



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 6 December 2022

A photograph of a narrow river or canal. On the left bank, a dark boat is moored. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding trees and the misty atmosphere. The background shows a line of trees and a fence along the bank.

**NABO's new Council
A carol for the Trust
And so to the
Medway at last!**



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The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

Issue 6 December 2022



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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 21st January 2023.

Cover photo

This month's cover photo of Tipton and Scavenger at Crofton on the Kennet and Avon canal was taken by Gillie Rhodes.

Please email your photos for the front cover of NABO News to the Editor, as JPEG attachments, ideally portrait format with a file size of 2MB or larger.



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Another varied set of articles to end the year, with Helen Hutt describing her trip to the Medway on the 75-year old paddle steamer, Waverley, and my article on the unbelievable attitude of a local council towards restoration of the historic stable block at Pelsall in the West Midlands.

So it's goodbye from me and...

After 12 years **Peter Fellows** hands on the baton of editorship.

I've also included details of NABO Council, including new members, Alan Douglas and John Sadler—welcome to both—together with Fly on the Wall's view of Council meetings in October and November. Mike Rodd addressed the AGM to give a summary of the highs and lows of 2022: the highs being the active work by council members in many different

ways to improve the lives and welfare of boaters; the lows being the lack of consultation by navigation authorities, especially the EA over changes to the Thames' management, which he details in correspondence with the Agency. Ken Hylins also reports on work he is doing with boaters who are disadvantaged by age, infirmity or ill-health, to help them in the face of navigation authority obduracy. Paul Monahan struggles with the figures in CRT's Annual Report and, as an accomplished poet, he has also written a timely

Christmas 'Carol for the Trust' and a paean to NABO—'For those in Peril on the Cut'—both are most welcome!

This will be my last issue as Editor as we are heading off to a smallholding in Ireland within the next few months. Fortunately, John Sadler has offered to take over as Editor, starting with the first issue of 2023. It is with huge sadness that I'll be leaving NABO Council and editing the magazine—I have enjoyed both immensely over the last 12 years (and learned an awful lot in the process about the waterways, the folk who cruise them, inhabit them, work on them, and 'manage' them). I started boating 40 years ago on a borrowed Trentcraft and cruised the Soar and Grand Union, later progressing to a 40-foot narrowboat for many years, before helping to set up a shared-boat group 20 years ago—which is still going strong. My first communication to NABO, after joining the Association in the early 1990s, was a letter to the then editor complaining about a BSS inspection (which I've included in the 'Letters' section). Now, 25 years later, this will be my last communication from NABO.

I offer my sincere thanks to NABO Councillors, past and current, for their unceasing support for both me and NABO News. Also to the band of eight trusty proof-readers who, despite my best efforts, always find something to correct in each issue. I would especially like to thank Chris Pink for his excellent design skills that, in my opinion, put the magazine in a different league to those of other boating and waterway organisations—as recognised by the National Libraries, which keep a copy of every issue. But my real debt is to you, the association members, for your encouragement and contributions—please keep them coming.

Best wishes and happy boating.



Sten Andresen on Facebook

There is a vital role for NABO in these times, when the continuing state funding of both CRT and the EA is coming up for review—right in the midst of a totally chaotic time for our government! As a result, we have been more active than ever and fortunately our very active council has risen to the various challenges.

For the Council, we seem to be settling down to a mix of face-to-face and virtual meetings—the latter working very well and certainly reducing our costs. We have also been encouraged by another small increase in our membership numbers—largely, I am sure, because of the issues that we have been tackling, which have a direct impact on most boaters. We are clearly being seen by many as probably the only active boater representative organisation willing to act as a critical friend of both CRT and the EA, giving praise where praise is due, but also not holding back when a hard line is required.

On the CRT front, I recently attended an on-line All Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways meeting. Sadly, very few MPs were present—but so many other people wanted to Zoom in that the system couldn't cope! CRT's CEO, Richard Parry, made it very clear that the Trust would not be able to sustain its present level of service without receiving continuing government funding. This must be seen against the original government policy under the Cameron-era concept of "let's get rid of the government quangos," which stated that when BW (then part of Defra) became CRT, it would no longer require government funding, after an initial 15-year transition period. As NABO said at the time, that whole model—of turning BW into a 'National Trust for the Waterways'—

was highly flawed. Despite its best efforts over the past ten years, CRT has not been able—and never will be able—to replace its government funding by finding money from other sources. This is neither surprising nor illogical, for a host of practical reasons. Nevertheless, CRT is responsible for maintaining one of this country's most popular, unique and valuable assets—the cornerstone of the industrial revolution and a potent symbol of the country's international leadership at that time—and is therefore deserving of national support.

