business boat licence fees for boats less than 7ft 1" (2.16m) wide will increase by 4%.

Licence fees for boats in the top width band, over 10ft 7 1/2" (3.24m) wide, will be charged an additional 5%. Gold Licence holders will know of any changes to their licence fees after the results of the EA's consultation on boat registration charges are published, expected by the end of the year. Also from 1st April, Gold Licence holders wishing to visit the Middle Level will need to buy an Anglian Pass from the EA.

Pete Earley comments:

I'm now based permanently on the Great Ouse. My understanding is that a Transit Licence will be available from the Middle Level

Commissioners (MLC). An Anglia Pass is available to those who hold a Gold Licence or an EA Licence, but not to boaters with an EA Visitor Licence. For most narrowboats, this is a £100 and also gives you unlimited access to the River Cam, if you can actually find a mooring in Cambridge. The MLC website gives a downloadable application form for a Visitor Licence but I can't find the cost. But you can pay on entry at Stanground or Salters Lode.

For those of us with EA Licences who do not wish, or are unable, to cross the Middle Level, there is no Visitor Licence currently available for the Cam. I understand there was no consultation with any of the boating organisations on these changes. Blamed on Covid! Again.

CRT Annual Report 2020/21

The report describes the Trust's sources of income, totalling £215.4m (2019/20: £216.1m), which it claims included four fifths from non-boating sources (a quarter from return on its investments, a quarter from the Government grant and a fifth from commercial income from utilities and water development) and around a fifth from boat licences and income from boating businesses.

There was also income from lottery funds, corporate and local authority partnerships, and donations from the public. The report notes the completion of nearly 100 major projects, in addition to 282 planned repairs and 68 emergency repairs, plus £6.5m spent on dredging and £8.9m on vegetation management. There were 92 lock gates replaced. Overall spend on charitable activities decreased by £10.8m to £183.3m, partly due to provisions for Toddbrook Reservoir. It claims that 'underlying expenditure on core maintenance, repairs and infrastructure works continued to grow'.

As NN went to press, the following stoppage notices were posted for five canals (Trent & Mersey, Ashton, Huddersfield, Grand Union and Leeds & Liverpool): "This stoppage has been cancelled. We regret to inform you that we have had to cancel the work and remove it from our winter programme due to the impact of arising emergency works elsewhere on the network. We apologise for any inconvenience that this has caused".

canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/annual-report-and-accounts.



Thames Navigation Users Forum

Andy Soper of the Dutch Barge Association reports.

The protocol is that the papers are circulated two weeks before the meeting. We were advised by the EA on 30th September that: "You will be aware that we endeavour to circulate any papers identified on the agenda for TNUF meetings two weeks prior to the meeting date (14th October). Please take this email as a notification that we have taken the decision to postpone the circulation of papers until next Wednesday, 6th October. We believe it will be more beneficial to members to receive updates from us that cover outcomes for the whole of Q1 and Q2 rather than partial reports. Many of these reports, including compliance and finance, will not be available until early next week due to the way our internal reporting systems work.' In the event, a total 53 pages of papers were not eventually circulated until late on 8th October, giving very little time to take soundings from members. I met, virtually, with colleagues from the main motor boating organisations (NABO, RBOA, ATYC, TMBA and IWA) on 13th October to confirm our consensus on the principal issues.

Historically TNUF is chaired by a senior EA manager and often had an EA main Board Director in attendance. Attendance by EA managers this time was disappointing. The meeting was chaired by Maria Herlihy, one of the two operations managers currently sharing the additional role of Waterway Manager. Apologies for absence were sent by the Area Director Julia Simpson, Thames Area Enforcement Manager, Colin Chiverton,

National Navigation Manager, Andy Wilkinson, now promoted to Deputy Director Commercial and Navigation with his post being advertised and there was no Finance Manager available to advise on financial figures.

The meeting started in fine style with the acceptance of the minutes of the previous meeting as it was claimed that no objections had been received in time—an erroneous conclusion that they had to accept as the minutes were late being presented—see above!

Operations update

Presented by James Adams—an appointee to a new post as Senior Team Leader responsible to both waterway managers and responsible for managing some 10 other managers and team leaders.

He claimed that having a resident lock-keeper allocated to each lock and recruiting some 24 seasonal relief lock-keepers was a great success. It was pointed out that in previous years we had summer assistant lock-keepers as well, giving significantly more manpower over the summer season.

He was pleased that 70% of the volunteers had turned up again this year, but had no answer as to why 30% hadn't. He was also pleased to announce that 20 seasonal reliefs have been kept on beyond the end of September and seemed surprised that this was challenged as a waste of money as there are too many lock-keepers with too little to do in winter. Unfortunately, on this issue, as on many others in this meeting, discussion was cut short with

the comment: "This will have to be continued by correspondence" (e.g. email) limiting the holding of managers accountable for their actions.

A communication plan was announced and challenged by boaters. There is a communications working group within TNUF but this had not been called to comment on the plan—or even be involved!

The discussions on vegetation management, a proposal for a wider water safety forum, non-return valves on water points and pump-outs, and red/yellow boards protocol were all guillotined to be discussed by email.

Finance.

Despite promises to improve the presentation of the financial position, we were still sent obtuse and impenetrable data. EA continues to obfuscate the figures as the Thames registration year runs from 1st January to 31st December but the financial reporting year is from 1st April to 31st March.

What was clear from the figures is that some 1000 boats—£500,000 of income—is missing this year, despite the marinas being full and increasing numbers 'continuously cruising' the river.

Compliance.

