



NABO News

Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 4 July 2022

A close-up photograph of a boat cleat, which is a red and yellow metal fitting used for securing ropes. The cleat is mounted on a wooden surface. Several ropes are attached to it: a thick white rope, a black rope, and a dark blue rope. The background is a blurred green, suggesting an outdoor setting.

**Members' experiences of BSS
Little Venice to the K&A
Happy 30th Birthday to NABO**



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NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

Issue 4 July 2022

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Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images in JPEG format please. Please email your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk or post to the Editor by September 10th.

Cover photo



Win a year's free membership by having your photo selected for the front cover of NABO News. Please email photos to the Editor as JPEG attachments, ideally portrait format with a file size of 2MB or larger.

This photo is from waterways photographer, Kev Maslin, whose work can be found at www.facebook.com/photographybykevmaslin.

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The extended period of hot, dry weather has continued and, as predicted in the last issue, the more vulnerable canals are now seeing closures due to water shortages—particularly the Peak Forest and Macclesfield canals.

Helen Hutt and Mark Tizard both comment on the lack of boat movements on the K&A and Southern Broads respectively, which raises a question of whether the recent fuel price hikes (and more generally the cost of living increases) are having an effect on peoples' boating. However, Mike Rodd reports that the hire trade is thriving on the Mon & Brec.

A focus on the BSS (and our forgotten anniversary!)

Peter Fellows previews this issue

This issue has a focus on the BSS: Mike, who is a user rep on the BSS Advisory Committee, describes the debates taking place to improve inspection consistency by examiners. David Fletcher will step down after 10 years as Chair of the BSS Technical Committee and he responds to feedback from members Peter Caswell, Nick Norman and

Helen Hutt, with press-ganged crew, prepares to step out into the lumpy water at Limehouse
Photo: Helen Hutt



John Hancox, who describe their own experiences of BSS examinations.

David has also revisits the new CRT towpath mowing plans to see how they are being implemented this summer and concludes that not all is well—except for the proliferation of wild flowers.

NABO News aims to give members an indication of what goes on behind the scenes that leads to the decisions and developments that affect their boating. But occasionally it reports on member's cruises, especially on infrequently visited waterways, to give a flavour of what you might be missing. In this issue, Helen describes her cruise through the Thames Barrier and back upriver to the K&A, Mark Tizard compares his boating experience on the canals with his new life on the Southern Broads. Ashore, David has also had a look for himself at the incidence of overstaying boats on Thames moorings between Hampton Court and Kingston, following actions by the local councils. Meanwhile, Ian Hutson attempts to arrange mobile banking from his mobile boat, with a predictable degree of frustration.

Finally, everyone on NABO's Council was distracted last year by the Covid-induced disruption and they completely forgot that NABO turned 30 in 2021. I have attempted to look back at some of the issues that the Council in 1991 were campaigning on and its relationship with British Waterways. Perhaps surprisingly (or not?), lobbying against the terms and conditions of waterways legislation, liveaboards and 'constant' cruising, sales of heritage property, lack of dredging and failing infrastructure all featured prominently. As the proverb says: "The more things change, the more they stay the same!"

Enjoy your summer boating.

How good it was to have another real meeting at Alvechurch, even if a few folk couldn't make it—damn nuisance this boating! Good to see the pub flourishing and many boats moving.

But strangely on the K&A we are seeing relatively little movement—are folk still holding back or is there a drop in interest? For me, my wife has officially (but not practically) retired as our vicar and is required to take time away from her parish (to give her successor time to settle in?) so we are having a longer than usual few months' holiday on the beautiful Mon & Brec. It is at its loveliest, but the vegetation is at its very worst—in the almost 20 years we have been based here, I have never ever seen it so overgrown. Approaching most of the nearly 100 bridge holes makes it almost impossible to line the boat up, and the result is, like most of the hire-boats, my newly painted boat is now seriously scratched. Many hire-boats also have clear damage to their sides and tops. The only place where the vegetation seems to have been nicely cut is where the excellent CRT volunteers are doing their very best to help. And I have to say how well the CRT lock volunteers are doing here in South Wales—indeed so well that some hire-boaters don't even bother to get off their boats to help!

Sadly, I have to say the same about vegetation on the K&A, where I am a boatmaster for the K&A Canal Trust. Again, we have never seen it so bad and dangerously so. Despite being a widebeam canal, when passing each other one boat just has to go aground. We also continually have to dodge the overhanging trees to avoid them damaging our windows—and passengers!

On both of 'my' canals, we are also suffering from the 'only fix a

paddle when both fail' approach—despite the promise from the CRT Director at a public meeting to get it sorted. Each of our public trips requires at least ten minutes extra at the lock we always have to go through—meaning that we have to speed up to get our passengers back in time so that they can avoid possible parking fines.

Of interest to me, especially last week, was a trip on the K&A where, unusually, we had an extra-long

Messing about on the ... Mon & Brec

Chairman, **Mike Rodd**, contemplates future CRT funding, BSS examinations and 'composite' lock-gates during an extended cruise.

charter trip, jointly with the local AONB group (much of the area we are based in falls into an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). This trip took me through one of CRT's trial 'composite' lock gates and I was delighted to hear that they were investigating these, given the problems with cost and the availability of suitable oak. Of course, we at the K&A Canal Trust have been developing these for many years, together with the Mon & Brec Canal Trust, backed by detailed design work by my old university in Swansea. On a non-CRT operated extension of the Mon & Brec, we have had several in operation for up to five years. The real benefits are so obvious: a much longer life (100 years?), being mainly constructed from stainless steel with some wooden sacrificial sections where boats might run up against the steel. We designed them in adjustable sections, so that the final sizing and assembly is done when they are on site. We take the sections



The various boating organisations have come together in their united opposition to what the EA is doing.

The next APPG meeting will be held on 29th July and will include a presentation by CRT's boss, Richard Parry, relating to the future funding of CRT.

It will be a fascinating session and I am sure it will be well attended. It will be available via the internet and anyone can attend and submit questions.

Details of attendance can be obtained from the APPG's Secretariat, presently run by the IWA.

to the site on the back of a 4x4 and only need a relatively lightweight crane to help assemble the final gate. But to my horror, the CRT composite gate seems to have ignored all we have learned on our gates; the result looks horrible, nothing like a usual gate, and already very difficult to operate. I am sure it is also required to be built away from the site. What a real shame.

It's an odd time in the re-funding (or not?) of CRT—we all were on tenterhooks waiting for decisions from Government, which were due in July, only to be told that the process is being delayed by some months. Good or bad news, or simply that the decision is so low on the list of Government priorities? But as I reported elsewhere, the recent meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Waterways (one of hundred or so APPGs), which looked rather boring, being dedicated to heritage etc., turned out to make one of the strongest rationales I have heard for a long time for the Government to fund our amazing waterways—especially given their unique role in underpinning the whole industrial revolution, which put Britain then at the top of the world. I hope the other MPs and Lords will take note! However, I have been depressed by the response from some MPs to the letters we have been sending them regarding CRT's funding situation—many clearly have no idea at all of the changes made when BWB became CRT and how it affected the funding model.

I am delighted to report that much progress has been made in the

work being led by my ex-employers, the Institution for Engineering Technology, to produce a professional guidelines book dedicated to the electrical aspects of small boats. I have been concerned for many years about the move to introduce more electrical power into our boats and the fact that, while there are some relevant standards, these are simply not accessible to most boat builders or boat operators, and especially us as target users.

As a result, I have seen many horrific and very dangerous installations. Working with interested parties, an outline of contents has been agreed and about half of the book is now in draft form and under review by the various representatives. Whilst targeted at the professionals involved, the guidance will, like the IET's internationally recognised wiring regulations, be widely available for us all to read.