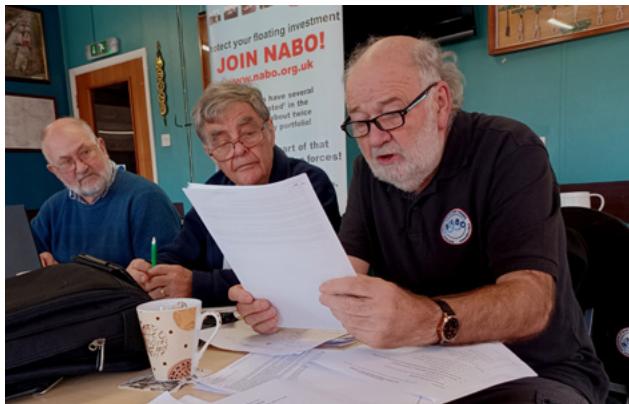


A busy year for the Association and an uncertain future for the waterways.

Chairman **Mike Rodd** addresses the AGM

We continue to meet with CRT on a regular basis, which is very valuable, in that it provides us with the opportunity both to input our views and to gain an insight into CRT's priorities. We are not always sure that they are listening, however, as at times they don't seem to even bother to consult us before making serious decisions that affect us and our members. So, for example, the second increase this year in our licensing fees was suddenly thrown at boaters without any prior discussion. Given the present financial situation, we would probably have agreed that a small increase was logical, and we could have helped them to introduce it with our support. Consult first, though? No way.

We have also repeatedly had to bring to CRT's attention the horrendous problems right across the



Council members Peter Braybrook, Mike Rodd and Phil Goulding at the 2022 NABO AGM

system with the (non) cutting back of vegetation, with some canals not being touched for up to three years. We eventually understood that new contracts were being drawn up, but why at such a late stage? It almost looked like a way of reducing expenditure by stalling for time. On the K&A, for instance, I have had to help the K&A Trust cut back offside trees so that we could operate our trip-boat (run solely for the purpose of funding the maintenance of canal-related buildings and structures, especially the wonderful Crofton Pumping Station)!

Our relationship with EA has also continued to be of great concern, especially when we became aware that the agency was planning to change the whole structure of the way it managed its waterways. We had reasonably early insight into the proposals (generated internally by the EA), which strangely and maybe not surprisingly, were very similar to CRT's! We worked with a group of most of the other interested boating organisations involved, and tried to enter into meaningful dialogue with the EA folk who were responsible. In the end, however, we failed miserably and our inputs have simply been completely ignored. Clearly, the EA was just not interested in the views

of those who are literally its only fee-paying customers. The first meeting of the new National Waterways Forum was a lamentable and totally one-sided exercise. We were able to introduce ourselves to our new 30+ colleagues, but this process—along with the EA introductions—took up over half of the two-hour meeting. Forty-five minutes were then devoted to EA presentations, most of which simply involved reading material presented on the accompanying slides. For serious issues to be moved forward on the basis of a farcical ten-minute break-out, with participants brutally cut off whilst actually speaking, was disgraceful. And the intention to have one-to-one meetings with the different groups was not clearly established until late in the meeting. The EA clearly does not understand that group dynamics are a key benefit of group discussions. Many of the non-waterways groups now attending this very broad church seemed blissfully unaware of the stark realities that we, as the prime user-funders of the waterways, could identify. With only one meeting per year, some attendees did, fortunately, support our plea for a 'real' inaugural meeting!

Our NABO Council always tries to take advantage of opportunities to represent our members on issues that might affect them, and this often requires us to prepare lengthy submissions to Government and other statutory bodies. On the CRT front, we have, for example, been active in objecting to their seeming willingness to sell off many of the assets that (in theory) they own as part of their present government contract. Many of these are of major historic value and NABO has been very active in bringing such cases to the attention of local authorities and other interested bodies. We also remain as an active member of NINE,

the National Inland Navigation Forum, which brings together representatives of most inland waterways organisations on a regular basis.

I need to express once again your Council's gratitude to our colleague, Ken Hylins, who has a deep understanding of the requirements of boaters who are experiencing personal problems, and who works tirelessly to ensure that they are treated with respect, dignity and, when necessary, within the Equalities Act. Regrettably, such needs are not always satisfactorily met, and Ken's involvement is much valued by boaters who encounter problems. This all demonstrates that NABO is always—where this is reasonable and fair—fully supportive of its boater-members. Indeed, Ken's work brings in many new members!