The proud announcement of 78 launch patrols since April was met with scepticism as it works out as one patrol every other day. EA have ten launches but were unable to advise the annual cost of maintaining one patrol boat. Guillotined discussion again.

Enforcement.

Article 16 of the Inland Waterways Order 2010 enables EA to remove boats that do not comply with registration requirements, but they do not enforce this and indeed are

believed to have agreed with the National Bargees and Travellers that any craft that is a home will not be removed.

No-one from EA was willing to confirm or deny this, but they did advise that they believe they need to consult further before using these powers—granted 10 years ago!

Boat Registration Consultation. Sam Holland, National Navigation Adviser, presented the outcomes and advised that significant opposition to both area charging and the level of increase had been reported, but he was not able to advise how this would be reported to the Secretary of State—who has the last word. The £20m p.a. to fund the EA waterways was challenged and a breakdown by waterway asked for again—not available—nor is the level of service that this is based on. The Thames 'Business Plan'—more a collection of aspirations—was rushed through with most of it 'to be discussed by email'.

One glimmer of hope—if it is possible and the contractors can make it safe to do so—the locks closed over the Christmas/New Year will be reopened for passage during the construction industry three-week close-down. My prompting worked!

This was an almost totally unsatisfactory meeting. It was held online when the EA's own main Board was meeting face-to-face. Too many items were tabled late and crammed into just two and a half hours. However, EA has no statutory requirement to hold any consultations—it was abolished as part of the 'bonfire of the Quangos' by David Cameron in 2015.

On the other hand, my complaint about EA waterways management is moving slowly forward and is being investigated by a manager from outside of Thames, with a meeting agreed for 25th October.

Changes at Boat Safety

David Fletcher explains the new Examination Check Procedures.



Information about the changes to the Checking Procedures is here:

boatsafetyscheme.org/about-us/introducing-the-revision-of-the-core-bss-examination-checking-procedures/

Download the fourth Edition (Sep 2021) of the BSS Examination Checking Procedures for Private Boats

boatsafetyscheme.org/media/299273/bss-examination-checking-procedures-core-private-boat-public-interim-complete-compress.pdf

The BSS team members are on a campaign at the moment to improve the consistency and quality of the examinations.

We are all familiar with the discussions about how my boat passed last time, so why has it failed now? These events do nothing to improve the confidence of boaters, and they don't improve the confidence of the navigation authorities either. They are worried. We should not forget that the BSS examination has only an incidental role in the boat owner's safety (the so called 'first party risk'). For navigation authorities it is about making sure that all the boats they have licenced are not a danger to others. This in the their duty of care. The statistics show that a third of boats fail their BSS examinations. The actual number is probably higher, because some failure points are fixed at the time and are not recorded. It is not a good picture.

NABO's presence

NABO representatives have been working in the BSS committees over many years to help and guide these issues. It is an important part of the work we do.

The starting point for this piece of work was the previous Examination Check Procedures (ECP) edition, together with a long list of inconsistencies, lack of clarity and the like identified by the office, examiners and users over the recent years. The task has been to go through the detail of each part of the procedures and amend the wording to address the problems. To consolidate this, the

office has developed a new training programme for examiners to ensure that they all have the same improved information and are equipped to achieve a high level of consistency. Existing examiners are currently undergoing retraining. If they do not complete this, their registration will be withdrawn. The overall number of examiners has been dropping steadily over the past few years and it has been imperative that a new cohort be introduced with up to date training. A group of new examiners is being trained and they will shortly commence working.

Examination Check Procedure 4th Edition

So, in October, BSS released the 4th edition of the private boat Examination Check Procedures. These are on the BSS website on the red highlighted pages.

They apply to all private boats, including liveaboards. This is the product of the four-year review of all eight parts to the Examination Check Procedures. You may recall that the revision to gas testing was rolled out last year. So what does it mean for your boat? Have the requirements changed and what should you do? The BSS says this:

"Apart from changes to two technical standards, it is important to understand that no new technical standards or requirements are being introduced. These two changes only affect a tiny number of boats with cast-iron fittings on LPG systems and a few dozen Wilderness trail boats with gas fridges. Crucially, there are a handful of slight re-

laxations of the preceding BSS requirements and/or the addition of further compliance option for the vast majority of changes. However, around three-quarters of the 540 adjustments are editorial improvements or process amendments. These will help everyone's understanding and application of the BSS checks, whether they are BSS Examiners, boat owners or members of the marine industry."

For the two actual changes, these will be consulted on in early 2022 to comply with navigation authori-

ties legislation such as the 1995 BW Act. So unless you have iron fittings in your gas system, or a Wilderness fridge, you won't be affected by a technical change in the requirements.

But with improved guidance in the Examination Check Procedures, some examination outcomes will change for your boat. Of course it may be that the item was just missed last time. Take it on the chin. Stuff happens. But you are entitled to ask for a full explanation from your examiner.

Grand Union water transfer project

The project aims to divert water from Minworth Waste Water Treatment Facility, which normally flows via the Rivers Tame, Trent and Humber out to sea, and transfer it to the South East where water is in short supply.

Using the Grand Union as a conduit is one of several schemes being evaluated. Water would be piped to join the canal near Braunston and then be abstracted in Hertfordshire at Leighton Buzzard, Tring or Hemel Hempstead. The EA favours Leighton Buzzard so that water is not taken over the Tring summit as apparently this could adversely affect chalk streams in the area.

