



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 2 April 2022

**BCN
heritage value
BSS
changes afoot
Wrecks,
salvage and
insurance**



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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 April 30th.

Cover photo

This month's photo was taken by Marie Lidgett.



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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Like all NABO Councillors, I was shocked to hear from John Devonald that he is seriously ill. He has stepped down from his roles with NABO and we all offer him our best wishes.

The future of CRT and the EA waterways will be decided in the next few weeks when the Defra review is submitted for consideration by the Government. As Mike Rodd explains in detail in his Chairman's column, NABO is committed to supporting continued funding for both organisations. The Council de-

Change is afoot

Peter Fellows on upcoming proposals for the BSS and main navigation authorities.

ecided that, as part of this support, we should all petition our MPs, asking them to back future funding, and I have included a template for the type of letter that we envisage will have the desired effect.

Discussions and consultations on 'safety zones' on the River Lea

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 David and Rachel Thatcher.



rumble on and David Fletcher took a stroll around the area to see it for himself. One of NABO's London reps, Ron Gooding, also shares his views on the current boating situation in the Capital. There is another consultation at the moment on proposed changes to the BSS examination checks, on which members may wish to contribute their views. David and Peter Braybrook are both on BSS committees and have written about further proposals in the pipeline for changes to BSS examinations. I have also included a summary of the BSS incidents and accidents last year.

Elsewhere, Anne Husar recounts her experience of boating in Belgium, where bow waves from the commercial 'big boys' pushed their boat onto the mud and then having one stop to help them off again. It's also good to welcome Howard Anguish back in the driving seat for the Rewind column.

On a less-happy note, Ken Hylins describes the problems currently facing boaters on low or fixed incomes, due to a wide range of recent price increases. River and Canal Rescue warns boaters to be careful when selecting boat insurance, highlighting the deficiencies and potential problems that could arise with some of the cheaper policies.

I'm pleased to include an article from Martin O'Keeffe from the BCN Society on the heritage of the BCN, with some examples of successful restorations as well as other buildings that remain very much at risk. In his own inimitable way, Ian Hutson also mourns the rotten totem posts he is finding around the system.

The fine weather has finally arrived as I write this in late March and hopefully you will be able to get afloat soon for some sunny spring boating.



The coming months are going to be absolutely critical for all of us who boat on our inland waterways, as it is clear that reports into the futures of both CRT and the EA—as I have mentioned in my previous columns—will soon come under consideration by the relevant government ministers.

These reviews will ultimately determine not only how CRT and EA are going to operate, but what (if any) government funding they will receive. So you will have to forgive me if I concentrate in this Chairman's column on these critical issues, as each and every one of us will need to understand the situation and do whatever we can to influence our local MPs, and also shout loudly across social networks, or wherever we have a voice.

The 'bonfire of the quangos'

First, we need to recall that when CRT was set up, the stated aim of the Cameron government was to eliminate many of the so-called government 'quangos', essentially by turning them into independent charities.

The grand idea was that they could then not only be run more efficiently (mainly by volunteers?), but also that they would have access to other sources of funding, not available to government bodies. By some highly flawed reasoning, government believed that there were shedloads of money 'out there', held by large bodies and just waiting to be used. Some of the quangos (for example, the Forestry Commission) fortunately managed to resist this move, but British Waterways became CRT. Initial government funding was granted for 15 years, and the government grant continued to underpin about 40% of CRT's costs. (Originally this was envisaged for a shorter period, but we all

screamed that that did not allow sufficient time for the new structures to bed down, and the time—which will soon elapse—was extended). Roughly another 40% of CRT's income is derived from BW's property portfolio, received as a start-up 'dowry', and the rest is derived from mooring and licensing fees, etc.

It is painfully obvious to everyone, however, that, hard as CRT has tried, it has battled to raise any significant additional funding. Even with the present income, it has had to cut its staff numbers, in many cases disposing of highly experienced and able staffers.

Crunch-time soon?

Chairman, **Mike Rodd**, peers into a very uncertain future for the waterways.

The practical outcome of all this is giving rise to serious reservations about CRT's staff reductions and its apparent policy of only fixing something when it is completely broken—the rationale seems to be, if one paddle works then that should be OK. No, it is not!—particularly when the lock then takes twice as long to fill, and you are running a public trip-boat. As a result, we all know that the canals are in a worse condition now than when CRT took over.

The financial implications of EA's handover to CRT

Additionally, the original intention was that the EA's navigational responsibilities would be taken over by CRT.

Detailed studies by CRT, however, showed that this was not going to be feasible without huge additional financial support. We, as NABO, could not support this move either, as we felt very strongly that CRT

The Defra reviews will determine not only how CRT and EA are going to operate, but what (if any) government funding they will receive.

needed to get its own act together before taking on additional responsibilities. Also, quite frankly, we felt at that point that the EA, in contrast, was doing a pretty reasonable job of running its waterways, as exemplified by many examples of good practice in working with its user communities.

User groups are losing their voice

However, although the decision not to move EA navigational responsibilities into CRT was made, it soon became very clear that the EA was going to totally revise how it operated—and the views of its user bodies now seemingly became totally irrelevant.

So, for example, an EA National Navigation Users Forum 'Stakeholder engagement review' was held to consider proposed changes to the whole way in which the EA interacts with its users. I and many others left the meeting feeling that this so-called consultation had been a total and utter waste of time, as the EA was simply not prepared to discuss their internally produced proposals, and this 'review' was just a way of going through the motions so that it can now say it has spoken to, consulted with, NNUF members.

The proposals claim, not unexpectedly, to be similar to the procedures adopted by CRT—but in practice they seem to be a jumble of new committees and groups, many fronted by EA staff. For example, a huge National Waterways Advisory Group is proposed, meeting biannu-

ally to receive reports from National Waterways Groups, including 'Sustainable Funding' which covers charges, boat registration and commercial partnerships, 'Sustainable Outcomes'—engagement, health and wellbeing, climate change, net zero, participation and sport—and 'Sustainable Operations' which includes asset management, compliance and enforcement, service delivery and volunteers.

It is not clear which organisations will be represented on these groups, but the underlying concept of the present Navigation User Forums has been abandoned in favour of having all possible users of the EA's waterways represented in future on the National Waterways Advisory Group.

Indeed, the word 'navigation' seems to have largely disappeared!

The future of the waterways network in an uncertain world

These are worrying times of massive international pressure on the Government in terms of the energy situation and other pressures related to Russia's invasion of the Ukraine and the situation between NATO, Russia and China.

Therefore, in addition, and of real importance, we have to accept that funding of our inland waterways is not going to have much importance in terms of government priorities! This will be compounded by Defra's current mantra that any funding can only be justified if it assists in meeting Defra's strategic objectives. These include:

- 1 Protection and long-term resilience, and transition to net zero carbon usage (to deliver, maintain and improve historic waterways infrastructure, heritage assets and open access systems, as well as to ensure navigation, accessibility and public safety);

- 2 Natural capital (to contribute to, and support, the protection and enhancement of the natural capital and historic environment found in and around CRT's waterways network);
- 3 Access to the outdoors (to contribute to the nation's prosperity and resilience, cultural capital and the visitor economy);
- 4 Levelling up (to contribute to national economic resilience and growth, particularly in areas experiencing economic deprivation and health and wellbeing inequalities).

This all means that both CRT and EA have to address these issues; hence their apparent shift away from focusing on the needs of boaters, towards giving precedence to towpath users and others. So, it is not clear whether EA's navigational responsibilities are to be forced onto CRT, or whether the two organisations will continue to work separately.