The next few years will prove to be of significant importance to the whole BSS scheme, not only as the slightly changed requirements for our private boats settle down and the retraining of all examiners is completed and applied, but several other issues will also need to be addressed. For example, recent assessments of outcomes over the past year show a very worryingly high number of failures—is this because many folk do not prepare their boats before an inspection? Also worrying is the number of non-failure but 'pass with advisory' concerns, mainly due to issues of ventilation. Interestingly, the failure rates for hire-boats are very similar to private boats—is this also a worry? One aspect of concern, and most recent changes and training have set out to address this, is lack of inspection consistency. We have seen too many cases where it is reported that one examiner passes a boat but, next time around with a

different examiner, it fails. Maybe there are clear reasons (like changes made between inspections) but clarity is needed.

There is also a suggestion being floated by a group of examiners that the scheme should change and be aimed at ensuring that boats are inspected to ensure first-party safety. The present third-party scheme essentially says you can kill yourself but not kill others! Sounds OK? Well, working with a public trip boat which has to be inspected by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, I know what such a first-party inspection involves! And what it costs, including, as it does, a regular out-of-water inspection. Boater representatives must ensure that this does not happen!

Also on the BSS scene, I am very sorry to see that David Fletcher will be stepping down as chair of the key Technical Committee. David has for many years provided inspirational leadership, especially bringing his extensive and practical industrial

expertise in handling risk analysis etc. A tricky group to lead, given that there will always be necessary tension between boat users, boating organisations and inspectors. A huge thank you to David for a vital job done so consistently professionally, and always with gentle calm!

I would also like to highlight the amazing work being undertaken by our NABO Council colleague, Ken Hylins, in helping a range of boaters with personal problems who are experiencing difficulties in dealing with CRT and EA officials, for example not being able to move in accordance with local requirements. So often such folk get caught up in internal issues between staff, but Ken seems to know his way around the organisations and has an amazing track record of getting sensible outcomes for all concerned. As a result he seems to be NABO's best membership recruiter!

And to conclude: what better place to be than on the boat on these hot summer days.

Wales and South West Mike Rodd



We try to ensure that NABO is represented at all the various user forums, but we really only need to be there from about half-way through! The format is consistent in that CRT seems to have standardised what has to be reported—mostly the wonderful non-boating achievements aimed at ensuring that their message about how wonderful the canals for non-boating users are. Fortunately, in the case of the Director responsible, Mark Evans, he does allow some reporting on canal works undertaken etc., and then also ensures that boaters have the opportunity to raise matters of interest to them. Mainly vegetation and lack of maintenance—he

Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

even promised to sort out a three-year problem—pity he couldn't deliver!

However, I have to report (as I mentioned in my Chair's column) in all my nearly-20 years on the region's canals, I have never seen them so overgrown and out of control, vegetation-wise. Currently, I am boating in South Wales and many parts of the lovely canal are single-boat width and passing another one requires a deep trip into the bushes! Totally unacceptable and dangerous. The good thing is the number of hire-boats out and about is great—even if most arrive back needing a quick paint touch-up!

Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at the Council meeting in June



The Council met in the snug at the Weighbridge at Alvechurch, overlooking the marina, which was rather noisy as the pub was also hosting a baby shower ... but despite this, Councillors agreed that it was great to have a real meeting again, with real people!

London moorings and safety zones

The situation in London appears to have stagnated, with militant boaters still ignoring 'no mooring' signs. Any potential involvement of GLC's housing department has fizzled out—the numbers of liveboard boaters appear to be too small for them to be concerned with.

NABO Calendar 2022

The next Council meeting will be on 3rd September (by teleconference).

Members are welcome; please just let the General Secretary or Chair know in advance (contact details inside cover). The dates for other Council meetings in 2022 are 8th October (teleconference) and 12th November (after the AGM).

Heritage sales

Heritage property sales and auctions seem to have slowed down and Councillors thought that NABO's protests may have had an effect! They discussed what was worth saving and what was not.

Would an application for World Heritage status for the entire canal system be feasible?—not unless CRT really got behind it and could adequately fund it.

The EA situation continues to deteriorate, with protests about

changes that have been expressed by all boating organisations totally ignored and the EA staff-driven proposals going ahead. The two forums that NABO Councillors attend, the National Navigation Users and Thames Navigation Users, are apparently now abandoned in the wake of new groupings. The prime one involves many more river-related groups than at present and NABO has been invited to join it. It remains to be seen whether EA management actually takes any notice of the new group's members.

Councillors thanked all NABO members who have written to their MPs about Defra grant funding for CRT. Some have received encouraging replies, but others are still awaiting a response.

CRT's 10th Anniversary

CRT celebrates its 10th anniversary in July and two Councillors will attend events in London and Nottingham.

Concerns about the fire-risk dangers of lithium batteries on boats need to be investigated by the BSS technical group. A BSS electricity sub-group is being set up to deal with the many issues arising from increased use of higher voltages and resulting high currents on boats.

To conclude the meeting, Councillors once again discussed the dangers of meeting paddleboards and canoes on the waterways.

Byeeee.....

NABO Reps at work

NABO meet with CRT

A summary of the meeting by **Mike Rodd** and **Anne Husar** with Matthew Symonds and Rachel Hayward in May.

Facilities review

CRT anticipates that the first part of a consultation will take place later this summer and will cover minimum cruising distances between services but also take into account exceptions, such as high demand and services supplied by third party providers. It is also looking to run a trial on contactless pumpout payments on one waterway, but is not planning to provide composting sites for separator toilet waste.

Census

CRT has been developing a census of liveboard boaters, to better understand this segment of its customers and their needs, and will be inviting all boaters to take part in it later this year, using a short video to explain the purpose of the survey. NABO is happy to support this.

Winter works

The first stage consultation on the stoppage programme is now published on the CRT website.

Government grant update

NABO members have written to MPs, many of whom have responded that they know little about canals.

Relationships with regional directors

NABO would like to develop better relationships with CRT's regional staff, but reported difficulties engaging with directors in London and South East and others. NABO will send CRT the contact details for its regional staff.

Welfare

Michelle Simmonds, the full-time welfare officer, is helping to break down barriers between boaters and the Trust. Sean Williams is working on safeguarding four days a week, and welfare once a week. CRT noted that if communications on its part are a problem, they need to know so that they can remedy this.

London

The consultation on pre-bookable visitor moorings is now completed and CRT is finalising plans to introduce more towpath rangers. The Trust is starting to see the effects of cost of living increases, with higher licence evasion rates. Some local authorities considered looking at accommodation on boats, but as the waterways can only accommodate so few people compared to the scale of the problem, they are not spending any time on this.

Water Safety Zone

There have been safety incidents over the past three months, involving both rowers and powered boats. CRT has a new near miss reporting form online which can collect and collate information more easily.

CRT meetings

These are not being notified on the website and it was agreed that the regions set meeting dates in advance and notify them on the CRT website.

Stoppages

NABO noted that there seem to be more than usual. CRT replied that it has been difficult to recruit staff, both in operations teams and in workshop teams, which, with increasing costs and reduced availability of materials, has created problems. Many canals that were restored 20—25 years ago are coming to the point where lock gates, etc. need to be replaced, all at the same time. Reservoir investment is also very high.

The next meeting will be on 24th August at 10.30am at the CRT Hatton office.

Winter stoppages: canalrivertrust.org.uk/notices/winter-stoppages

Incident Reporting: canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us/reporting-an-incident-accident-or-near-miss/incident-form



If you would like to contribute to the debate and/or offer your own experiences, get in touch at contact_us@nabo.org.uk or send your views to the Editor.