The whole canal will be surveyed, pound by pound, to inform calculations of flow and how a slight increase in water level might affect boating (e.g. under low bridges). The project group needs local information to flag up any constraints they might face. This might also identify other opportunities for improvement (e.g. to towpaths). If members who are familiar with the GU between Braunston and Tring know of issues that the project should take into consideration, please let me know and I will pass them on.

Helen Hutt



CRT privacy issues

David Fletcher examines CRT's response to NABOs analysis of the recent changes to their privacy documents.

In December 2020, whilst the terms and conditions consultation was in progress, we reviewed the privacy documents and made a submission on our concerns.

They were numerous, but three stood out: the first was readability; the second was that the documents were clearly written at different times, so they did not link up; and thirdly we did not agree with the legal consents. Many of the matters we felt were not compliant with the law. We heard nothing for six months, no request for clarification, no phone call, just the usual legal blanking that we have become used to from CRT in-house legal department. They don't do customer relations.

We did finally get a written response at the same time that the new terms and conditions were produced in May 2021. The privacy documents were also republished, like a rabbit out of the hat. Thankfully many simple issues have been addressed, so we are making progress. Are we happy now? No, we are not. We have offered to help CRT, but they have not responded.

CRT says that these documents are not part of our licence agreement. NABO does not agree. They are the legally binding promise by CRT as to how they handle our data. They go together with the terms and conditions document and because they are part of the offering to boaters at time of purchase when they buy a licence, they are therefore part of the contract.

The privacy laws require documents to be readable and

understandable, but the current versions are not well composed and don't meet the accepted standards. CRT understands this because it rewrote the terms document to comply. So why not the privacy documents as well?

For data handling, CRT has to identify each parcel of data, say what it is going to do with it and why, and then identify the legal basis of the agreement to hold the data. This is the 'legal consent'. For our boat licence, the consent is 'public task' because the activity is a legal duty of CRT governed by the Acts. Although CRT has wide powers under the '62 Transport Act, in our view these do not extend to changing the scope of the '95 Act.

CRT has assumed your agreement to holding and using, say, your email address for activities other than licensing, for example consultations, marketing, advertising etc. it says this is a legitimate interest. Legitimate interest is in itself a valid legal consent, but there are limits and it places a high duty of care on CRT. There can be no transfer of data from one parcel of data to another. For example, your email address should not be transferred from your licence application, to be used for marketing, customer research or self-promotion. In general, public bodies are not allowed to use legitimate interest as a consent. They need to ask.

CRT says it uses legitimate interest as the consent to cover boat insurance details, but any request for data other than specifically required in the Act, exceeds CRT powers.

They've tried to get around this by putting a clause in the terms document. Is this legal? We don't think so.

So what have we done about all this? Fortunately the Information Commissioner's Office is responsible for enforcement of UK privacy law, so we have made a formal complaint.

We await their response. In the meantime, if you are in any doubt about the customer friendliness of CRT legal, have a look at this statement in the Privacy Policy: "We may

change this Privacy Policy (or the individual Privacy Schedules below) from time to time to ensure it reflects current legislation without notice to you, so please do check it regularly."

So one day, when you are moored up and unable to move because of an unscheduled stoppage, do go and check the CRT Privacy Documents. They might have been changed yet again, to reflect their own self-serving view of the law. And according to them, they don't even have to tell you! I doubt a Judge would agree.

Toddbrook restoration update

Toddbrook reservoir is essential for the long-term water supply to the Peak Forest and Macclesfield canals.

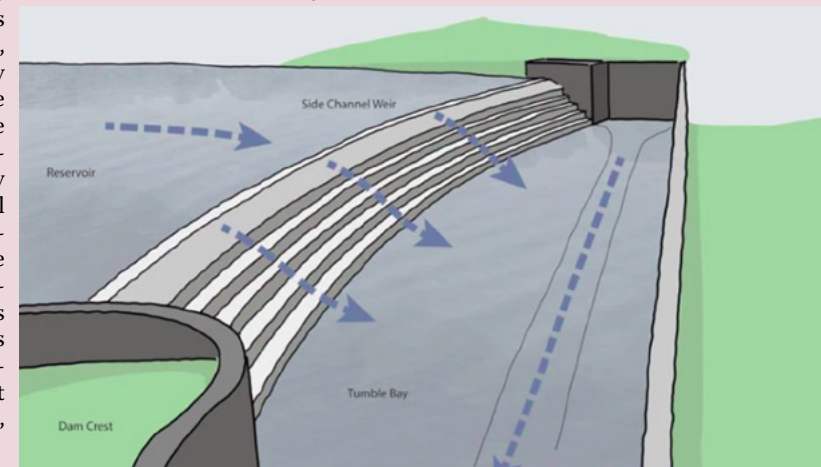
Following public consultations in September 2020 and June 2021, CRT has submitted a planning application to High Peak Borough Council to replace the 1970s spillway with a new overflow side channel weir, 'tumble bay', spillway channel and stilling basin.

These will link to the existing bypass channel and funnel excess water when the reservoir is full into the River Goyt. The planning application also proposes to replace the sailing club facilities with a new clubhouse, boat storage, slipway and car park. There was a public wish to see water constantly flowing down the spillway channel and this will be achieved by connecting the top of the tumble bay into the existing reservoir bypass channel. The project is estimated to cost £12–£16 million and, subject to planning permission,

work is due to start in spring 2022 taking about two years to complete. The high-volume pumps will remain in the reservoir to manage water levels until the end of the project.

The planning application is available on the High Peak Council website at planning.highpeak.gov.uk/portal/servlets/ApplicationSearchServlet?PKID=251190 and more information is on the CRT website at canalrivertrust.org.uk/restoring-toddbrook-reservoir.