Personally, I would anticipate that one of the conditions placed on CRT for any future government funding might well depend on their taking over EA's waters as originally proposed. However, even if this does not happen, there is no doubt that the whole way in which the EA manages its waterways is likely to be totally different, going forward.

Nevertheless, I do strongly believe that we have no option other than to put as much effort as we can into supporting both EA's and CRT's appeals for funding, whatever our opinions about the implementation. Whilst the question of their effectively merging their navigational responsibilities is unclear (and, given the way EA has gone over the past few years, even NABO might support this now!), the underlying issue is simply that there is no 'Plan B' for the management of our unique and historically significant waterways.

We all have to get behind both organisations—right now. This can be done via all our social platforms, our Facebook group and of course right here in NABO News. But it is also essential that we appeal directly to all relevant MPs, and we strongly urge our members to do this.

But there is no 'Plan B' for the management of our unique waterways. We all have to get behind both organisations—right now.

Finally, I have, sadly, to report that John Devonald, who has only recently taken on the essential duties as our General Secretary, is now very ill and has had to give up boating. We wish John the very best. It does mean, however, that we now have to find a new General Secretary—offers, please! Otherwise, however, we are fortunate to have an excellent and hard-working Council team, which will be absolutely vital as we face a very crucial few years for our waterways.

Despite all the problems, though, we can all still do some wonderful boating!

Photo : David Hawgood / geograph



Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at the Council meeting in March

For its March teleconference meeting, Vice-Chair, Anne, took control of a somewhat depleted Council, with several members having commitment clashes.

First up was mooring developments in London, with new rings installed on the River Lea and Regent's Canal; all much needed and very welcome.

Yet another consultation on 'safety zones' on the River Lea, but why are rowers allowed to

break the speed limit, when all other boats are not? A heritage freedom of information request revealed 61 properties have been sold by CRT, but recently auctions have been cancelled. It's not clear why, but NABO will not be invited to meetings of CRT's Heritage Advisory Group. Apparently there are now only two remaining properties on the BCN that are owned by CRT.

Wasting time with the EA

Recent meetings with the EA have been a waste of time as its managers are not willing to discuss anything and take no notice of users' views.

The takeover of EA waters by CRT is not a given, and NABO will make a formal submission to the Defra review of funding for the two navigation authorities. As one Council member noted: "The EA is now a good advert for us to work

with CRT—it has become what everyone feared would happen to BW before the Trust was created."

David Fletcher had his last meeting after 10 years on CRT's National Advisory Group.

A shortage of oak

There are problems getting oak and other organisational issues at the Bradley workshops that are slowing the production of replacement lock gates.

A shortage of facilities

A CRT subcommittee is surveying the distribution of boaters' facilities, with a suggested five miles between service blocks—but this doesn't take account of any locks along the way! CRT wants a list of water points where the pressure is too low to be useful and Elsan facilities that block regularly because of poor design. Each rubbish disposal point costs CRT around £20k per year, but the one in Leeds is costing £100k for some reason.

25% failure rate for BSS

Of the thousands of BSS inspections each year, around 25% fail. Are boaters maintaining their boats properly and could this failure rate be addressed by increasing the inspection frequency from four years to two?

But where is the evidence that this would work? CRT's licence terms and conditions give powers to require a re-test, but the Trust has never used them.

Byeeee....



The next Council meeting on 23rd April will be by teleconference.

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 other Council meetings in 2022 are: 18th June, 3rd September (teleconference), 8th October (teleconference) and 12th November (after the AGM).

West Midlands Peter Braybrook

Birmingham boating parade

The Commonwealth Games are coming to Birmingham this summer and there are many events taking place.

As part of the Birmingham 2022 Festival, celebrating the people, history and stories of our canals, CRT, the Birmingham Canal Navigations Society (BCNS) and the IWA are organising a parade of boats on the weekend of 24th–26th June in the City Centre to celebrate boating and the canal heritage of the city. On Friday 24th, boats will gather at a rally organised by BCNS at Smethwick Locks in Galton Valley, where moorings will be available. The following day, boaters will travel into the city and the boat parade will form between Birmingham Roundhouse and Icknield Port. It will then pass through the heart of the city to the Mailbox, returning to moor for the night between the Roundhouse and Icknield Port. The parade will be repeated on the Sunday morning. Entry is free of charge for boaters taking part and each boat will receive a commemorative plaque. Boaters are being asked to showcase and celebrate their crafts and the waterways 'in the most fun way possi-



Birmingham Roundhouse
Photo: CRT

Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

ble'. Entry forms are available from bcnsociety.com/event/commonwealthgamescruise. CRT is preparing activities around the canal network, detailed on its website at canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/west-midlands/commonwealth-games-2022. There are 'signposts' off this page to Volunteering, Community Programmes and #games on, whatever that means!

CRT is improving moorings in many areas and, nearer the time, a moorings map will be produced with details of the arrangements. There may need to be some restrictions for security reasons but, I am informed, these will be few. There will be a canoe event and a fishing event at some stage. CRT is very keen to showcase the canals as the spotlight will be on them as the games site is adjacent to Perry Barr locks at Perry Bar Stadium. The Trust manager has told me that they want to get their housekeeping right and encourage the life and colour that boats bring to the area. There is scant information about what facilities, if any, there will be for boaters who want to visit the games by boat and get nearer than The BCN Main line. I will be keeping an eye on the CRT website for further information which may be further promulgated in future NABO News.

Wales and South West Mike Rodd



I have continued to have a good relationship with local CRT management on the Mon & Brec and the situation with some winter works by contractors, which left the canal and especially the towpath in a total mess, was rapidly sorted out when I complained!

CRT has also moved fast to lift a deserted and sinking wrecked boat off the waterway. On the

K&A though, some very large and urgent work at the eastern end, which completely closed the canal, required CRT to shift resources there for about six weeks. This resulted in some planned work not being undertaken. However, overall the level of maintenance of the whole canal is poor and the 'repair only when it completely fails' policy clearly continues! It is also clear that some serious effort is being made to remove 'problem' non-moving boats.

London Ron Gooding



It is a sad truth that we need different levels and styles of campaigning organisations in the waterways world. You would hope that just asking for something that needed to be done in a polite way would be enough. But that doesn't, of course, always work.

The NBTA do have a part to play as do the IWA. What can be annoying to see is any group taking credit for the other's work. The lack of co-operative effort between waterways user groups lets some navigation authority departments 'off the hook' and, if I had a pound for every time I have seen an idea put in that was already in by another group, I would have a new boat. We should remember that this credit-taking is not deliberate. When a facility goes in, it will sometimes be after many years and several groups will have campaigned on it. So they all think they did it when it happens.

There are reasons for this non-engagement between different user groups and with CRT, and it is important to remember there were things done in the past that have discouraged co-operation. It is understandable that some people refuse to ever congratulate CRT on the occasions it does something correctly and build some bridges, or to say well done to another campaigning group when they score a victory. Years ago they did.

When you ask the reason they will reference something from years ago. These long memories mean we don't put the past behind us as move on and I am of course guilty of this also. What

does not help is when we fail to acknowledge the past with a "we can't change the past" type quote. That one has been annoying me in meetings for years and normally is paving the way for the next round of disappointment.

The experience of us old-timers can keep the door to engagement fully closed, which is such a shame for the new boaters coming in with enthusiasm to have a go at change. Someone passionate enough to volunteer their time, but then be effectively sidelined, is a loss to the waterways, be that an old or new boater. We should be encouraging engagement and with our experience, providing helpful guidance rather than reasons not to bother.

Equally CRT and the EA do some great work and do not publicise it, which doesn't help in changing this non-engagement. There are many instances where CRT has fought for boaters' rights and never told anyone. We all have a part to play here.