Could do better...

Feedback on the Boat Safety Scheme

A number of members have responded to an article by **David Fletcher** in the April issue of NABO News

David asked in April; 'Has anyone had a bad experience with the revised BSS requirements? Everything is very quiet out there, unless you know different. There were about 17,000 private boat examinations in the year April 21st to March 22nd. 36% were failed on the first check. Do you prepare your boat for examination, or do you let it happen and then sort it all out afterwards? About 10% of private boats pass, but with advisory points—the most common being insufficient ventilation. Who will you blame if you become ill because of this?'

John Hancox

Let me preface my remarks by suggesting that NABO should perhaps be more robust towards some of the nonsense that still attaches to the Boat Safety Scheme.

I was unaware that the BSS permits examiners to raise 'advisories', seemingly in the style of the road vehicle MoT test. You will be aware that one of the problems that has dogged the BSS is inconsistency between examiners. We are all familiar with reports of boats that have failed on design issues that previously had been accepted. To my mind, the BSS should be either 'pass' or 'fail', based on entirely objective criteria. There should be no scope for an examiner raising an advisory which might be seen as 'almost a fail'. One examiner's advisory might be another's fail. Advisories can only serve to increase the scope for inconsistency. NABO should, I suggest, campaign against the use of advisories.

I was intrigued by the remark about the most common advisory being 'inadequate ventilation'. Presumably there will be some

boats, licensed for the inland waterways and therefore subject to the BSS, that are designed for sea use. A boat that is designed to be sea-worthy has to be capable of making the superstructure watertight and will therefore have no fixed ventilation in the BSS sense. Could this account for the advisories relating to ventilation I wonder?

I do not specifically prepare my boat for the BSS. Of course, I do maintain nb Titian Princess in good order, but the design is largely unchanged from when I fitted her out in 2002. On the subject of ventilation, the Titian Princess has four roof mushroom vents (one per compartment) and two louvered vents in the front doors. The overall ventilation area meets the requirements derived from the power of installed flued and unflued combustion appliances etc. The BSS examiner who did the first two examinations valiantly measured the louvre area with a steel rule. More recently examiners haven't bothered! The most recent BSS exam was in 2019 and the exam-

iner was on board for no more than 15 minutes. £150 please. Go figure!

To my mind, there is little point in trying to prepare a boat for a BSS exam unless you know there are obvious fail points—which an owner would want to fix anyway regardless. More likely, a boat will be 'snagged' on things that have previously passed—back to the point about consistency between examiners.

I have no idea what the 'revised

requirements' are. My take is that my boat met the RCD requirements when first used in 2003. Although we are no longer in the EU, that design certification remains valid indefinitely. I did look at the public consultation that was conducted earlier in the year. I was underwhelmed! The only issue seemed to be an arcane point about cast iron pipe fittings that had been used in gas installations in the distant past.

Peter Caswell

A question was asked on whether one prepares for the BSS or just chances it.

I download the latest BSS checklist and work through it; of course if nothing has changed with the boat or a particular part of the BSS since the last examination, that gets an automatic tick (i.e. ventilation, battery isolator switch in correct part of the wiring). I've never had a

failure. Also I have no desire to see more frequent checks (indeed there is talk of extending the frequency of vehicle MOTs) with the associated added cost, but I would support spot-checks.

But that's a whole can of worms: access, right of refusal to come on board, insurance, powers etc.—I don't ever see that happening.

Nick Norman

Can I pick up on a couple of points? You mention that 36% of boats fail on the first check. I presume you mean that they fail at first attempt, not on the first check from new.

Presuming the former, this implies that 36% of boats which passed four years ago did not pass on the next inspection. Well OK, a bit less since a small proportion will be on their first test from new or had significant non-compliant works done.

Anyway, bearing in mind that most boats won't have had significant changes in the previous four years, surely the implication is that a boat that passes an inspection with one examiner is quite likely to fail the test with the boat in the same condition but a different examiner four years later. In other words, the standardisation of BSS examiners is

The standardisation of BSS examiners is extremely poor with lots of 'interpretation', [...] or ignoring rules to suit their personal agendas

extremely poor with lots of 'interpretation', aka inventing or ignoring rules to suit their personal agendas. It does seem to be a common complaint and the BSS scheme seems pretty unaccountable. You don't seem to notice this point.

Secondly you mention an advisory for ventilation. Do you have any statistics on how many boaters who had advisories on ventilation 'became ill because of this'? If there is no evidence, then the last sentence is pure scaremongering. There are some well publicised CO poisoning accidents, but it has not been dem-

onstrated that ventilation compliant with BSS advisory requirements would have helped—the cause of the accidents lay elsewhere. Please don't do casual scaremongering, it isn't a good look! And please remember

David Fletcher responds to Nick Norman

You are right in that 36% is the number of (private) boats that fail the examination at the first examination, and not necessarily when four years old and their first required BSS.

I have not seen a recent failure number of the four year-old boats, but last time it was discussed some years ago, it was not thought to be out of line or a big risk. The number of hire-boats that fail is similar.

On the reasons for failure, they

Nick

I agree that it is sensible to check for obvious points (e.g. a sponge blocking the gas locker vent), just as one would check lights, tyres and wipers before putting a car in for MOT.

What would be interesting to know is the proportion of first

David

The recent examination requirement review and examiner retraining is all about consistency and reducing the individual interpretation.

User reps have gone through all this and have had plenty of opportunity to comment. There has been push-back from some of the longer serving examiners, who say they don't need this, but BSS rejected this view and insisted that all examiners receive the retraining. The new training is challenging and many examiners have decided to pack up. There is a new group of examiners coming through training now to keep the numbers up.

that the BSS is supposed to protect third parties, it is not there to protect us from ourselves despite its 'mission creep.'

are many. But many of the very frequent failure check points are very basic, and not associated with major work. If boaters checked just those simple points, then the number of failures would reduce. So that is why I ask about what boaters are thinking when preparing.

Examiners are required to report the boat as they find it, even if a problem is fixed on the day and passed.

fails that occur as a result of such a temporary 'transgression' or deterioration since the last inspection vs more substantial things that have been extant at the time of the previous inspection but which the new examiner doesn't like.

Inevitably there are going to be some surprises to examination outcomes, perhaps in a previous test a fault had the benefit of the doubt, but now it fails. We are keen to understand why this happens. The committee regularly deals with appeals and it is surprising how many old boats come up with odd designs that have apparently bypassed the system for years, but have always been 'wrong'. There is an issue around at the moment with 500 Aquiline boats that have unsuitable fixings for solid fuel stoves. How did we miss this? There are a lot of unhappy owners out there.

The recent examination review and examiner retraining is all about consistency and reducing the individual interpretation

Your comments mirror the thoughts of the user reps who sit on the committee. Boating is pretty safe and we have to challenge any wish to ramp up examinations. I have to be a bit careful as a committee chair, but the great thing is that I can ask all sorts of questions to make sure the debate is solid.

The private examination 'advisories' are so-called first-party risks. As you say, CRT, EA etc. don't take responsibility if you kill yourself by your own neglect. They are only worried if they licence a boat which is then responsible for harming someone else, in another boat or on the towpath etc.—i.e. the third-party risk. So this is broadly aimed at fire and explosion. The ventilation check is advisory for private boats because the risk is to the boat user and therefore first party. The ventilation rules are based on very old domestic rules, not invented by BSS, and have been in place for a long time. BSS has done and continues to do research on this matter, because the science behind it is not very clear, and is related to gas testing and the measurable leakage rates. The variation of boat types also makes this very complex. The number of CO deaths, MAIB inspections and coroner courts means that we have to take care. Because of this it is probable that the BSS cannot change these rules any time soon. We at NABO have done some testing over the last few years with CO monitors and the need for good ventilation is very clear to avoid CO build-up. Although there are rules on exposure, the truth is no-one knows what the safe low CO threshold is.