Diagram of the proposed side channel weir and tumble bay
Diagram: CRT





Built like a brick... boathouse

Ian Hutson shares his thoughts on reusing some CRT buildings.

Not long ago, I wandered up and down the Audlem flight, leaving a tangible trail of cheery wellbeing.

There are two buildings on the flight, offside, easily accessible and on CRT territory. One is a little larger than the usual cabin arrangement on a 'historic' narrowboat, the other is of a more generous size, akin to a London architect's notion of a 'Granny Flat extension' and with room for perhaps six well-behaved grannies. Both buildings are on the slippery slopes of looking sad and sorry for themselves, but basically structurally sound. There are more countryside walks about than you could shake a pair of Alpine walking-poles at. Boat-loving Audlem is a mere drunken stagger away.

Now, I'm no landlord, but are these buildings really beyond bringing in any useful income and being saved in the process? In an era when, for example, Benidorm is inaccessible without ten reams of isolationist paperwork? Really?

Some sheet roofing, a damp-proof course, glass back where glass used to be and fitted out internally with exactly the amenities one finds on a narrowboat, supplied in the same, boat-like manner? Elsan or composting toilet, water from a tank, two domestic batteries and a couple of solar panels.

Add fluffy pillows, a shower that—as with all boat systems—pumps out into the canal, a stove and Robert's your mother's brother. Bung in some panoramic windows lock-side and you couldn't get a better view of hundreds of those endlessly amusing boat thingies oinking up and down.

The smaller one, a single-person retreat at £500 a week? The larger one a family affair at perhaps £1,500 a week. It really wouldn't take long to rake back the initial investment and be into regular, reliable profit—which, incidentally, might then be used to repair the murderous state of some of the Audlem Flight lock landings.

Some healthier specimens of human can still tow a suitcase-on-wheels a few hundred yards from their cars, especially if the case is their own. An old retainer boating past once or thrice a week with barrels of water, Elsan cassettes and a delivery of groceries from the local Co-op, wouldn't be akin to recreating the Moon landings.

Elfin Safety objections? There's nothing in the location of these buildings that holiday hire boaters don't already deal with daily; off-grid, proximity to water, isolation at night, boats passing by, windlasses flying in all directions.

How many properties on two thousand miles of canals might become phenomenal, quirky holiday properties? Those that haven't already been sold off for magic beans by the Trust, I mean.

Better by Water?

Anne Husar surveys yet more recent heritage sales.

This has been a bumper couple of months for CRT's finances. By quietly auctioning off four more listed properties, including two in London, they have another £4m in the coffers to spend, who knows on what? I do hope it's for more of those tacky blue and white signs.

I wonder how the sale of the Top Lock Cottage at Tardebigge got past CRT's Heritage Impact Assessment. Presumably the fact that this was where Tom Rolt and Robert Aickman met on nb Cressy, leading to the formation of the IWA, had no 'impact' on their decision. You'd have thought the IWA might have objected to the sale for this reason alone. Never mind, there's still a plaque there marking the spot.

And then there's Buggeddin. Listed it might be but there are ways around that protection for anyone with the knowledge and money to persist. Who knows, it may end up looking like this wonderfully enhanced lock cottage we found on our travels. Better by water? Hunt the cottage...

So, what protection has the nation got against this insidious privatising of the UK's unique canal system? Staying with the idea of protection, you would think that CRT's Protector, answerable to the Secretary of State, might have been notified occasionally of sales and maybe, just maybe, would say no. This must be perceived by CRT to be too much of a risk to take, as none of these sales has been put up before him. How about the Cultural Advisory Heritage Group set up by CRT? No, they will only advise 'stra-



teggically!

There's always clause 2.2

of CRT's charitable objects, which they signed up to, that stipulates that CRT will preserve and protect all heritage. Patently being ignored.

So we are left with Richard Parry's assertion that CRT is very careful who they sell to. This is absurd. How does CRT control that at auction?

The only protection there seems to be is us, all of us, objecting to the continued sales of iconic canal properties. If you are concerned, email richard.parry@canalrivertrust.org.uk and write letters to your newspaper of choice.

CRT has already sold nearly 70 listed properties and, as if that was not enough, Braunston Stop House and Navigation House in Northwich are under threat of sale. Two more listed buildings that CRT should be proud to have in their care. But do they care enough?



Top: Hunt the cottage
Photo: Anne Husar

Bottom: Heritage Top Lock House, Tardebigge sold at auction in November for £303,500
Photo: BidX1 Technology Ltd

The tiny one (below) would make a single-person retreat.

Photos: Ian Hutson



Cosgrove

A little village with an interesting canal heritage

John Devonald is out and about locally.

There are many incredible and interesting feats of engineering around the canal system: long tunnels that took years to hack through hillsides and huge flights of locks that, when you are at the bottom and look up, make your heart plunge to your boots at the thought of operating them. Most of us know of them and have visited many over the years.

I'm lucky where I am based in Milton Keynes in that it is a lovely part of the Grand Union canal with beautiful scenery and varied wildlife. The nearest big canal tourist attraction is Stoke Bruerne with its canal museum, flight of locks and Blisworth tunnel. Lauded as the typical canalside village and with huge historical presence and popular public houses, it is a worthy destination for the boater, the canal enthusiast and the gongoozler. However

all over the system there are other canal villages that haven't had the same recognition, even though there are historical features and stories that deserve to be better known. Just six miles to the south of Stoke Bruerne is Cosgrove Village, where its best known features are probably its popular pub and Cosgrove Park holiday destination. Lesser known are the canal-based areas of interest and Cosgrove has its fair share. As you come south from Stoke Bruerne, the first one you encounter is an ornamental bridge which, for some reason, is called Solomon's Bridge by the locals. The style of the bridge is due to the insistence of the local landowners, the Biggins family, and it was built when the north and south parts of the canal met. It is, so I'm told, one of only two ornamental bridges on the canal.