We continue to play an active role in the management and technical contents of the Boat Safety Scheme, and we have actively supported some recent changes that impact on our private boats, including the need for smoke alarms on all boats. We are also positively engaged in work that seeks to understand, and then respond appropriately to, the massive increase in on-boat electrics, especially the extensive use of high-current, high-voltage devices. A key issue here is how far the BSS inspections should go, and what expertise might be needed in inspecting such complex electrically-based systems. From a NABO point of view, what are the consequences, for example cost-wise, for our members? I have personally been actively engaged with the Institution of Engineering and Technology (formerly the IEE) in preparing extensive guidelines for electrical installations on inland waterway boats. This is now at a very advanced stage and will hopefully go into print early next year. It has been amusing to see some opposition to

this, especially from some organisations who offer (expensive) training courses and consulting in this area. The guidelines are aimed at those who have a good understanding of electrical matters, but they will still be readable for those with less expertise.

I would like to conclude by thanking all my council colleagues for their extensive support throughout a very busy year. I would especially like to thank my vice-chair, Anne Husar, for taking so much of the load off my shoulders. I would also like to thank David Fletcher, not only for his continuing professional activity on the BSS scene, for all his work on data security etc., and for keeping the website up and running so well, but also for his many years on CRT's Operational Navigation Advisory Group. Sadly, he has had to step down from this role and we thank him most sincerely for his contribution. We have not, as yet, had our nominated replacement to the group accepted.

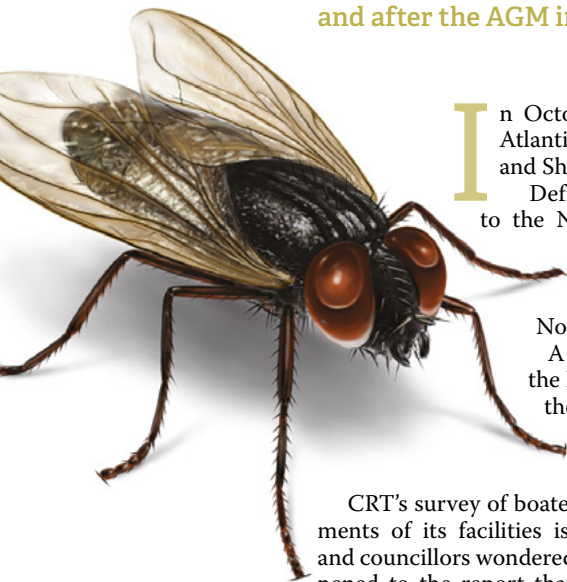
Can I also express our appreciation to Peter Braybrook for his extensive work as our Minutes Secretary, and also for his excellent monthly articles in Towpath Talk. And to Helen Hutt, our Honorary Treasurer, whose financial expertise ensures that we remain financially viable.

I could never conclude this report without expressing the appreciation of every member of NABO to Peter Fellows, who has edited NABO News for twelve years, and brought it to its current excellent professional state, so well received not only by members but also widely read by officials in government, CRT and the EA. Sadly, Peter is selling his boat and moving to live in Ireland! Peter, we will miss you so much—you will be a very hard act to follow.

Thank you all.

Fly on the wall

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



In October, some councillors were away (one in mid-Atlantic!) but the meeting was joined by members, John and Sharon Sadler and Mark Tizard.

Defra's report on its review of CRT has been delayed to the New Year, but intimations from CRT are looking less than positive. Hopefully, Richard Parry will be able to offer some clarification at the Parliamentary Waterways Group meeting in November.

A (possibly apocryphal!) leak from a meeting with the Defra team is not a good omen: when considering the most expensive parts of the waterways, one team member asked: "Are locks really necessary?"

NABO Calendar 2023

The Council meetings in 2023 will be on: 14th January (by teleconference), 11th March (by teleconference), 22nd April, 17th June (by teleconference), 2nd September, 7th October (by teleconference) and 18th November (after the AGM).

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

CRT's survey of boaters' requirements of its facilities is underway and councillors wondered what happened to the report that the Trust commissioned a couple of years ago to document service facilities. Councillors agreed that most boaters use pumpouts at boatyards and CRT's pumpouts were often out of action—although they recognised that pumpouts are very expensive to maintain. The situation with Elsan disposal is different: it is currently free at CRT facilities, but this would be unlikely at boatyards.