Nick

Good. As I said, it is always tempting to want to save other people from themselves, but it is outside the remit of the BSS—or should be!

Examiners have been recording the details of ventilation failure checks and we hope to see some statistics soon, and see if non-compliance is minor or major. You can be sure that the committees continue to work on this one. The CO alarm requirement came in a few years back because of external sources of CO, a third-party risk.

The advisory items become 'requirements' in the examinations for hire-boats, to protect the unwary and unsuspecting hirer. They are real risks with similar assessed risk levels as the private boat requirements, and are not scaremongering. A group of examiners has recently challenged CRT that these 'A' items should be 'R' items for private boats too. It would be a major change to the scheme, and unlikely to come about.

What could possibly go wrong?



David

I suspect that CRT and EA have no interest in the additional liability of first-party risk, but it is under review at the moment, because the question has been asked.

Can you imagine a boater suing the navigation authorities (NAs)

Nick

It is always easy to 'catastrophise' when it comes to insurance and suing, but IMO this is usually used when other arguments have failed! I cannot see how an NA could be sued by anyone following an accident, whether the first-party boat owner

David

Because of the scrutiny of the scheme during the Covid lockdown period, NAs became very concerned about their risk exposure because of delayed examinations.

The failure rate is therefore under scrutiny and NAs are questioning whether boaters can be trusted to

Nick

OK I see the point. But there needs to be solid evidence as to why the failure rate is so high.

What proportion is due to lack of maintenance and what is due to lack of examiner standardisation. I don't know what form the BSS database takes and whether such information could be extracted without breach-

David

Next year the requirement for smoke/fire alarms will go for public consultation.

If this goes through, this alone will increase the number of failures. I am asking the BSS to have a

after an accident? It is bad enough with the cost of slips and trips on the towpath. We should not dismiss advisory items as of no consequence, but user reps on the committee are in agreement with you and want to stop mission creep.

or a third-party boat owner.

In the same way that the government or highways authority or DVLA does not get sued by car drivers when there is a crash due to vehicle defects.

maintain their boats. Hence understanding the boaters' preparation for the exam. The NA risk concern is not going away, and there is talk of reducing the period of four years. Users are objecting, but we need to see a trend of reducing failures, to hold this off.

ing GDPR, but perhaps a University undergraduate research project could look at it? It is interesting that the Government has been suggesting a reduction in the frequency of car MOTs, so a move to increase the frequency of BSS would run counter to that concept.

campaign on preparing for an examination. In my case, every time my boat of 20 years has failed, it was because of work done by a professional boatyard.

Nick

Herein lies one problem—that anyone can set themselves up as a 'marine engineer' etc. without any qualification.

And then there is the question of "which regulations do you want to work to?" especially for gas, as there are conflicts between BSS and RCD (ISO) regulations. I am in the "if you want a job done properly do

David

This is an example of the pressures user reps face in the committees, and the need for us to be alert. At the

To which Nick Norman added:

Thanks for your very detailed reply. I will first mention that my personal experience of BSS on our now 11 year-old boat has been good.

We used Chris Williams (Ovation boat services) and he is entirely sensible and I have no complaints. I hope he will be able to carry out our next BSS this autumn. Some of my opinions come from participation in the Canal World Discussion Forum, where there are stories of examiners refusing to pass a boat unless an 'A' item is resolved, boats passing one time and failing the next for stuff that is clearly visible, even stuff failing when the work was carried out by the previous BSS examiner, but the new BSS examiner doesn't like it. Clear misinterpretations of the rules. And a BSS appeals system that is unsatisfying, opaque and unaccountable.

On the CO alarm point, we have a CO alarm on our boat and one in our house, long before it was a BSS requirement. However I voted against it in the BSS consultation because it was 'mission creep'. It is always tempting to want to save

it yourself" camp and I am generally distrustful of boatyard competence, but I appreciate that plenty of people lack any skills.

If the NAs want to address this issue, there would have to be auditing of work done by boatyards whilst in progress, in the same way that a building inspector checks out houses mid-build.

last meeting the NABO rep was the only user rep present.

other people from themselves but ultimately not the BSS's place. You say: "The CO alarm requirement came in a few years back because of external sources of CO, a third-party risk." but I don't agree with that. Yes, there can be CO from generators getting into other people's boats, but the third-party risk is created by the generator, not by the adjacent boat. If you wanted to address the third-party risk, you would have to ban petrol and gas generators (I'd be happy with that).

One final point to mention is that it seems that the BSS checklist is very long. To properly and fully examine every item would take a very long time, and as a consequence shortcuts are taken in order to do the exam in a reasonable amount of time so that a reasonable fee can be charged.

This may be one reason why a boat passes with one examiner but fails with the next—levels of pragmatism and common sense vary. Therefore any attempt to make the BSS checklist even longer is likely to be counter-productive.



Little Venice to the K&A

Following her article, London Calling!, in the last edition of NABO News, **Helen Hutt** gives an account of the next leg of her journey, from the Cavalcade in Little Venice to Limehouse, to take part in a Thames Tideway Cruise, then up the Thames and onto the Kennet & Avon.

The weather was gorgeous, there was very little traffic, and all went well apart from an altercation with Islington Tunnel.

As I untied the Cavalcade bunting from my boat I must have twisted my headlamp round, so it was totally ineffective inside the tunnel and I lost all sense of direction. A torn cratch cover, bent eye-bolt and scraped paintwork—oh dear, not as clever as I thought I was! But I cheered up on approaching Camden Lock ... there was a volunteer lock keeper on duty! What an unexpected treat.

I don't think I could have moored anywhere, even if I'd wanted to. Although there are several stretches of 'eco-moorings', with electricity bollards, these were all full, with some double mooring. On one such stretch with four or five

bollards, after Camden, I counted 17 boats but not one was hooked up. I spoke to a boater who had booked one of these to recharge their batteries the previous week, but arrived to find two unoccupied boats in their allocated spot! I asked CRT's boating manager for any stats on bollard usage; there are none, and there is no obligation to use them if moored there, but I'm told the whole management of these eco-moorings is under review. One can only hope that things get better with time. CRT suspended mooring in Limehouse Cut so that our group could tie up for two nights prior to the next stage of our journey and, again, my misgivings about staying in the area seemed largely unfounded. It was very quiet at night and there was no unsociable behaviour during the day.

Limehouse Cut to Teddington— via the Thames Barrier!

Being single-handed, I needed crew for the Thames trip. The cruise organisers, Andrew and Frances

Phasey of St Pancras Cruising Club, took care of this and my new friend David arrived at 8am to join the first group of four boats locking out of Limehouse.

Mooring in Limehouse Cut
All photos: Helen Hutt





Sixteen more were to follow, making a long snake of narrowboats cruising down past the impressive Thames Barrier to Margaretness,

turning and stemming the tide before heading up-river with the incoming tide to Teddington Lock, arriving at 7pm. A great experience, all the better for sharing it with so many others. The only shock was how much more expensive the EA licence and overnight mooring were since my last visit!

Teddington to the K&A

Now it was back to 'flying solo'. Having coughed up £11 for the overnight and £75 for a week's EA licence (which actually covered only 6 days; even though we didn't get to Teddington until 7pm, I still had to pay for a whole day).