Boating seems to be now fully into a major period of change and London seems to be on the front line of this with other cities reporting issues of crowding and the resulting problems that follow.

One thing I do feel is problematic is when navigation authorities fail to finish one trial before heading off into another one, or stick their heads in the sand and wait too long, followed by trying two things at once - and you do not know which one worked.

Commenting on London, I feel we are doing so much better now than in the past. Boaters are taking greater levels of responsibility. For years a 12V fridge dumped on a lock landing was greeted with: "How do you know it's a boater?" This has changed to: "We need to stop doing this". While social media reporting would sometimes make you feel the issues were increasing, it is in fact a giant step forwards. Boaters in London are taking more personal responsibility.

CRT has also put in several bins and water points in the years that I have been on the London network and has just completed new sections of rings for mooring. I just wish it would publish the records of what has gone on over the last ten years to demonstrate some commitment to boating. Enforcing the rules it already has, coupled with a proper localised social engagement effort, could go a long way. With new

facilities going in and boaters doing so much better, you would think we would all be a happy bunch ... but no. The new rings, which were mapped and planned a long time ago, were followed on social media with a backlash of:

"They are going to make them bookable";

"These will be sold off";

"This is to make up for the hundreds they have taken away".

It is a great example of good news being hijacked and spun into a negative. Of course boaters think this. Why wouldn't they?

The biggest issue for me is the widebeam 'problem', but not in the way that you may think. Years ago, I was in a meeting where I said: "You can decide on these while there are 10 of them, or wait until they are everywhere and then have to deal with it when everyone has one". Head in the sand and here we are. Of course, they are lovely and I don't have an issue with them.

What I do hate is the bullying that has started as a result. What people fail to realise, or choose to ignore, is that 60 x 12-foot boats are not owned by the rich. Rich people can afford to buy any boat they

want and match their needs to the boat. Working people have more of a budget to work to and will often borrow money from family or take out personal loans.

Due to the madness of VAT-exemptions, not everyone will know that a larger craft can be cheaper to buy. Telling a hard-working person that they should spend more money on a smaller boat is of course insane. These things need addressing and campaigning on, as does the massive London boat rental market. Why can't any home be VAT-free so that people can buy a 40-foot narrow-boat if it suits them better? This is a big subject to tackle and needs a separate discussion.

The massive majority of boaters are not active on Facebook, do not moor up badly, and do move about covering their chosen network, and are loving boating. They are also happy to work within the rules, but naturally think: "Why do I bother?" when they see a minority of people not sharing the space for everyone. It would be so refreshing to see more happy boating stories when I turn on my computer. They do exist and it would actually be more reflective of where we are as a community.

Regent's canal
Photo: Richard Croft
geograph.org.uk/p/3072648



Write to your MP

Mike Rodd encourages you to make your voice heard

The Defra report on CRT will shortly go to Government and discussions will start on future funding of CRT and the EA.

Despite NABO's reservations about the performance of both organisations, there is no 'Plan B' and we have to support them. There is no way that the organisations can survive without receiving at least the same level of government support as they do at present.

However, both organisations are going to have great difficulty in persuading government to provide a suitable level of funding. NABO is putting every effort into supporting both EA's and CRT's proper funding. It is essential that we appeal directly to all MPs for their support, and also ask our members to do the same. NABO Council has produced a template, below, which we request members to use to contact their own MPs.

Find your MP's name and address

members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP

Suggested letter to your MP:

I am writing to you as a resident of your constituency to make you aware of my concerns about the future of the Canal and River Trust (the Trust) as the guardian of the historic canals in England and Wales.

The Trust was established in 2012 and took over the duties and liabilities of British Waterways in England and Wales under a 15-year grant agreement. This agreement is currently under review by Defra and the Treasury, with a view to extending the grant. Discussions are taking place now to finalise a proposal by the middle of this year. The future of the UK's unique and historic canal system is dependent on the outcome of these discussions.

The establishment of the Trust was a flagship event of the Government of the day within the policy of the Big Society. The Trust has come a long way in ten years and continues to promote the use of the waterways as an asset for all, but the Trust is not yet at the point where it can be independent of Government funding.

I would very much like you to indicate your support for the Trust and the work it does by contacting Rebecca Pow MP, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Water, Forestry, Rural Affairs and Resource Management and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

You can contact me at [email] or [telephone]. Thank you for your help with this matter and I look forward to your response.

Regards,

Boat Safety Scheme consultation

In March, the BSS began consulting boaters on proposals contained in its Examination Checking Procedures.

The revisions apply to checks used in examinations of privately owned boats, managed boats in private use, and boats subject to the 2017 Hire Boat Requirements. The consultation concerns the introduction of two mandatory BSS requirements by amendments to existing BSS checks. The two increased requirements are:

1 On boats with petrol propulsion engines, requiring evidence of recent servicing for any Wilderness Boats conversion of an Electrolux RM 212 refrigerator, BSS Check 8.2.2R

2 Clarification that ferrous or cast iron fittings, joints and components used in LPG pipework, are not compliant with BSS Check 7.8.3R.

It is also proposed to introduce 20 relaxations by reducing some requirements or allowing additional compliance options. Details of these are provided in the consultation.

The BSS considers that the improvements are necessary and proportionate means of risk control that will improve the consistency of applying BSS checks by examiners. Send comments on the amendments to the BSS by Tuesday 31st May 2022. At summary of the views expressed and the BSS response will be published in the summer.

The consultation is available at boatsafetyscheme.org/ECPconsultation

Diary of a CRT Boaters' Representative

Wednesday 16th March

Another online meeting with the Customer Service Facilities Working Group; the update was encouraging but there's still a long way to go. This time we looked at the 15 most expensive-to-maintain facilities on the network; further analysis is being carried out to determine which elements of those sites are most costly. Next month we will also look at future policy frameworks.

Friday 18th March

An actual meeting of the representatives at the Roundhouse in Birmingham. Tracey Clark gave a preview of her presentation to the CRT Council meeting on 28th March, concerning the difficulties faced by boaters and other canal users, including volunteers, with disabilities.

Other topics included stoppages and the 'tsunami' of lock gates which will need to be replaced in the next two years, with the inevitable problems of materials supply and limited manpower; restricted opening times at Limehouse and Brentford Locks; a series of five animated films on safety, based on those introduced on the Broads; and a boater app which is being developed for launch next year.



NABO's regular meeting with CRT

Mike Rodd and **Anne Husar** met with the Boating Team

On 7th February, NABO met with Matthew Symonds and Rachel Howard and, on this occasion, Sean McGinley, who covered the situation regarding the Ferrybridge fish deaths and suspension of freight movement.

Concerns over facility closures

The facility block at Sutton Cheney has expensive problems with fly tipping, costing nearly £100,000 to service this site.

CRT is proposing to relocate the services to Market Bosworth. In Marple, the development of the site started sooner than expected and the facilities were closed at short notice. The regional team is working to put alternative provision in place. At Barbridge, the bridge has been damaged and bins can't be serviced while it is being repaired.

A review of facilities is currently taking place, which will result in an agreed standard and best use of the budget for service facilities (e.g. replacing buildings which are vulnerable to vandalism with more robust open-air facilities). NABO raised complaints by London boaters about the facilities (closed bin sites, broken Elsans, distance between facilities, rubbish not collected at Little Venice). CRT replied that it has issued an update to the London Mooring Strategy proposals, which includes details on more sites for additional facilities and it will consult on specific proposals for additional facilities at Steel Road. In response to a question about future sites allowing recycling, CRT replied

that Biffa has some segregated waste at source, but it normally separates waste off-site.