Not more than a hundred yards further south, just after passing the Barley Mow pub garden on your right, you cross the horse tunnel. This isn't visible from the canal so you need to moor up and take the tunnel to get to the pub on the other side. Built so that horses could cross the canal where the towpath changes sides, it is a wonderful little tunnel that my children and then grandchildren love and it's all the better for being horse-shaped!

Continuing on along the canal, you come to Cosgrove Wharf on the left and the start of the Buckingham arm on the right, just above Cosgrove lock. The wharf still has narrow gauge rail tracks where the trip-boat moors. The Buckingham

Right top:
Cosgrove Horse tunnel,
Photo: S. Gudgeon

Right bottom:
Cosgrove Solomans bridge
Photo: Nigel Cox @geograph

Below:
Cosgrove Wharf with the
Buckingham Arm ahead and
the lock for the Grand Union
canal southwards on the left.
The old wharf rails can be
seen in the foreground.
Photo: J. Law



arm at present only goes a short distance and is used as moorings for Cosgrove Marina. The arm has an active society that is working to bring it back into water.

Going down the lock you come to rather an unusual large basin. This was the start of where the original locks went down to the River Ouse, before the Iron Trunk Aqueduct was built, five down to the Ouse and four back up the other side. Their path is still visible with one lock partially rebuilt, which is accessible from the aqueduct.

Travelling about half a mile along a straight embankment you come to the Iron Trunk Aqueduct. It has a long history in itself, having first been built in brick, then collapsing and finally being rebuilt as the iron trunk.

It has a walkway on one side, the other has just the lip of the trunk, so it is one of those places where it's better to stay on the other side of the boat if you are not so keen on heights. There are plenty of mooring close by and information boards all around the structure, so it is worth stopping and exploring.

So that's Cosgrove village: just a little place but with lots of canal history. Blink and you would miss it, but if you are passing through it's worth taking a bit of time to explore it.



Three ages of the waterways

Paul Monahan calls for a united front by boaters.



Barge Tom on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal 1902

As with the Shakespearean view of Man, the waterways have existed in several distinct phases, each transforming into the next. However, rather than the seven ages of Man, the waterways can best be viewed in three stages.

These ages can be defined as **Transport, Leisure and Housing**. Each is an immense shift in the very nature of the waterways. What makes these points of inflection so important is the way in which the changes happened in relatively short periods of time and the actions or otherwise of the waterway authorities during those periods of upheaval. Each age of the waterways of course includes an element of the others, but these elements are very minor as an adjunct to the principal

We are now all suffering from the refusal by BW, and carried on by CRT, to recognise that there is a problem in the making.

and defining use in that age.

The first age of waterways covers the time from the earliest development of canals to the final cessation of regular long-distance carrying in 1970. During this time, the defining characteristic was **transport**, whether of raw materials, manufactured

goods, or people. The canal was primarily a place of work and associated with it were three sub-groups of people; those concerned with the handling of goods, those who moved the boats and those who maintained the infrastructure. Characteristic of all these together is that they formed a closed group centred on the waterway which was their life's work.

The second age, which grew out of the demise of the first, is **leisure**. Although pleasure-boating existed during the first age, it always and quite explicitly took second place to transport. Indeed, pleasure craft were expected to give way to commercial boats and to give them precedence at locks. During this period, the living full-time aboard, which undoubtedly took place, was, except in the case of rare 'houseboat certificates', either as an adjunct to the remaining commercial carrying and very much subject to official disapproval, even if usually tacitly ignored by the authorities. Further, living afloat, other than for commercial boating, was then generally because of an abiding interest in the waterways rather than as one of many alternative lifestyles.

The third age, that of **housing**, grew out of the second age because of the increasing use of the waterways for accommodation and the changing attitudes of the authorities to this. The causes of the 'housing crisis' are not relevant to this article, but the results very much are.

Whatever the answer is, it is certainly not more linear moorings. There are still many people who wish to travel extensively on their boats and a proliferation of linear moorings will mean that the experience of travelling the waterways, will more akin to passing through a car-park.

Of course, people have always lived on boats, but in times past

there were far fewer and almost invariably the choice of living aboard came from a deep interest in boats and waterways. Today, it is so often just somewhere to live. Once it was a way of life, now it is just a way of living. Unfortunately, we are now all suffering from the refusal by BW, and carried on by CRT, to recognise that there is a problem in the making. The use of any entity for a purpose for which it was not intended is always fraught and will cause unexpected difficulties (for example, turning towpaths into mass cycleways).

One thing is clear; that the viewpoints from either extreme must not prevail, for this will be a loss and to the detriment of all. This applies where any one section of canal users demands special treatment over other canal users. Alas, there is also a small minority of live-aboards who demand everything, yet who pay nothing. This often causes internecine strife between boaters. More seriously, should the wider public ever become aware of how few people living aboard boats pay for services such as roads, libraries, or schools, provided by local authorities through council taxes, then the public backlash, that will inevitably follow, will encompass all boaters.