I managed to find free moorings on all but two nights (Cookham £8 and Henley £12). All the locks were manned, which was a relief, but quite a few of the lock-keepers seemed quite grumpy when I asked for help with my ropes. To offset all this, the weather was mostly glorious. I arrived onto the Kennet & Avon at Reading a week later. Some years have elapsed since I was last here and the navigation seems very neglected, and very quiet. Some days I only saw one other moving boat. But I did hear cuckoos calling almost every day of the next five weeks as I cruised to Wootton Rivers and back! Call me daft, but that simple joy makes everything worthwhile.

One final shock to leave you with! On leaving the K&A to head up the Thames to Oxford, I intended to moor just outside Reading, west of Caversham Bridge, as I had done before. No other boats there; saw the usual green signs and was quite prepared to spend a tenner for the night. Pins banged in, I went up to the sign to make my payment to find that they wanted £100 for 24 hours! Yes, £100! Needless to say, though already tired, I upped sticks and cruised on.

The Broads and canals... ...they are not the same

Mark Tizard is getting used to his new boating environment

Hire craft on the Broads seem to have got larger and ever more sophisticated, with two decks. I wonder if the hire market has peaked, with prices ranging from £1300 to £3300 a week, with most at the upper end in the main holiday period.

I have noticed an increasing last-minute availability of boats; a quick check shows many are still available to book. Hirers report now having to pay a fuel surcharge rather than getting money back from the deposit as in previous years.

Having moved from the canals to the Southern Broads, leaving slack lines to allow for the tide when you are mooring on the river is still a novelty. It's nearly three weeks since we had a call saying our boat had passed the BSS inspection but so far no certificate or invoice—Norfolk time I'm told!

I'm enjoying good water depth under the boat when mooring, but like the canals you still need to moor up early on popular spots. Late morning or early afternoon, when the hire-boats have moved on, is favourite. Private moorings charge, but EA moorings are free and are 24-hours and to be honest so far they have not been a problem. Some people moan on Facebook about overstaying boats but I've not noticed it yet. There would appear to be very few continuous cruisers compared with the canals. Apparently things are much busier on the Northern broads but we are staying south this year.



I'm amazed at the substantial number of expensive sea-going motor yachts moored up in the marinas in Brundall, where we are, but there are relatively few boat movements—perhaps it's the price of fuel! Fortunately, the River Yare is wide and there is plenty of room to accommodate the many users, from paddle-boarders and canoes to sailing yachts and motor cruisers. More buoys and signs have been put up in Breydon water (the link between the Northern and Southern Broads) due to an increasing number of craft going off course and aground—subsequently having to be rescued by the inshore lifeboat as the tide ebbs.

RNLB broads rescue, credit (Great Yarmouth & Gorleston Lifeboat)

Focus on apprenticeship

RCR is a staunch advocate, as **Stephanie Horton** explains

Businesses across all sectors are being encouraged to invest in apprenticeship schemes and, in February this year, a National Apprenticeship Week campaign reminded employers of their merits.

River Canal Rescue is recognised as a Top 100 Apprenticeship Employer by the National Apprenticeship Service and has been named Medium Employer of the Year at the North West

Apprentices at RCR

National Apprenticeship Awards. Among RCR's 40 employees, 15 are, or were, apprentices, representing over 40% of the workforce, and there are seven in management roles. Managing director, Stephanie Horton, describes them as "the backbone of the business", and says: "apprenticeships give staff a depth of business understanding that's impossible to buy in".

RCR generally employs three apprentices a



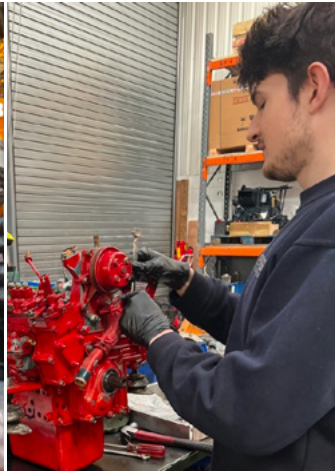
Abbie Pamplin
Marine engineer, 18

I grew up tinkering with cars and engines and my brother had a mate who worked for RCR, which sounded so interesting. I was keen to join." She is being trained to inspect and service engines, run diagnostics and undertake breakdown repairs.



Joe Lewis-Smith
Marine engineer, 17

I was interested in engineering and RCR's apprenticeship programme looked more interesting than a college course." Joe is being trained in marine engines and their components.



Mark Hargrave
Diesel Engineer, 21

Mark works Key Diesels, RCR's diesel engine repair and refurbishment subsidiary. He joined after completing his NVQ Level 3 in motor vehicle mechanics. "When I heard there was an opportunity at Key Diesels, I thought why not transfer my vehicle skills to marine engines."

year, two engineers and one in the office, and marine engineers, Abbie Pamplin and Joseph Lewis-Smith, and junior workshop member, Mark Hargrave, are currently on its programme. RCR's apprentice programmes run for two to three years and every apprentice is assigned a mentor who trains them and takes responsibility for their career progression. RCR also provides education funding up to degree level, external courses, senior staff support, in-house training, monitoring and appraisals, progression plans

(including driving lessons if needed) and a buddy system. Apprentice engineers attend one of the best power-plant courses in the country, run by Stafford College.

Stephanie comments: "The best way to train staff is to start at the bottom; apprentices have an appetite to learn and fresh ideas. They're likely to have a greater commitment to the firm, and this coupled with investment in training and wellbeing, reduces employee churn—a key focus of any organisation."



For the first time in 180 years, the spawning migration of an endangered fish, the Twaite Shad has been enabled on the River Severn, the UK's longest river. The Shad's colloquial name is 'May fish', May day marks the official start of their run. Severn Shad were a favourite food of royalty—brought to Henry III's royal court in London—and also of commoners. By arriving en masse during the spring hunger gap, they were a lifeline for local people.

Hundreds of thousands of fish used to migrate up the river from the sea each year to spawn. But when the Severn became an artery for industrial trade in the 1840s, weirs were built across the river to create a more reliable, deeper passage for barges carrying industrial goods between the Black Country and Gloucester docks, a barrier that catastrophically prevented the Shad's migration so they could no longer reach their spawning grounds in upriver gravel beds. The population crashed and now only small numbers are confined downstream of Worcester. Since then, the

Fish pass at Diglis, Worcester
Photo: unlockingthesevern.co.uk

fish have had to spawn as best they could in the fast-flowing waters of the lower reaches.

Four fish passes now provide a route around the weirs between Worcester and Stourport. The removal of two other partial weirs has reconnected the River Teme, a tributary that joins the Severn at Worcester. In total, the Unlocking the Severn project has restored access to 158 miles of river habitat for the fish. The new fish passes will also help other endangered fish species such as salmon, eels and lamprey. The fish pass at Diglis in Worcester has an underwater viewing gallery, which members of the public can book for a guided tour and a chance to see the fish swimming past.

This has been the biggest conservation project of its kind in Europe, delivered by CRT via a partnership with Severn Rivers Trust, the EA and Natural England, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the EU's LIFE programme.

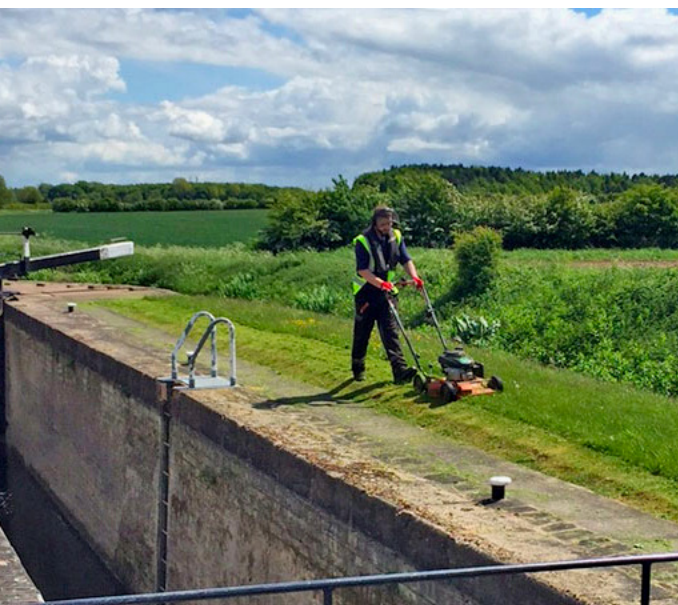
Grass cutting update

David Fletcher asks where the CRT teams are?