The Council discussed the situation on the 14-mile Bridgwater & Taunton canal: a lease of Bridgwater Docks from Somerset County Council came to an end and about 15 boats that moored there had to relocate along the canal.

Unfortunately, there are few other moorings and some boaters applied for a continuous cruising

licence. CRT responded that travelling back and forth on a short length of canal could not be regarded as bona fide navigation and refused the licence. But if this is their only cruising option, how can it not be bona fide? Maybe the courts will have to decide. A few years ago, CRT allowed continuous cruising on another isolated canal—the 35-mile Mon & Brec—although this has not met with universal approval.

The CRT winter works' programme has been reissued four times in the two months since August and it is now four pages shorter than the original—boaters need to check the most recent iteration for stoppage details and also check it for accuracy as some 'nearest winding points' are incorrect. Councillors also noted that CRT is no longer reporting as many infrastructure failures as being due to 'vandalism'—another small win for NABO and common sense.

The AGM goes virtual

In November, the Council's first attempt at a Zoom AGM went surprisingly well, with David Fletcher's expertise in setting it up and a relative lack of incompetence by everyone else—except for reminding people to 'unmute'.

Twelve members attended remotely, coupled with the six in person, so not exactly a full house, compared to the 30 or 40 attendees a few years ago. However, given the fall-off in membership in many boating organisations, the Council was pleased when Helen Hutt reported a small increase in NABO's membership over the last year.

Mike Rodd gave a quick-fire rundown of events during the last 12 months, including the regular meetings with CRT managers and the appalling reorganisation of the EA's management of the Thames. He particularly thanked Ken Hylins for the valuable work he is doing to help disadvantaged boaters get fair outcomes after they have fallen foul of CRT's bureaucracy. He also recorded his thanks to Peter Fellows, who he thought was nuts to give up boating and editing NABO News in order to disappear off to Ireland with his 'cars' (later clarified as 'cows' pronounced with a Rhodesian (sorry, Zimbabwean) accent).

Later, the Council meeting confirmed post-holders for the next year, with Mike vowing that this would be his last year as Chair. There was a welcome to Alan Douglas and also to John Sadler, who will take over editing the magazine. David said that he would only be Chair again if it was to close NABO down—a possibility within a decade unless new members come forward to ensure that NABO's role continues to protect the waterways.

Byeeee

For Those in Peril on the Cut

Paul Monahan

With apologies to the Royal Navy and William Whiting

Temporal leader strong to save,
To use the cut we must be brave
And bid the Trust tho' strong men weep,
Its own-appointed limits keep.
O NABO hear our cry to thee
For those harassed by CRT.

O NABO whose almighty word
The Trust's Trustees submissive heard,
They walked about like aimless sheep
And calm amid the rage did sleep.
O NABO hear our cry to thee
For those confused by CRT.

O goodly NABO, who did brood
Upon the waters dark and rude,
Ten thousand letters you have wrote
In hopes to keep our boats afloat.
O NABO hear our cry to thee
For those oppressed by CRT.

When it's boating time to go,
He thought the locks were very slow.
With the stoppage notice viewed,
He used expletives rather rude.
O NABO hear our cry to thee
When boating's stopped by CRT.

Photo: Gillie Rhodes



Anglian Waters Mark Tizard

The Broads Authority has published its five-year vision, which recognises the need to address climate change, responding to the risks of flooding and salt water incursion. In addition, key features include maintaining and enhancing the navigation, together with protecting landscape character and the historic environment. It would be good to read of a similar commitment from CRT. Meanwhile avian flu continues to decimate birdlife on the Broads and rivers in the region.

The strategy document is [here](https://broads-authority.gov.uk/about-us/how-we-work/strategy/broads-plan-2022); broads-authority.gov.uk/about-us/how-we-work/strategy/broads-plan-2022



East Midlands Peter Brayley

On 3rd December, Nottingham City Council, in conjunction with the NHS and with help from Aquavista, CRT and Nottingham Castle Marina Boaters' Group, is holding a health and welfare event, mainly aimed at boaters, but open to anyone.

If successful, I'm sure it will be repeated and may be adopted elsewhere on the canal system.



Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

Southern and Welsh Waterways Mike Rodd



On 20th October, I attended the CRT Wales User Forum, with six other users and three CRT folk, but unfortunately the Regional Director, Mark Evans, was down with another dose of Covid!