In these difficult times, when CRT is doing little to maintain navigation while imposing yet more arbitrary 'terms and conditions' and ignoring the law which governs our waterways, we must not allow them to set one group of boaters against another by such divisive and underhand tactics as apparently favouring certain groups or creating different classes of licence, the better to sow division and dissent between boaters. 'Divide and conquer' is not just a military strategy, as we are all set to learn to our cost.

TECHIE'S



CORNER

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

Ortomarine conducted a trial to test the operation and efficiency of eight of their boats. This was done to evaluate the difference between the different propulsion systems available on narrowboats, with emphasis on the 'green' agenda that is being pushed by Government and other interested parties.

The test fleet consisted of three conventional diesel-powered boats, two parallel hybrid boats and three

Ortomarine narrowboat trial

John Devonald crunches some numbers.

serial hybrid boats. For those not conversant with the different hybrid systems, this is the explanation from Fischer Panda: in a 'serial hybrid drive' the diesel generator supplies an electric motor directly. The electric motor is the main propulsion of the boat.

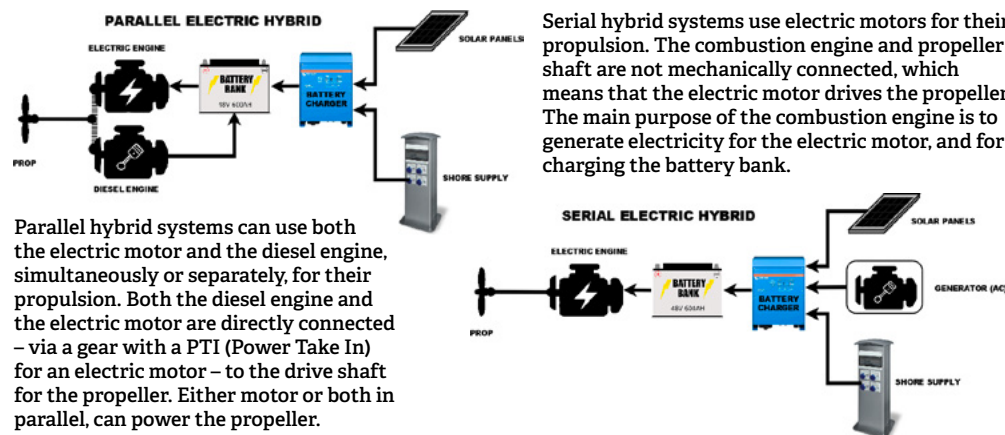
In a 'parallel hybrid drive' the electric motor is parallel switched to the drive shaft of the diesel engine. This means that the electric motor works as a generator when the boat is running with its diesel engine. When the diesel engine is turned off the vessel can be driven with the electric motor only. Two of the boats, one conventional powered and one serial hybrid, were using hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel and the others, where used, red diesel. The trial was held on the River Severn going upstream from Worcester.

This is a short synopsis of the trial and the full document is available at www.ortomarine.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Ortomarine-Narrowboat-Trial-Final-Report.pdf.

Observations and conclusions by Ortomarine:

- Electric boats create less noise than conventional boats, and can be so quiet that the only sound is that of the wash.
 - Power measurements can be used to identify locations for dredging and hence reduce the overall cost of dredging operations.
 - Parallel hybrid installations can halve the fuel burned compared with a conventional installation.
 - Serial hybrid installations can reduce the fuel burned to one third that of a conventional installation.
 - The sunshine available on the day of the trial provided as much as one third of the energy used during the cruise.
 - Using HVO fuel will reduce CO₂ emissions by 90% compared with normal diesel fuel.
 - A model has been developed which allows the fuel consumption, and hence CO₂ emissions, of normal diesel, parallel hybrid and serial hybrid boats to be predicted.
 - Narrowboats compare badly with international emissions targets for motor cars, but the technology demonstrated in this trial shows we can exceed those targets.
- There are more conclusions and observations in the full report but to comment on the ones above: yes, an electric boat will be quieter than a diesel powered boat—where's that 'rolling eyes' emoji! Parallel and serial installations reduce fuel consumption by a half and a third respectively. Now, I'm a bit confused at those statements unless they are allowing recharging by solar, because the second table *Trial and model energy consumption* suggests otherwise—unless I have completely misread it.

| Class | Diesel | | | Parallel hybrid | | Serial hybrid | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| | Boat | Here We Go Again | Mokoro | Oyster Moon | Mordiford Dragon | Stannator | Hunky Dory | Old Nick | Perseverance |
| Role in trial | Reference diesel | Shut down in locks | Diesel with HVO fuel | Using diesel on the river | Using electric through-out | Fischer Panda hybrid | Vetus serial hybrid | Serial hybrid HVO | |
| Length | 58'6" | 60'6" | 58'6" | 60' | 58'6" | 61' | 58'6" | 62' | |
| Diesel engine | 43 BHP | 43 BHP | 43 BHP | 50 BHP | 50 BHP | | | | |
| Electric motor | | | | Hybrid marine 10kW | Hybrid marine 10kW | Bell marine 10kW | Vetus 10kW | Tema 12kW | |
| Generator | | | | | | Fischer Panda 12kVA | Vetus 6.5kVA | Beta 7kVA | |
| Batteries | 4 x 12V AGM | 4 x 6V lead acid | 2 x 12V lead carbon | 24 x 2V lead acid | 24 x 2V lead acid | 24 x 2V lead carbon | 24 x 2V lead carbon | 2 x 24V lithium | |
| Battery size (kWh) | 4.8 | 5.28 | 5.04 | 37.2 | 37.2 | 48 | 38.4 | 13.44 | |
| Solar (kW) | 0.48 | 0.25 | 1.28 | 1.28 | 1.28 | 1.92 | 1.92 | 1.28 | |