Any views and feedback on the condition of vegetation, with photos or other information, should be sent to Grass.Feedback@canalrivertrust.org.uk.

CRT won't respond to emails but it will use the information to gauge condition and problem locations.

One man went to mow...
Photo: CRT



In April's NABO News, we set the scene for CRT's mowing plans for this summer. So how is it going? Well it is clear that not all is well. The only really good point is that there are a very great number of wild flowers on the tow-path fringes.

In an unprecedented admission, CRT's Boaters Update in June admits that the transfer of work from Fountains to three separate contracts is not going well and mowing is not getting done.

We are now at the peak growth period and mowing should be happening monthly to keep walking areas clear and safe, but I see little evidence of this in the West Midlands area where I am cruising. The longstanding requirements for

cut to edge at bridge holes, lines of sight and casual moorings are just not being done. I see towpaths are generally cut, but I doubt the month frequency. I am hearing reports of lock flights left uncut.

The main cutting routine for this year was to have been four cuts in April, May June and July, and then the final autumn cut to edge. So if your local mowing is poor so far, there is really only July to get this back on track. So what can you do? As always report, report and report. Be specific on location and use the website tool or the regional Twitter account.

CRT takes action, but is it enough?

At the start of April, CRT appointed three new vegetation management contractors to manage and maintain waterside trees, hedges and grass. It reports that the new contracts offer significantly better value for money and enable CRT to reinvest savings to address the backlog of offside vegetation improvements.

But the Trust acknowledges that it is taking longer than expected to deliver the service, which is resulting in towpath grass being over-long and uncut in some areas. CRT explains the reasons as follows:

- The transfer of staff from the previous contractors and filling resource gaps took longer for the contractors to complete and continues to be an issue.
- New teams familiarising themselves with the network and CRT's specifications.
- A technical issue resulting in not

all specifications being available straightaway.

- To resolve this, CRT is:
- Meeting frequently with contractors' senior staff to identify issues, review resources on the ground and progress, to get back on programme.
- Additional resources are arriving, but it will take time for these to get up to speed and for the impact to be widely seen.
- Local, regular, often daily discussions with the contractors'

team managers to make sure that priorities are clear, to be able to move to areas requiring urgent action, and to deal with new problems.

- Holding contractors to account and ensuring that they are not being paid for works that have not been completed.

CRT acknowledges that it is not where it would want to be and it's likely to be the end of summer before it gets the programme back to where it should be.

National boat count

CRT completed its national boat count in the spring, which showed a 3.3% increase in overall boat numbers since the last full annual boat count in 2019.

The licence compliance rate was 94.1%, down from 96.5% in 2019. There has also been an increase in the numbers of boaters taking a licence without a home mooring. Compliance decreased in all Trust regions, but it was greatest in London and the South East. The East Midlands saw the greatest increase in boat numbers, followed by

the North West and Wales & South West. In 2021-22, 100 unlicensed boats, many abandoned, were removed, despite the efforts of the boat licence customer support team to resolve matters.

In response to concerns about the potential for confrontation or abuse while conducting their work, and following the murder in 2021 of Clive Porter, a CRT licensing ranger, Trust employees whose role includes day-to-day interaction with those on the waterways will now wear body-cameras.

Area	2022 Compliance %	2019 boat numbers (CRT licence)	2022 boat numbers (CRT licence)	% change in boat numbers	2022 all boat numbers*
East Midlands	96.8%	4502	5102	13.3	6014
London & South East	89.4%	6891	7044	2.2	7157
North West	94.3%	5549	5870	5.8	6019
Wales & South West	94.4%	3425	3589	4.8	4370
West Midlands	96.8	7897	7638	-3.3	8434
Yorkshire & NE	92.7	3169	3227	1.8	3268
Overall	94.1	31,433	32470	3.3	35,262

* Including private marinas and other offline locations

A stroll beside the Thames

David Fletcher looks at moorings on the river

I was in London recently and walked down the Thames from Hampton Court to Kingston on the north side, known as the Barge Walk. This area has a few mooring problems: the north side is owned by the Royal Palaces and the only moorings are at Hampton Court Palace and separately at the Kingston bridge end. They are being managed by our car-parking friends. There was space and movement in both areas, and I suggest that it is working (24-hours free).

The south side is a mix of private moorings, at least three large commercial marinas and the like, and a long length of concrete river wall owned by Kingston Council (Riverside). In the commercial marinas this is predominantly widebeam and barge country.

Molesey Lock and the Thames Motor Yacht Club are at Hampton Court. The EA recently won a court

case against a man who had two large barge tenant dwellings moored for a long period on the lock landing. There are still a couple of boats in the area, including one that is sunk.

The main area of contention is the Kingston part on the town side. At the bridge there are two areas set aside for casual moorings but I saw little evidence of movement and there was no space for mooring. There are clusters of boats and I venture to suggest that they are not moving so much. There is no clear signage. Further up the river in the Riverside area, Kingston has long ago decided that they would not allow mooring, and there is plenty of signage. But this is widely ignored by a range of craft. It is a shame because these would be good visitor moorings if they could be managed. Perhaps local resident pressure is too much? Protect heritage, don't think so. Kingston is busy at the

More information

kingston.gov.uk/news/article/263/kingston-council-introduces-river-moorings-fees-to-protect-riverside-heritage



In April, Kingston Council introduced new Thames visitor moorings fees, designed to deter overstaying boats. The council carried out a six-week consultation in Autumn 2021 and, of almost 400 people who responded, 80% were in favour of introducing mooring fees and 91% supported the use of penalty charges for overstaying permitted mooring times.

moment because other Thames areas, like the adjacent Richmond, have taken action and so craft are displaced. Kingston Council recently decided to take bylaw powers to manage the waterfront. I could see no evidence of them doing anything yet; but presumably they will use the car-park people.