Fish deaths on the Aire and Calder near Ferrybridge

In December last year these seemed to coincide with the passage of the two freight vessels currently operating on this length.

CRT suspected that the craft were disturbing what was believed to be contaminated silt, creating a toxic environment for the fish and stunning them, making them more susceptible to propellers. The fish were checked and were determined to have been healthy before they were sliced up. In an attempt to reduce boat impacts, CRT asked the operators to run with lighter loads and reduce their draught from around 7' to 6'6".

The next passage at the reduced draught resulted in around 100 fish deaths and CRT decided to suspend freight traffic for eight weeks so that it could carry out further investigations. Samples of the water and silt were taken at 13 locations over a 3km length of the navigation. It is suspected that pollution is entering the waterway from a Yorkshire Water combined sewer outfall (CSO) and CRT has requested data from Yorkshire Water on the dates and times of the CSO spills. It is also preparing dredging plans and expects to have freight resuming as soon as possible.

Heritage Status for the waterways network

NABO asked if there is any value to

get heritage status for the whole of the waterways.

CRT replied that this has been considered, but it might undermine the viability of the network, because caring for World Heritage designated sites would cost more and it could also undermine the value of the heritage status of those already designated.

Annual boater survey

The annual boater survey started in March. CRT will run a separate survey in the summer about liveaboard boaters' use of their boats.

'No moorings' and safety on the River Lea

CRT is currently consulting on proposals to strike a balance between London's continuous cruiser use and those who wish to visit the city from

other areas.

If the proposals go ahead, they will be phased in later in the summer and more staff will be employed to manage the sites. CRT engaged an external facilitator to consult 'stakeholder representatives' about concerns with the River Lea water safety zone proposals.

From January it has implemented an 'improper mooring' process. NABO asked about rowers who break speed limits and CRT noted that it expects rowers to follow safety procedures and operating proposals.

The waterway has been used for over 100 years by rowers, who happily co-existed with other users for a long time. But it has become harder with more boats now mooring in continuous lines. The speed limit is not legally imposed, so there is no specific speed restriction on rowers.

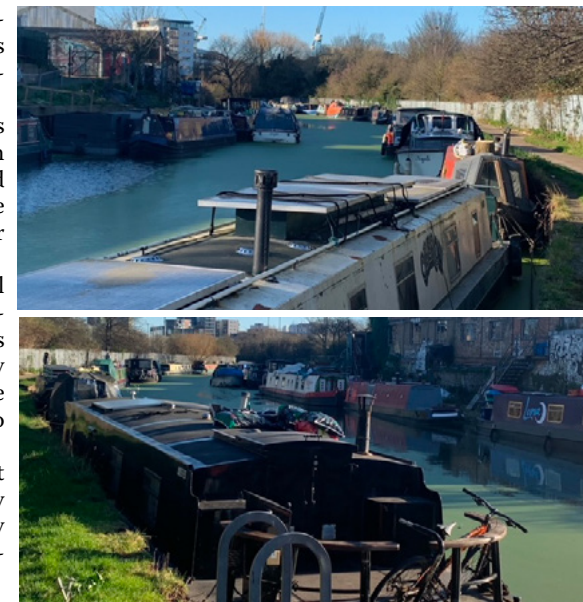
David Fletcher took a stroll down the River Lea near to the junction with the Hertford Canal and Old Ford Locks

I suspect this area is south of the area of operation of the rowers. There were very few boaters around, with boats all shut up despite a sunny afternoon.

I saw no 'no mooring' signs and there was no mooring three-abreast. But there was often a widebeam on the outside of a narrowboat and some offside mooring sites had two abreast. The availability of moorings is limited by the number of mooring attachments.

The wash-walls are all heavy-grade steel piling, which could easily take welded mooring loops at very little cost. The available rings usually have at least four ropes. There are many places that are suitable for mooring, but they are not used because of concrete to the edge and no rings etc.

The river is wide here and moorings are not an issue for navigation. The towpath was busy with footfall and cyclists and there are not many cases of boaters' property overflow onto the towpath. The area is not attractive for visitors.



Towpath mowing

Following last year's mowing trial, which covered 375 miles (around a fifth of the network), CRT collected feedback from boaters, towpath users and others, and undertook periodic spot checks in the trial areas.

The majority of feedback favoured an increase in the amount of habitat fringe, and resulted in some amendments to the mowing specifications to ensure that the towpaths are suitable for boaters. The new national mowing programme, starting in April, will ensure that sightlines on the inside of sharp bends are mown to the water's edge, and vegetation at locks, moorings, winding holes and places of interest will be cut four times between April and July. Where there are no formal moorings and the towpath fringe is allowed to grow, a cumulative 100m of informal moorings will be cut every kilometre. There will be a minimum width for the towpath so the fringe width will vary, rather than the width of the towpath, with the fringe no more than 1m wide, and alternative management methods will break up long stretches of tall vegetation. A full-width cut, between September and December, will continue to remove the season's growth, including saplings.



National Inland Navigation Forum

On 26th February, Mike Rodd attended the AGM of NINE. Michael Stimpson was reappointed as the Secretary General of this valuable forum which brings together representatives of most inland waterways user organisations.

The meeting paid special attention to the Defra review of CRT's and the EA's proposed changes in their waterways management and the need for member organisations to petition MPs over the future funding of EA and CRT. Other issues included CRT's maintenance backlog and the London proposals, red diesel and HVO, fish kill issues, and proposed fee increases on some waterways when moorings change hands.

2021 Annual Lockage Report

After Covid restrictions were lifted, most places recorded lockage counts that were close to pre-pandemic levels, although there was little boating in the first four months of 2021.



Using 178 comparison sites, the report shows a 39.4% increase in total lockage 2020-2021*. The estimated total lockage of all the Trust's locks—not just those with lock-counters—was up from 2.65m in 2020 to 3.70m in 2021, slightly below the 2019 total, before the pandemic, when there were an estimated 3.96m lockages. However, this compares a full year with only eight months, as 2021 saw little traffic before May due to the extended lockdown period.

The twinned Hillmorton Locks 2 & 3 on the North Oxford Canal saw 8,147 lockages and remained the busiest locks on the English and Welsh system. New Marton on the Llangollen Canal was the second, with 7,457 lockages, and

Cholmondeston Lock on the Shropshire Union third with 7,103 lockages. At the other end of the scale, the least number of lockages was at Lock 1, Belan, on the Montgomery Canal, 46 lockages, Lock 1, Graving, on the Dee Branch of the Shropshire Union, 66 lockages and Carpenter's Road Lock on the Old River Lea, 78 lockages.

Adam Comerford, national hydrology manager, said: "The last two years have been like no other, with the lifting of pandemic restrictions resulting in increases in lock use that are unprec-

Dangers facing working boaters—an extraordinary case of suffocation and narrow escape

From the Birmingham Daily Post of July 1st 1886

Yesterday, Mr John Booth, coroner for North Staffordshire, held an enquiry at the Bridge Inn, Tunstall, as to the death of Alfred Philip Middleton (17), boatman, Kidderminster, which occurred under circumstances of an extraordinary character, and which narrowly escaped proving fatal to two other persons.