Perseverance is a 62ft serial hybrid built on an Alexander Boats hull. Perseverance is powered by a TEMA SPM132-1 propulsion set (12kW, 48Vdc) and has two MG Lithium Batteries (LFP. 25.6V 280Ah. There is a Beta Marine BetaGen 10, 1500 rpm diesel generator, with super sound insulation, housed under the bow deck.



| Boat | Trial | | | | | Model | | | | | |
|------------------|-------|---------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------------------|--------|-----|
| | Time | Battery | Solar | Fuel | | Total | Energy | Diesel | Hybrid generation | | |
| | Hours | kWh | kWh | Litres | kWh | kWh | kWh | Litres | Hours | Litres | kWh |
| Here We Go Again | 6.5 | 0 | | 12 | 116.40 | 116.40 | 10.3 | 12.0 | | | |
| Mokoro | | 0 | | 10.45 | 101.37 | 101.37 | | | | | |
| Oyster Moon | 6.7 | 0 | | 11 | 106.70 | 106.70 | 10.9 | 12.5 | | | |
| Mordiford Dragon | 7 | 7.66 | 1.66 | 2 | 19.40 | 28.27 | 10.4 | 14.3 | 1.5 | 7.1 | 69 |
| Stannator | 8.1 | (4.65) | 1.84 | 0 | | (6.49) | 8.5 | 15.6 | 1.3 | 5.8 | 56 |
| Hunky Dory | 7.9 | 6.62 | 2.90 | 0 | | 9.52 | 9.3 | 13.7 | 2.1 | 3.6 | 35 |
| Old Nick | 7.5 | 7.03 | 2.77 | 0 | | 9.80 | 8.1 | 12.8 | 3.2 | 3.7 | 36 |
| Perseverance | 7.8 | 2.72 | 1.86 | 6 | 58.20 | 62.78 | 8.8 | 13.4 | 2.0 | 3.6 | 35 |

Trial and model energy consumption



Left: Vetus Serial Hybrid
 Right: Parallel Hybrid with Beta 38 and Hybrid Marine 10kW motor
 All photos: Ortomarine
ortomarine.co.uk

Solar obviously is a must and the bigger the array the better. If the panels on these boats supply a third of the power needed for a day's cruise, then that's a reduction of a third in fuel consumption.

If we are talking green, HVO is the obvious answer. Even on the hybrid boats it reduced the emissions by a factor of 10 and was said by the people on the narrowboats that were

using it to give off much less noticeable fumes.

So an interesting read with a few caveats from my point of view. If you are in the market for a new boat, a hybrid boat makes sense. Is the difference in efficiency and the silence of electric power enough to warrant the cost and upheaval of changing from conventional to hybrid? Certainly not from my point of view. In the report they do admit not taking into account the hot water and battery charging resulting from the conventional diesel, which is quite important to me so that I have full batteries and hot water when I moor up. These boats are still reliant on diesel and therefore at the whims and vagrancies of the Government of the day deciding what's best for us. And changing your conventional narrowboat to using HVO will be more ecologically friendly than running a hybrid on red diesel. That's food for thought.

CO₂ Emissions

| | CO ₂ using normal fuel | | CO ₂ using HVO | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------------|
| | No solar | With solar | No solar | With solar |
| Diesel boats | 29.2 | | 2.92 | |
| Parallel hybrid | 16.7 | 13.7 | 1.7 | 1.4 |
| Serial hybrid | 9.6 | 6.8 | 1.0 | 0.7 |

How to get our voice heard

At the end of an era, **Mark Tizard** has some issues that need shouting about.

It strikes me this is a question for the wider boating community. The vast majority of boaters go boating to get away from the hassles of everyday life.

For the majority, it's a recreational activity, so as a group we are pretty apathetic when it comes to anything to do with the management of the waterways. Despite boater satisfaction being on a downward trend in recent years, boaters tend to shrug their shoulders and just accept the issues. Look at the recent consultations with low response rates.

CRT is no doubt working hard behind the scenes persuading DEFRA to renew its grant. Boaters need this to happen as it's in all our interests that Government recognises the importance of the canal and river network as a national asset to be treasured by the population as a whole. It's a shame that CRT would appear not to need boaters or boating organisations to help them shout this from the cabin top. We should all be engaged with maximising the funding for the waterways. As I said, maybe it's time for us to start a campaign to get our voices heard both with the navigation authorities and with Government.

Well, for me it's an end of an era and, after 40 years of boat ownership from dinghies and a Broads cruiser, to 30 years on the canals, we are hanging up our windlass and leaving the cut. Not an easy decision to make as the pull is strong and we may yet get a small boat on the Broads. Trying to sum up our reasons is difficult as there are many. Over the last few years we have found it increasingly difficult to en-

joy boating to the full. We are not getting any younger and the locks are getting increasingly harder to operate, paddles are stiff and gates are badly balanced. Having a long deep-drafted boat is becoming more of a challenge as the bottom gets nearer to the top, especially when mooring. We used to enjoy planning a long voyage but now it's a challenge with what appears to be annual water shortages, and a growing number of breaches and stoppages having the potential to disrupt planned navigation. Lastly, there has been a change in the canals over the last decade or so—canalside pubs have either closed or been turned in gastro pubs. Lockside cottages and other heritage sites are just sold off. Infrastructure looks, and is, neglected and increasingly new boaters seem to have no awareness of established canal etiquette—whether that is waiting/helping another boat through locks, to mooring considerately, or not running engines or generators long into the evening. The towpath community, once its great strength, is under pressure, compounded by a canal authority that appears more focused on PR spin and signage than ensuring safe navigation. Towpath users appear to be pampered while boaters are constantly reminded by CRT how little they contribute financially. Ineffectual enforcement of a few means ever more rules and regulations for the majority. Regrettably, we have decided we can get more bang for our buck emotionally and financially elsewhere. This is not a whinge, just a personal reflection as the canals have given us so much, for which we will be forever grateful.