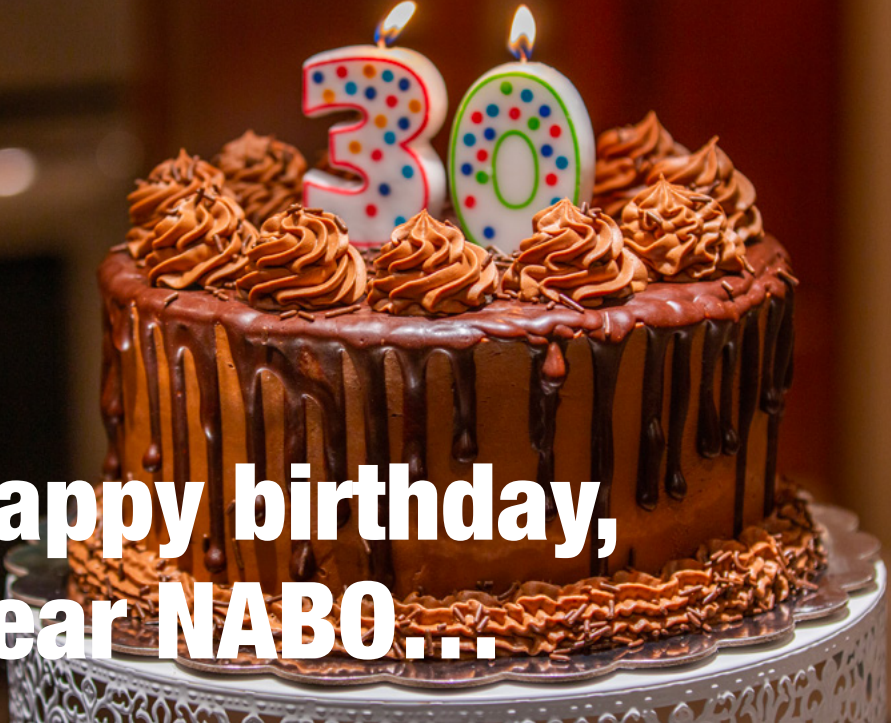


Stourbridge Open Weekend

After a two-year Covid-induced lapse, the open weekend is on 15th - 16th October. Boat entry is free but those proposing to attend should complete a Stourbridge Navigation Trust form for insurance and administrative purposes. Rally plaques should be pre-ordered using the entry form. The Trust anticipates that at least one residential boat will be on site for the week before the event to provide security for boaters who want to leave boats.

Entry forms are available at thebondedwarehousestourbridge.co.uk/latest-news/october-boat-trip-draft.





Happy birthday, dear NABO...

Photo :Phinehas Adams on Unsplash

Although formed in 1991, last year's pandemic distracted everyone from NABO's 30th anniversary. Here's a belated summary of some of the issues facing NABO 30 years ago.

Formation

Phil Bland and Jon Darlington formed NABO, joining forces with Syd Beacroft and Dave Green, who had called a meeting to form a boaters' organisation.

NABO's first open meeting, on 25th August was in Dudley and was an overwhelming success, with 69 boat owners joining on the spot, bringing the initial membership to over 130. Speakers from the floor said they did not feel that anyone had hitherto been prepared to listen to the views of individual boat owners.

NABO's first Council

There were 15 nominees for the first

Council and each described their reasons for standing for election:

David Ling gave a flavour of contributions from other nominees: "A more authoritarian regime appears to have taken over at BW and I have become alarmed that the very freedom which attracted me and many others to the waterways is now at risk. I feel that it's no good crying if one is not prepared to stand up and be counted."

Mel Darlington wrote: "In 1989, I spent six months cruising in the central area and I realised just how bad things were. The canals are badly maintained and shallow, due to a water shortage and no dredging, mooring is restricted in places, and I feel very much as if all the fun and freedom which I want is being taken away from me. With the formation of NABO, I decided that I wanted to take an active part in trying to get a fairer deal for the boater."

Communicating with members

NABO's newsletter 'The Boater' reported in Issue 1, September 1991, on how and why NABO had been formed and its proposed objectives.

Jon Darlington covered policy issues, including the Waterways Bill, the Certificate of Compliance and dredging—or rather the lack of it. He stressed that NABO would be a lobbying organisation and not a social club—a concept that continues today. He also emphasised the importance of communication with members and urged them to write to the committee and not wait for open meetings, "since these would be few and far between". There would also be a network of regional representatives to further help communications.

Campaigning issues

The first issue that NABO took on was the 1991 British Waterways Bill, which was about to pass through Parliament, and in particular the terms and conditions attached to BW's 'Houseboat Certificates'.

Subsequent campaigns included 'Constant Cruising' and whether a boater who lives on a boat but cruises it the whole time needs a Houseboat Certificate. In particular, NABO noted: "There is the question of the byelaw covering cruising licences, which says that a boat cannot be used as a dwelling. We do not know of any attempts to enforce this byelaw and, indeed, in our view it is unenforceable. The only question that has to be answered is: "Is this boat genuinely or sincerely used for navigation? Whether you live on it or not is irrelevant."

NABO's lobbying against the BW Bill in the House of Lords included four pages of amendments for consideration by their Lordships. At the end of the debate "a significant number of Lords gave vent to deep-felt criticism of the [BW] Board

69 boat owners joining on the spot, bringing the initial membership to over 130.

and the way in which it has treated its customers.... they must change old attitudes and the way in which they are perceived by their customers; they surely cannot afford such open and hostile criticism as was laid on thick and fast by a number of their Lordships. The Board will only achieve this by listening to and taking notice of what their customers are saying to them."

NABO also campaigned against the 'Transport and Works Bill', noting that it: "contains some far-reaching powers which, if unamended, could have extremely serious repercussions for boat owners and the canal network as a whole. Despite having no white paper and no consultation with user groups or IWAAC—indeed no waterway user group was even aware of its contents—the Bill had its second reading [in Parliament] yesterday and is expected to go to its committee stage within 10 days. This Bill would allow for the removal of not only remainder waterways but of any waterway, and any rights of navigation which exist now could be terminated at a stroke of the pen." NABO wrote to the Committee of MPs suggesting amendments and successfully lobbied for changes in the provisions affecting waterways.

NABO also provided detailed evidence to a Department of the Environment review of the navigation functions of the National Rivers Authority and BWB. It supported the idea of a single navigation authority, "but only if appropriate safeguards for boat owners can be built in."

NABO proposed a 'Minimum Safety Certificate' [but] BW turned this down out of hand and without explanation.

The early BSS

In consultations with BW over boat standards, NABO proposed that a 'Minimum Safety Certificate' be made available for vessels that comply with appropriate safety requirements.

BW turned this down out of hand and without explanation. NABO responded: "BW refused to take account that evidence should be sought to determine the need for each particular standard. Instead of objective research providing the basis of standards, we have a mixed bag of personal opinions that leads to a hotch-potch of poorly thought out standards. The extraordinary stance taken by BW seems to be derived from an emotive fear of standing up in a coroner's court and being blamed for the accidental death of someone. Until BW approach standards sensibly we will oppose them. Overall this is a very depressing state of affairs."

Sales of BW property

At a meeting with BW: "The Board said that they had been suffering from a reducing government grant over the last 20 years and anticipated that ... they would have to generate half of their income from their own resources."

They had reached an unusual agreement with the Treasury and were allowed to sell off non-operational property and reinvest the proceeds to generate ongoing revenue. NABO expressed its concern that this would lead to substantial increases in charges: "As BW effec-

tively holds a monopoly of inland waterways, the application of free market pricing policies is not appropriate. They denied that they are anything like a monopoly, since people could choose whether they bought a boat, a caravan or a new car [!]"

NABO pointed out that the essential character of the waterways was changing under BW management as a result of inappropriate signage and other matters. BW said that they wished to preserve the industrial heritage aspects of the system—within safety constraints."

Wrong type of customers

"Despite all the 'customer-first' talk, it appears that BW seems to have the wrong type of customer in the same way BR complained last winter about the wrong type of snow.

People who don't want it to be run as a big business, or have fancy signs and pretty locks, but virtually no water in the canal, do not fit into BW's modern waterways scene."

Failing infrastructure

"After the majority of the Garrison Flight in Birmingham, which was only closed for four years, can we expect to see the same 'rapid' movement take place to ensure through navigation on the Kennet and Avon, the Ashby Canal, the Lapworth Flight, another rebuild of Shadehouse Lock on the Trent and Mersey after the first rebuild then collapsed, and slow-drying concrete causing extended closure on the Southern Grand Union.

The provision of 'teashops and craft outlets' together with an audio-visual facility, are the latest in a long line of 'better things to do' for the managers of our navigations."