Mr W Keary watched the proceedings on behalf of the British Gaslight Company and Mr S Watson, superintendent of the works at Brownhills, Tunstall. It appeared from the evidence that the deceased and a man named John Underhill were in charge of a boat, which from Saturday to Monday was moored alongside of the British Gaslight Company's works at Brownhills, the cabin of the boat being five or six yards from a purifier connected with a sulphate plant. The two men slept in the cabin, and about three o'clock on Monday morning, Underhill was aroused by the deceased making a choking noise. He got up and tried to awaken him, but was unable to do so, and then found a suffocating smell in the cabin. On opening the cabin door Underhill perceived that the purifier grids were on fire and giving off fumes*, which overcame him so that he did not know what he was doing. When he recovered consciousness he found himself on the canal bridge, and he at once returned to the boat and moved it away from the gas works. On the cabin being re-entered, it was found that Middleton was dead, and that a dog which was sleeping there had also been suffocated. Some time elapsed before the men employed at the gasworks discovered the fire, and, while they were engaged in extinguishing it, one of

edented in the 21 years of preparing this report."

The report can be found at canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/managing-our-water/annual-lockage-report.

*It is important to distinguish lockage from boat movements, which are the actual number of boats that travel through a lock. CRT separates boat movements from lockages to acknowledge that averages can be skewed by the boat:lockage ratio - in a typical broad lock, the ratio can be between one and four boats per lockful of water used.

them was overcome by the fumes, and, although removed immediately, it was ten minutes before he recovered consciousness.

It was stated that the grids of the purifier could not have been ignited without fire being applied in some way. The nearest fire on the works was in the retort-house, 40 or 50 yards away, so the manager of the works was totally unable to account for the fire. The boatman Underhill admitted that he had no permission to moor alongside the gasworks. Both he and deceased had been smoking during the day, and the latter was smoking when he went to bed. Deceased passed the purifier about eleven o'clock on his way to the boat, but witness could not say if he was smoking then. Mr Watson said if lighted tobacco had been thrown down it would probably ignite the sulphur with which the purifier was impregnated, and it might smoulder for hours before firing the grids. The jury returned a verdict to the effect "That deceased was accidentally suffocated by fumes from the burning purifier, but how the latter was ignited there was no evidence to show". They also recommended that in future boats should be prohibited from being moored by the side of the gasworks.

*The 'fumes' are likely to have been sulphur dioxide produced from the burning sulphur. This gas is highly soluble and dissolves in the moist linings of the upper airways and lungs to produce sulphurous acid. Although sulphur dioxide is a strong irritant, the sleeping boatman wouldn't have responded to it. The sulphurous acid would have produced spasms that narrowed the bronchial tract and a buildup of fluid in the lungs, both of which would have prevented the boatman being able to breathe and he effectively drowned in his own bodily fluids.

Healthwatch

I visited my local doctors last week and I noticed a stand advertising support for health and social care called 'Healthwatch'.

I was quite interested to find out more and whether it could be of help to us boaters and the answer was 'yes'. This is run by councils all over the country and their objective is to reach people who need help on medical issues, or accessing a doctor or a dentist, especially travellers and boaters. This kind of support can often be difficult if you live on a boat so Healthwatch can help in accessing much needed care and make it easier to navigate the process. They can also help with social issues such as benefits, or how to cope with financial hardship, again guiding you to the right area and getting you access to the organisation or sections of the Council that help you cope with the situation. I have lived on a boat for over ten years with my partner and have had to use medical services all over the country and, at the time, it was stressful not knowing who or where to go for help. So Healthwatch could be a real benefit. Ken Hyllins Welfare Officer

Community-led moorings in Oxford

A research report *Unlocking Community-led Moorings in Oxford* has been published by the Collaborative Housing Hub, sponsored by Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire Community Land Trust.



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The report makes a persuasive case for more moorings within the city and looks at the growing use of boats to provide affordable housing and the need for more secure and community-owned mooring spaces.

The report includes case studies of other boaters' co-ops and community-owned moorings across the UK. Moorings can be cheaper to

provide than bricks and mortar, but could also make use of land otherwise undevelopable due to flood risk. There is some evidence of private moorings becoming unaffordable through the use of auctions that inflate mooring costs, as well as boaters not feeling they have sufficient control over the ways moorings are managed. Community-led moorings can offer a solution to more affordable, more secure moorings which are rooted in the local community.

The report identifies at least 12 potential mooring sites and also provides a framework for different ownership models. Potential sites include Redbridge Paddock and Castle Mill Stream; the latter could potentially be redeveloped alongside the regeneration of Jericho Wharf if a way forward on the legal issues can be found.

The report also highlights the need for greater access to temporary moorings and better services for visiting boats. Although the report has an Oxford focus, it has useful applications across any city or town with a waterway. The full report is available at collaborativehousing.org.uk/uploads/unlocking-community-led-moorings-final.pdf.

Spotting recycling bins

CRT's waste contractor, Biffa, has red as its primary corporate colour and, as a result, all bins have historically been red with the only difference being the lid—a general waste bin has a black lid and one with a red lid is used for recycling.

The recycling bins include information on the front on which waste can be put into the bin. To better differentiate between the two types of bin, CRT is starting to introduce green recycling bins around the network.

Boaters will then be able to segregate their recycling (termed 'recycling at source'). 93% of total waste is currently diverted from landfill, but only 12% of this is recycled at source within the waste compounds.

Biffa takes general waste and separates it at its own recycling centres. CRT says that 99% of recycling facilities are reachable within a five-hour cruising period (at 3mph) across the network

Unlocking Community-led Moorings in Oxford

November 2021

www.collaborativehousing.org.uk



Photo: CRT

Trees down on the Monmouth & Brecon Canal

The storms in March brought trees down across canals all over the country, but particularly so on the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, where around 30 trees were blown down. Three were especially difficult to tackle due to their extremely large size and the remoteness of the sites near Llanellen and Llangattock.

Additionally, in a freak event, the limb of a tree punctured the canal bed between Talybont and Pencelli and damaged an historic culvert beneath. Fortunately, this stretch of canal had already been drained as part of CRT's £150,000 winter works programme, so more damage by uncontrolled water escaping was avoided.

Wrecks, salvage and insurance

RCR warns of the perils of cheap third-party insurance

For more information, rivercanalrescue.co.uk email enquiries@rivercanalrescue.co.uk or call 01785 785680.

River Canal Rescue is warning boat owners about the perils of buying third-party insurance on price alone after finding some insurers will not pay out if a boat sinks.



The breakdown and assistance firm estimates around four out of ten sunken boat claims are being rejected and says it's due to a lack of definition in the small print, referring to 'wreck removal' rather than 'salvage'; exclusions for salvage cover and salvage costs being rejected unless specifically covered.

RCR managing director, Stephanie Horton, believes 'low cost' insurers are selling policies that are neither fair nor transparent, and opines they're likely to break Financial Conduct Authority guidelines. "We're not insurance experts, but we have many years of experi-

ence and some of the clauses and reasons used to reject claims are not made clear at the outset. In many cases the small print is full of ambiguities, meaning people don't know what they're covered for when buying the policy."

"The definition of 'wreck' for example, varies between companies and while we regularly undertake salvage for customers under this clause, an insurer recently rejected a salvage claim stating: 'wreck removal was for vessels that had broken up and required disposal.'"

"The most important reason for third-party cover is that it's required when mooring in a marina. Should the vessel sink, insurance is in place to cover the refloat. When buying cover, the assumption is that refloating is included, however I know of one insurer offering two third-party policies—one with salvage and one without. So unless you look at both policies in detail, and know what you're looking for, you could end up with sub-standard cover."

RCR is authorised to handle claims for most of the UK's leading boat insurers and reminds boaters about the importance of understanding what they're covered for in their policies.

Stephanie concludes: "Those with a basic third-party liability policy could face crippling costs as it only covers the cost of a claim against you if you hit another boat, cause damage to someone else's property or injure someone. And while the majority of third-party policies automatically include the raising of your boat as standard, not all do."