Rewind

Issue No 6, 2006



Peter Fellows steps in to review NABO News from 15 years ago and wishes Howard a speedy recovery from his recent illness. This time, it's Issue No 6, 2006, and some of these extracts resonate strongly today.

Funding The main topic in this issue was DEFRA deciding not to pay BW the £62.5m originally agreed. In July, BW was told that its grant for 2006/07 would be cut by 7.5% (£4.5m) with the possibility of a further cut of 2.5% (£1.5m) in the autumn. Stuart Sampson, writing in his Chairman's column, said: "However much we may want to scorn BW, it can't look after our waterways without

enough money, so it is in all our interests to put political pressure on the Government to save cuts to the 'cut'."

Adrian Stott wrote presciently: "Waterways need reliable long-term funding, because they need proper maintenance every year. If it is skimped, the catch-up costs more when it is eventually done. They need different, secure, funding. BW should be given an endowment of property in exchange for never coming cap-in hand to the Government again and NABO should lead the call for one. BW makes considerable money from developing and leasing its property. It could make much more, if it had more property. The government has a lot of property, so there's the answer. If the total value of the holdings ... were big enough (probably about £1.5 billion), the annual waterways grant could be cancelled completely, which would be classed as a politically-valuable government spending reduction.

This could help in the longer term, but would take years to set up. It would also mean that towpath users would no longer be paying for the waterways through their taxes. It would shift even more emphasis away from BW's core activity. This trend is already evident from the appointment of three new 'non-exec' board members, leaving only one with any demonstrable interests in the original purpose of the canal network. We must do our bit to get the cuts reduced now. Joining a banner-bearing flotilla up the Thames past the Houses of Parliament is one idea. Blockades were suggested—but not at Fradley Junction as it wouldn't look out of the ordinary!"

Another topic that still has a familiar ring:

Meetings "The meeting [with BW] started with a presentation by the Head of Boating Development outlining the 'framework' of her activities to date, displayed as a series of 'slides' on a screen, each containing a bullet pointed list of headings which she read out and commented on. We have been grumbling for many years about 'Death by Powerpoint' at BW meetings. (It went on to explain: "For those in blissful ignorance, Powerpoint is a Microsoft computer program inflicted upon the business world to create 'slideshows' which have the power to either bore audiences to tears at meetings, or lift them to new levels of enlightenment").

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.

Middle Level woes

I thought that I should draw your attention to a problem for those few boaters who use the Middle Level to travel between the rivers Great Ouse and Nene. I have been using the link for many years to gain access to the canal system from my home mooring at Earith on the Great Ouse.

On 26th October, I received an email from the Canal and River Trust to advise that issue of new Gold Licences for 2022 was being delayed.

The email went on to say that navigation of the Middle Level would not now be covered by the Gold Licence and that one would need to purchase an Anglian Pass. I have written to the Canal and River Trust who have replied saying that I should contact the Environment Agency. I have written to the EA and am waiting, with little hope, for a reply.

Perhaps other readers who use the Middle Level to move between the rivers Great Ouse and Nene could add their voice to mine in protesting at this very retrograde step.

Richard Collet-Fenson, NB Odin's Hall

Biting John Devonald's head off

Cats are one of the most wonderful animals on the planet and John Devonald's narrow and ill-informed view of them is an insult to these beautiful creatures. By comparison, dogs are dirty, smelly and sycophantic, and the noise they make is intolerable.

My cat, Sophie, is decorative and affectionate. She has a cat-flap and is free to go, but her territory is the boat, not the land around. Of course, she hunts. So do dogs. She has a strong personality and, above all, she purrs. Stroking a purring cat is good for you, John!

Don May, NB Wine & Roses, Shropshire Union

An oldie but goodie: from the Southport Champion Newspaper 1919

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 I spotted in Oxford.



Too many barges 'spoil view' along canal towpath

ONE recent fine morning, I decided to take a stroll along the towpath at Burscough Bridge.

After accessing the towpath through an opening at the car park, I was very dismayed to see a very long line of barges moored up to my left and right.

I understand that what constitutes a 'view' is personal to the viewer. Some take pleasure in seeing lots of barges moored up and I know that barge people keep their barges in good condition and are nice to see - or most do.

But I think it would be nice to see a barge-free stretch of the canal so that I could enjoy watching the antics of the ducks, moorhens, and jumping fish early morning.

Instead, nowadays, I see oily stretches and rubbish gathered round the barges. Last year, I witnessed a person actually throw food waste into the water from a barge.

I may be getting old and perhaps a little set in my ways and, hanker for simpler times, I know, but why are they all moored up at the bridge when there's a marina close by? I suppose it's lack of spaces and the cost.

And are people allowed to live in barges? Maybe? I'm not sure about the regulations. I had a friend years ago who did use his barge as a home but he had to move it to Liverpool.

Ah well, as they say, what can you do? I'm just musing that so many barges do 'spoil the view' in my opinion. It's still peaceful to walk along the canal but I wish it could be better.

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