Fast-forward to 2022: *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!*

Location, Location, Location

Ian Hutson wrestles with mobile banking

I'm ancient. Far past my 'Use-by' date. Crusty. Ill-tempered. Ill-fitted to modern life in the Human Battery Farm. When I was nobbut a callow youth with an intact ambition-gland and the energy of a Duracell bunny, my bank was Williams & Glyn's and my branch of choice—for choice a-plenty there was—was the one by the Riverhead in Grimsby. They used fountain ink pens and hand-written ledgers and, because the clearing system used paper, there was no objection to my cashing a cheque three days before my salary went in—the paperwork wouldn't catch up until the funds had arrived.

Cashing a cheque involved swapping polite inconsequentialities with the teller and leaving two minutes later with sufficient folding moolah to keep me in the company of Bacchus & Co all weekend. Granted, banks only opened when nobody could conveniently get to them, but we none of us died of 'Insufficient Bankitis'.

I am emphatically not a willing or eager 'smart-phone' user. Mine is an early iMoskvitch or iWartburg or some such unfashionably cheap make that will only spring into life if I plug a charging cable into its shiny little rectum. Using it, I look not dissimilar to a frowning zoo-bound baboon sorting through a collection of unsatisfactory flinging-turds. Everything on a mobile is so tiny—and my fingers are so large. The laptop is my weapon of choice.

To get to view my account—since there are no physical branches—involves both laptop and smart-phone:

something called an 'app'; a ten-digit customer number; three characters from a long password; a four-digit 'PIN' to wake the mobile; another four-digit PIN to wake the app; and manifold tapping to provide 'confirmation of log-in within one hundred and twenty seconds or else'. Sturdy mobile and internet signals are assumed, and we all know that those are only found on the well-deck and in the rain.

Virgin Bank demands that I, as part of its 'bio-metric security' and 'for my benefit', log my mobile's precise location. Google demands installation of a new 'location' function, and I deny it every time, as I deny everything such on principle. Anyone else remember privacy?

We boaters tend to be very confused regarding 'home' location. How will Virgin's new security allow my attempts to access my account from a variety of locations—and no more than fourteen days in any one neighbourhood? I smell problems, and I don't mean an empty fountain pen or the last but one cheque in my chequebook. I smell 'Biometric Banking Boater Botheration'.



Graffiti under a bridge in Middlewich. (I would have sent a photo of a Virgin Bank branch but I've never actually seen one)





Rewind

Issue No 5 2007

Howard Anguish reviews NABO News from 15 years ago.

LAND NAVIGATION ISSUES, NEWS, AND VIEWS



What Veg Pledge?
EFRA Committee BW Report Out
Tendering Trials - Your Views

Issue 5 August 2007

Fed up with waiting? British Waterways sought members' thoughts on congestion—mainly to help them when planning the siting of new marinas—and NABO News included a simple pro-forma, enabling members to submit their thoughts to BW via the NABO reporting format.

Medway Cruise Carole Sampson was delighted that all had gone according to plan, with no problems, and had been enjoyed by all participants. Detailed planning had helped to make this third NABO Cruise a great success and she would recommend this trip "As long as boaters are sensible, prepared to wait for the right weather conditions for inland craft, and have the correct equipment. The only downside is the distance—about 70 miles. It took 12.5 hours which is a long time"

Will it go under? Some helpful (and still valid) suggestions from Stuart Sampson: "With raised water levels common this 'summer', narrowboat skippers have to ask themselves sometimes, with chimneys, water cans and an increasing variety of other paraphernalia on the roof, whether a bridge is high enough to pass under."

What Veg Pledge? The issue of overgrown towpaths and sapling 'fender growth' was causing great concern, especially along the South Oxford, and generally throughout the system. This issue raises its head regularly and even in 2022 it is still a subject for complaint! The article concludes with a very relevant

quote, even in present times: 'Every year plants grow—Every year this seems to be a novelty to BW!' For BW now read CRT!

BW and Defra A report was submitted in Summer 2007 regarding findings on British Waterways and detailing suggestions for changes and improvements. It suggested that the relationship between BW and Defra 'left a lot to be desired' and suggested that the new Waterways Minister 'should make a fresh start to improve communications and work out a longer term funding structure'. It can be suggested that this was the start of reforms which eventually led to the formation of the Canal and River Trust, which, in turn, may face some changes as its present funding is under review—possible reforms with some interesting times ahead!

Under a heading 'IWA' there is a note about a recent article in Canals and Rivers magazine, which appears to accuse NABO of trying to 'poach' members from the IWA. It elicited a response from the Chairman that many people were actually members of both organisations (including myself). He goes on: "It cannot be denied that there are areas of overlap in the two organisations' remits, and occasionally differences of approach..... it is a shame that valuable volunteer effort may have been saved by better liaison." I do know that, as a result of this and other similar conversations, I was invited by IWA to act as an 'Observer' on its Navigation Committee, which I found very useful, and contributed to better understanding between the two organisations.

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.

Cycling on the Tow Path

After last month's NABO News concerning the Towpath Trials, I thought maybe balance was needed and input from the 'minority cyclist community' was required. Unfortunately, I couldn't find anyone from the aforementioned group who could write, so I decided to compose a poem for them. I might add that I have never ridden a bicycle on any towpath before, but having grunted with a few of the cyclists in question I have been able to put the following poem together. I hope you like it.

David Thatcher

*Peddling along as fast as I can
passing the boats and a lone fisherman
Whizzing past children who get in the way
Can't stop for anyone, don't want delay*

*The boats with their mooring pins waiting to trip
The people walk slowly and give me the lip
They're all a damn nuisance crossing my path
I cycle by quickly and try not to laugh*

*What's wrong with these people, why are they a pain
Slowing me down on this fast cycle lane
Why do they all come here on this hot summer's day?
I keep losing momentum 'cause they get in the way*

*Blue signs are telling me to get off and walk
'cause we're reaching a bridge or encountering a fork
Why should I slow down, I'll just ring my bell,
although I don't have one, I'll keep peddling like hell*

*One of these days, I think it's a cert
They'll cause an accident and someone'll get hurt
It could even be worse, a fatality I fear
So just think of others,
KEEP OUR CYCLE PATHS CLEAR!*

NABO comments: We will be very interested to see if the new cycle barriers are effective. We hope so, but they need to be every 100 metres or so to really slow the bikes down. Otherwise they just go through one barrier and pick up speed again.



Cycle barriers near Shardlow—wheelchair friendly too.

New boat; new BSS?

I am heartened to read that our Chairman considers the four-year time period between BSS inspections to be about right, given the lack of evidence to the contrary and the escalating cost of the examination (originally £80, now nearer £200 a time). I do, however, have some sympathy with those who advocate a fresh inspection when purchasing a boat. My recent experience with my own sea-going boat, which had a record of six pass certificates over the past 25 years, but which failed this time around with a different examiner, supports my view. He said it should never have passed from day one! I would strongly urge any prospective purchaser to make a new BSS certificate from a chosen examiner a condition of sale, especially now that the procedures have been made more stringent and less subjective.

Stephen Peters

A low cost, easy way to filter contaminated water from your bilges

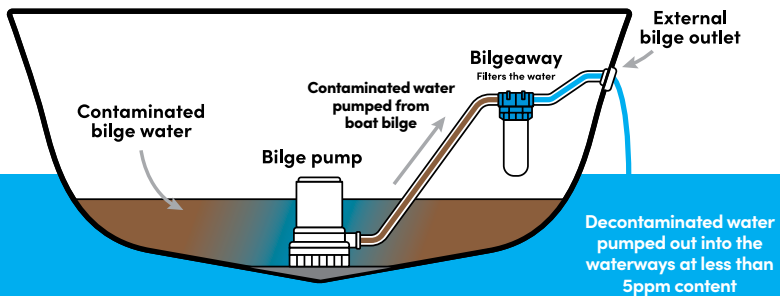
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