Annual BSS report of incidents and accidents

Compiled by the Boat Safety Scheme Office on 1st March 2022.

This report covers incidents over the year from 1st January to 31st December 2021. In total there were 70 incidents on the inland waterways.

There were 28 fires and CO incidents. Of these, the cause of 16 (57%) are unconfirmed. In 9 of 28, the boat was residential or extended use. Despite the high number of unreported causes of fires on boats, there are 6 recorded incidents involving stove fires, which makes these the single largest factor in known causes for 2021.

Fatal incidents

- A fatal accident in January, when a man drowned after falling from a boat into the River Lea. Temperatures were below freezing at the time. According to eye-witnesses, the rear of the boat was in collision with the towpath when the man fell into the water.
- In October, the victim was travelling on a commercial waterway on his narrowboat with relatives. He left the cabin to climb to the front of the boat to take photographs of his relatives. While climbing back around the side of the boat, he lost his footing and fell into the water. A relative jumped into the water to assist him but the victim disappeared from view. His body was recovered the following day. He was not wearing a life-jacket.

Major injury

- In February, one person was seriously injured after a fire on a liveaboard cruiser. Paramedics treated the victim for smoke inhalation and burns before taking him to hospital. The victim was known to be a vulnerable boater. The fire is believed to have been an accident, potentially caused by a wood-burner. The boat was destroyed by the blaze and sank.
- In December, a septuagenarian man and sole occupant suffered severe smoke inhalation and minor burns in a narrowboat fire. He was taken to hospital after being treated at the scene. It is believed that, after waking early in the morning, he lit the stove before returning to bed. When he later awakened, the boat was

filled with smoke and he attempted to fight the fire. It was reported that the boat was very cluttered with combustible items and it is not clear whether it was fitted with a smoke alarm.

- In December, an explosion and subsequent fire on a boat caused serious burns to the single occupant, who was hospitalised. The boat had no installed LPG systems and unofficial reports suggest that the owner was using a portable camping stove and gas heater at the time and that one of these had leaked. The gas ignited, causing the explosion and fire.

Man overboard and personal injury

- In April, a man was airlifted to hospital after he fell overboard when the boat had an uncontrolled collision due to gear failure. He was crushed between the boat and the river-bank.
- In May, to avoid colliding with another boat in a lock, the helm took evasive action, applying more throttle, just as the victim was stepping from the lockside onto the boat. The victim slipped and fell into the water. The helm used throttle power to avoid crushing the victim between the boat and lockside, but the victim's leg got caught in the propeller. The helm had to use the weedhatch to cut away clothing to free the victim, who suffered shock, hypothermia, a broken leg and severe lacerations.
- In June, a hirer fell into the canal and sustained a deep leg wound. Heat from the sun and radiated heat from the roof of the hire-boat had softened a plastic boarding plank, which bent into a U-shape when hirer stepped on it, tipping him into the canal.

Other incidents:

- A narrowboat caught fire in October when it was moored in a river marina. An investigation found that the cause was due to items being too close to a lit log-burner. Nobody was harmed; the boat was unattended.
- A residential boat suffered a small fire when moored on a river. The fire originated behind a wood-burning stove, due to radiated heat from the stove. The flames caused damage to plyboard and insulation. A smoke alarm warned the owner and sole occupant and there were no injuries.

The financial predicament

Ken Hylins feels the pinch

Over the last few years we have seen an increase in the numbers of people living on the canals due to the cost of getting on the property ladder.

These people often have low or fixed incomes and the financial side of living on a boat has recently become a serious problem for some. A few examples:

Gas

There has been great difficulty in obtaining gas bottle refills in the northwest and Calor seems to be only filling the larger 18 kg and 46 kg bottles.

I have travelled around, without success, trying to obtain a full 13 kg Calor gas bottle, wasting expensive petrol. My only option would be to buy a 13 kg propane bottle from another supplier, but this would cost approximately £120 after paying the deposit on the bottle and buying the gas. I have spoken to the local suppliers, who say further price rises are imminent.

Diesel

Red diesel has doubled in price and the cost of diesel heating on the boat has therefore also doubled.

White diesel has also gone up in price by approximately 50p to £1.85 perlitre. My narrowboat engine uses about one litre per hour, so again adding financial pressure, which is further compounded by the need to move the boat increasing distances to the rapidly disappearing facility points to get water, pumpouts and dispose of refuse.

Electricity

If a boater has no solar power, petrol for generators has also increased to record levels, to around £1.70 per litre and a rough cost estimate for running one could be about £6 every two days, up to £21 a week.

The Government's measures to help reduce the cost of electricity and gas are aimed at householders and do not apply to boaters.

Solid fuel

I have checked with two local suppliers and the cost of a 20 kg bag has increased by £2 to about £11, and this is likely to rise again as suppliers are having difficulty obtaining it.

Food

The cost of food is expected to rise by about 15% and it goes without saying that such increases put additional financial pressure on boaters with low incomes.

Boaters who have a bus-pass or train travel supplement may find that having to move every 14 days causes a problem as these change from area to area, for example passes that are valid in greater Manchester are not accepted in west Lancashire.

With all these increases in the cost of living, some boaters will have some hard decisions to make: keeping warm; buying food; having power; or moving. Without forward thinking by those who manage the canals, and compassion towards boaters in financial turmoil, they risk losing much needed revenue from boat licences, mooring fees and also the income to the canal service industry.

I don't think we're in Kansas any more, Totem

Ian Hutson rides the range

I've only been moored here overnight, and already it's been ... emotional.

How could anyone not be emotional when faced with a dead totem pole—with a re-branded, screeching-blue CRT sign not long since screwed to the top of it. It sums up the Corporate approach; new plastic branding on wood that's rotten to the core.

I photographed the worms and the soggy-damp results of their work. In three out of the last four places that I have moored the totems have been in a similar condition; up to half a dozen "Das Ist Verboten" pictorials proving to be too much weight for the layers of paint to support.

Amusement and bemusement, irony and sadness, sympathy, empathy and yet also a certain guilty epicaricacy are more emotions than an old chap ought to be confronted with on a simple mooring.

The totems in this area all sport discreet 'Supplied by SUMBA' signs (Shropshire Union Middlewich Branch Adopters), and this august body does good practical volunteer works, for which I have the greatest of respect. Would that CRT Corporate had spared us the new-fangled, now-horizontal branding and given the money to SUMBA to replace the rotten totems. It does smack rather of gilding one of those things produced by the rear ends of well-fed Labrador dogs.

If I were to fetch my well-greased little toolkit, unscrew the signs and give them to local CRT for safe keeping until the totem could be replaced

would they be re-used? Or would I be accused of theft, unscrewing the arrow, the angling information, the wholly-invented mooring-time limitation, and the Corporate branding? Given the sad state of the world today I was reluctant to risk it. Instead I girded my loins, tightened my girdle, and moved the remains as found to hide underneath the nearest fixed picnic bench.

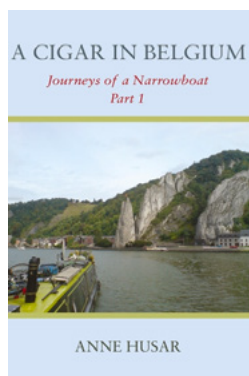


We'll see whether, when a replacement is made, there is some quiet extension of the restrictions—perhaps using one of those new, CRT-blue plastic totem posts that are in the mind of someone deep in the history-chomping, anti-aesthetic heart of CRT Ltd Corporate HQ. The poor thing lying there, rotten to the core, covered in vivid blue plastic 'branding' and colourless plastic restrictions might be an unwanted vision of the future of the canals. The Public can learn a lot from a corporate totem.

Stuck in the Belgian mud

Anne Husar attempts to flag down a passing barge

More of Ann's adventures in the Wandering Snail can be found in her book *A Cigar in Belgium*



The Espierres Canal, running from Belgium to France, has a rural similarity to an English narrow waterway and made a tempting break from the buffeting of the big stuff on the commercial canals.

The entrance to this canal is in the middle of what appeared to be a wide turning point on the Haut-Escaut just after our first lock in southern Belgium, the Ecluse de Herinnes. It would be an easy manoeuvre for our 21m narrowboat, but Skipper very soon started to shout: deep mud had stealthily crept up on us and we were going nowhere.

Nothing to worry about, we'd been grounded in England in the past and, with me up front to take some weight off the stern and some judicious use of reverse, we'd always got off again.

The difference here though was the commercial traffic. Showing no mercy for our predicament, they sped past on the canal behind us, each one causing a tidal wave of tsunami proportions that pushed us further and further onto the mud. No amount of reverse engine power was going to get us off this time. We were well and truly stuck!

There followed much contemplation of what to do next; we'd never been in this predicament before. The lockkeeper at Herinnes could still see us from high up in his tower and was chatting on the VHF radio in too-fast-to-be-intelligible French.

We hoped he was asking passing vessels to slow down or perhaps even give us a tow off. Quite why any of them, even unladen, would want

to chance getting stuck too didn't bear thinking about.

It was time for us to be pro-active. Our 'tender' is an American plastic folding boat, affectionately called Origami, and normally stored in a box on the roof. Origami is much more co-operative folding up than opening out, so usually we perform this tortuous operation on dry land where there's plenty of room to persuade her to turn into a boat shape. Unfortunately all we had now was the tiny space in Wandering Snail's bow. If our situation hadn't been so desperate, it would have been 1-0 to Origami.

By now we had an audience on the banks who had much entertainment as, with many expletives, Origami was at last put together and launched over the side into the canal. Skipper tied together every rope we could find on board and heroically rowed Origami out into the main canal. Here he waved the end of the rope at passing commercials in the hope that one might stop to help, with much encouragement from our audience.

At last an empty barge stopped, took the rope and began to pull. The strain of towing a 26-ton narrowboat out of its muddy embrace was too much for our ropes, which snapped before Snail had moved a centimetre. Our audience were getting bored and began to walk away. Skipper gave up too and rowed the valiant Origami back, tying her to Snail's bow where the next tidal wave capsized her. Things could not get worse.

The 1500-ton Futura decided



enough was enough. Miraculously she edged her bows so close to us that Skipper could accept her proffered rope by standing on Snail's stern. This commercial rope was as thick as a fist and, after some initial reluctance, Wandering Snail was at last pulled off the mud. We had been stuck fast for six long hours and it

was getting dark.

Mooring Snail alongside the lock quay wall back at Ecluse de Herinnes, a kind passer-by helped us pull poor Origami out of the water. We gave her a good scrub to remove the mud that was caked onto her, packed her back into her roof box and fell into bed.

The innocent-looking entrance to the Canal D'Espierres as seen from L'Escaut
Photo: Google

The Wandering Snail in Belgium
Photo: Wandering Snail



BCN and its heritage value

Described as the heart of waterways, but does this reflect the heritage of the BCN?

Martin O'Keeffe of the BCNS celebrates to some success but warns as well of other structures that remain very much at risk.



I recall a good few years ago, when arriving at JFK airport in New York, seeing a UK tourist poster showing Gas Street basin. centred on the canal with a number of relocated items such as the lift-bridge from Tipton. The museum is an important tourist site and certainly benefits the local economy. The site is seen as representing heritage, but the context of things is lost.

Back in the days of the West Midlands County, a number of projects around the canal were completed. Brasshouse Lane pumping house was restored, as was Malthouse stables in Tipton. More recently, British Waterways in conjunction with the BCN Society, restored Titford pumphouse from a fire damaged hulk. Currently, the Roundhouse Stables in Birmingham are being restored in a project between CRT and the National Trust.

Sadly, there are buildings that very much deserve being saved and repurposed, but remain very much at risk: Langley Maltings on the Titford canal is a sorry sight; the future of the Gauging Station alongside Factory locks in Tipton has been talked about for years without anything happening; the same applies to the Monmore Green interchange basin in Wolverhampton, which could be the focus for a small mooring scheme. The canal would be the worse for loss of these buildings, but so would the wider community.

Fortunately, some of these are listed structures, so they are certainly considered to be of national importance. We are also fortunate that there are other structures, like

Galton Bridge, which when built was the longest unsupported bridge and is of global importance.

From a personal perspective, I feel concerned about how our canal is being seen in the modern world. I was attracted by the 'industrial canal' where it was hidden among the factories and workshops. That has now changed; the old has been swept away. I am sure that the green corridor that the canal provides is seen as an environmental benefit, likewise the towpaths for cycleways, but do those users appreciate the heritage? I'm not so convinced,

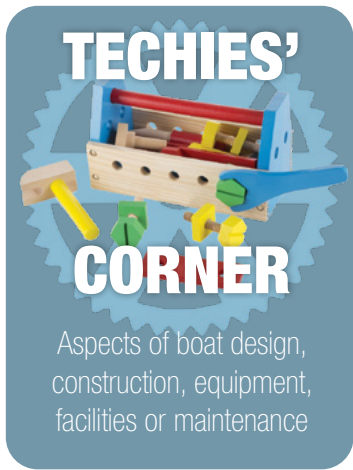


Langley Maltings
Photo: Attic Tapestry

Chillington Interchange Basin
Photo: Peter Clayton / BCNS

Roundhouse Stables
Photo: Elliot Brown





BSS changes afoot

David Fletcher, BSS Technical Committee Chair and Peter Braybrook BSS Advisory Committee representative sniff the air

Through the committees of the Boat Safety Scheme, NABO representatives have heard of the intention of navigation authorities to change the interval between boat examinations from the current four-year period to two yearly.

There are in excess of 80,000 licensed boats on the waterways. The four-year interval therefore requires approximately 20,000 examinations to be carried out each year. There are 130 examin-

ers working across the country with more in training. Some work on the BSS as a part-time occupation while others treat examining boats for the BSS as a full-time job. All of them work as independent businesses. The scheme administrators have received views from some examiners that there is not enough work to make their businesses viable. There are 5000 'failures' each year. The table shows top ten reasons for a BSS examination failure.

These are not trivial matters. Many, though, are easy to spot and should be fixed as a matter of good housekeeping and maintenance. Only gas leaks are hard to find and a bubble indicator can be a good aid to knowing that there is one. There has also been a suggestion that many of these faults arise within the four-year interval (e.g. gas leaks, inoperative CO alarms, boat alterations and modifications which could all give rise to a 'failure' on the next

Top Ten BSS Failures

6.4.1R	If the vessel has one or more accommodation space(s), are the correct number of carbon monoxide alarms provided?
3.1.2R	Are batteries secure against excessive movement in any direction?
7.12.2R	Is the LPG system free of leaks as defined in the tightness test?
6.1.1R	Are the correct number of suitable portable fire extinguishers provided, and do they have the correct combined fire ratings?
3.1.3R	Are battery terminals correctly insulated or protected?
2.13.3R	Are all fuel shut-off valves, or their means of operation, in open view or their location clearly marked?
8.8.1R	Are all LPG appliance burners delivering a proper flame?
7.6.2R	Is the LPG system main shut-off valve, or its means of operation, in open view, or is the location of the valve or its means of operation clearly marked?
3.6.5R	Is the location of all battery isolators, or the means to operate them, in open view, or their location clearly marked?
3.3.1R	Are all electrical cables supported in a safe position?

examination). The scheme wishes to pick these problems up early, as is done in the annual vehicle test to which our cars are subjected every year.

There has also been a suggestion that the BSS examination be made 'non-transferable'. In this scenario, new owners would have to have a BSS examination before they could relicense the boat. This would eliminate any safety issues arising from modifications or changes that are undertaken when the ownership changes, which apparently is very common practice.

Another suggested change in the scheme would be to prevent a boat from having more than two consecutive examinations by the same examiner. This, of course, in itself suggests that examinations are taken flippantly or casually by the same examiners when they are familiar with a craft.

It is my opinion that the very suggestion that this is happening brings the scheme into disrepute. I think

that boat owners should always know that examinations have been carried out fairly and will pick up any safety issues on each occasion, and that the examiners are working without fear or favour on our behalf.

The process of making changes like these is quite protracted. A 'position paper' is being prepared to inform the committees of the full proposals and the reasoning behind them.

These will be debated in the three committees and, when a firm proposal is agreed, it will go out to a full consultation. We will all get our say then. However, NABO Council believes that we should come up with other proposals that may head off what will be a considerable additional expense.

We would therefore like to hear what you think about the changes that I have described above and let your representatives know your ideas. They will then be well-prepared to put them into the mix when the debates come around.

Preparing your boat for a BSS examination

Before the examination, has any relevant landowner been notified? Is there access to the mooring? Are the boat keys available for the examiner if needed?

Fuel burning appliances

- Is there gas/fuel oil available to run appliances?
- If the appliances need power, are the batteries charged?
- Is there enough water in the system to run boilers/water heaters?

Access

- Are all gas system joints available to see and touch?
- Are all access panels/covers removed?

- Is the gas locker lid/door unlocked?
- Is there sufficient access to the gas pipe to assess its support and condition?
- Can all gas hoses be seen and reached?
- Can fuel hoses and their connections be seen and reached?

LPG lockers

Ensure that the examiner can check the LPG locker for condition, including removal of all portable items, base protection mats and temporary removal of LPG cylinders.

Shore power

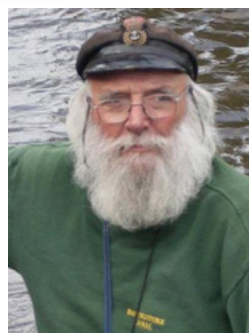
Tell the examiner the location of the AC consumer unit in advance of the examination. If practicable and safe, disconnect shore-power battery charging for the examination.



Rewind

Issue No 2 and 3 2007

Howard Anguish returns to his review from NABO News of 15 years ago.



Tony Haynes

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

Thanks to Peter for standing in for me after my moderate stroke last November—it was much appreciated and hopefully I am now on the mend.

The NABO News archives do not contain a full copy of the April 2007 edition so I have combined snippets from issues 2 and 3 for this review. This was the first edition of NABO News under new editor and NABO Vice Chairman, Tony Haynes, after six years under Chairman, Stuart Sampson. Tony begins with a salutary tale of his own near-disaster while

out enjoying a 'pre-season' trip on the K&A on his boat 'Dreamcatcher'. While closing the upper lock gate with the boat unsecured he slipped and found himself dangling from the tiller arm with outstretched arms, up to his waist in cold canal water, and unable to get back on board unaided. It took the combined strength of two men to lift him back on board and all ended well, but it could easily have ended in tragedy. Ironically, he tells this story against himself, pointing out that even though he was NABO Safety Rep., he hadn't followed the common sense advice about not stepping off an unsecured boat unless a rope is at hand, or not stepping across watery gaps. Both warnings are important bits of safety advice, especially for someone with gammy legs.

Waterways in Dire Decay? Stuart raises concerns about the increasing and serious deterioration of some waterway assets—locks, bridges, tunnels etc.—highlighted by the growing funding gap brought about by the shortfall in Defra funding year by year. As we are all too aware in 2022, there is also very serious concern about the next funding round, which falls due in 2027.

Stuart raised a pertinent concern about an occasional downside resulting from **increased consultation with BW**, and how our willingness to become involved can also be used against us, suggesting: *'One example is the new BW proposal to trial the auctioning of vacant moorings, where BW said: 'After discussions with a working group, including representatives from IWA, NABO, RBOA.....' a statement which was used to reinforce BW's proposal. ... pointing out that: 'The fact that we oppose something 'in camera' it is not always reported, and if we try to pre-empt this with a press release we are accused of scare-mongering or publicising confidential discussions.'* This downside to co-operation and consultation with BW needs to be closely monitored during consultations to avoid being misinterpreted or misrepresented.

Finally, Tony introduced his grand scheme: 'The two-year NABO Vice Chairman's Retirement Windlass, Walking Stick, and Warfarin Ten-Point Cruise in aid of Save Our Waterways.' An ambitious scheme and I will keep you advised of how he got on over the coming months!

Letters to the Editor

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

Copper cooling systems

The piece about choice of antifreeze in the last issue has got me concerned. I know John Devonald specifically refers to canal boat engine cooling systems, but owners of river craft need to be a little cautious. It is my understanding (supported by a number of forums) that modern OAT-based products are not compatible with cooling systems employing copper or copper alloys. Most river boats have engines with heat exchangers with cupro-nickel tube stacks and there are sometimes bronze pumps and copper pipes associated with the cooling system. For this reason it seems that traditional ethylene glycol (blue) antifreeze should be used. Perhaps you could seek some expert clarification so that we may avoid any corrosion problems.

Stephen Peters

Practical issues facing prospective boaters

I was interested to read Ken's account of his interaction with CRT over his recent illness. First, I hope his health has improved and, secondly, it is to NABO's credit that they printed CRT's response. The issues Ken experienced I fear will increase with the growing number of boaters inspired to retire or move onto the water by Covid-inspired staycations and the growing number of rose-tinted articles in the national and boating press. These boaters, new to continuous cruising, often have an expectation of life afloat being akin to life ashore as far as access to services and facilities are concerned. Those, for whom boating didn't meet their expectations or through illness, had to return ashore, often having sold their property, don't have a voice, their story is rarely told.

When you are fit, little thought is given to how you would access medical services, let alone shopping and basic services. With the majority of CRT staff working from home, they will have no

personal experience of boating when healthy, let alone the difficulties experienced by Ken. Little empathy, I expect, with the stress of accessing the decreasing number of basic water/sanitation facilities when ill. Boaters needing CRT's support probably become a 'problem' within a short period of time.

There is a need for the boating associations through social media, the boating and national press, to make prospective boaters aware of some of the practical issues and difficulties they may experience. CRT could learn from Ken's experience: why, for example, are the spotters not encouraged to check on boaters with reasonable adjustments? Why not actively recruit volunteers who can check up on boaters' welfare, and proactively engage with waterways chaplains etc.? Obviously there are privacy issues but these can be addressed. Boating is a wonderful activity, but with an ageing customer base outside London, CRT needs to be proactively considering the 'wellness' of their customers.

Mark Tizard

Barging along

David Lowe comments very kindly about my article on the 'Three Ages of the Waterways', but slightly takes me to task for overlooking the North-east waterways and the continuing barge traffic upon them. He is, of course, quite correct. I have no excuse save my special interest in old narrow boats, and a focus in the article on the problems of, and caused by, the growth in living aboard. Despite my oversight, barge carrying is very much in mind at the moment with the difficulties caused by those who seek to prevent commercial carrying on these commercial waterways. I wish David and the other barge operators every success and hope that their efforts, which are considerable, result in a thriving and long-lasting trade.

Paul Monahan

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