Most of the meeting was taken up with long presentations about all the wonderful things CRT and others are doing on the Llangollen and on developments on the Montgomery and Swansea canals. There was a bit on the Mon & Brec, where my only input was regarding the problems with vegetation management—but, as we saw that week, at last that is underway. CRT staff admitted that they have had to revisit all their instructions to the subcontractors! But the low number of attendees at this Forum was depressing to say the least.

On 26th October, I represented NABO at Glandŵr Cymru's (the Canal & River Trust in Wales) celebration of its 10th anniversary as guardian of the Welsh waterways, held at the very impressive Welsh Senedd in Cardiff. Of importance was an excellent and very supportive speech by the Welsh Minister for Climate Change, Julie James, who was supported by the Chairman of Glandŵr Cymru, and CRT's Richard Parry. Leading the event was Mark Evans, the Regional Director of CRT for Wales and the South West.

On the K&A, extensive winter work is underway, including the important second phase of upgrading the feed into the canal at the Crofton pumping station. Also dredging is now planned on the stretch around Hungerford—hopefully vegetation management will also take place soon!

Nottingham - Beeston
Canal Health Event



Offering a range of free services to help support you and those around you...

- Vaccines, including helping you book appointments
- Health checks
- Healthy lifestyle choices
- How to make your money go further
- How to find and use your local health services
- How to improve your wellbeing

3rd Dec
10am - 1pm
NG7 1TN

SATURDAY
FREE ALL WELCOME
FOOD & HOT DRINKS
THE YARD, NOTTINGHAM
CASTLE WATERSIDE &

NABO's New Council 2022-23



Mike Rodd
Chair, Legal Affairs,
BSS Rep, Southern
Waterways, Welsh
Waterways



Anne Husar
Vice Chair, Publicity
& Communications,
Floating Traders,
Facebook moderator



Helen Hutt
Treasurer



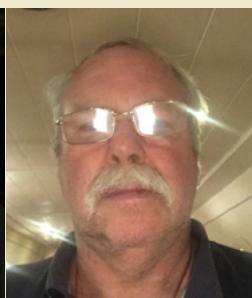
Peter Fellows
Outgoing NABO News
Editor & interim General
Secretary



David Fletcher
Webmaster,
Membership, BSS
Representative, South
East Waterways



Phil Goulding
Continuous Cruising,
Winter Stoppages,
Moorings, River Severn
and South West



Ken Hyllins
Recruitment & Welfare
Officer, North West
Waterways



Peter Braybrook
Minutes & Agenda
Secretary, BSS
Representative, West
Midlands Waterways



Carolyn (CJ) Green
Twitter moderator



Peter Braley
Member, River Trent &
East Midlands



John Sadler
Incoming NABO News
Editor



Alan Douglas
Technical Officer

NABO at the user groups

Meeting of the APPGW

Anne Husar listened in to a presentation to MPs from Richard Parry.

A few observations of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways' meeting in October: there were no MPs taking part in the Zoom meeting, apart from the Chair, Michael Fabricant.

One participant, Sir Robert Atkins, therefore regarded the whole meeting as having no point. It's difficult not to agree. Many potential

participants were unable to join the meeting because the organisers had not paid the small extra amount to have more than 100 Zoom attendees. The sound quality was very poor, with a pervasive echo that rendered much of what was being said unintelligible. Apparently, this was due to too many mics in the room being switched on at the same time, but it was never resolved.

Richard Parry began the presentation by saying that he wasn't going to talk about boating, although he acknowledged that it was 'central' to what they do. He stated that the charity model had been successfully established, but I would have liked more definition of the word 'successfully'. He realises that there is much to do for the future. Strangely, in a lengthy Powerpoint presentation, the slide featuring a photo-collage of CRT volunteers did not have one of them working on the canals and just one slide was devoted to preservation of waterway heritage. CRT's income from investments is forecast to drop, but he is optimistic that fundraising efforts will go up, although not by a sufficient amount to cover this deficit. The worst-case scenario is that a reduced grant = more structure failures = a canal system eventually completely failing = CRT having to prioritise the money it has to pay off bonds and shore up its pension funds. I again offer more pleas for NABO members to write to their MPs, while DEFRA is still considering CRT's funding.

Rochdale summit to
Tormorden
Photo: Peter Fellows





Photo: Steve Pemberton/CRT

Anderton update

Work on the hydraulic cylinders of the Anderton Boat Lift will start in mid-November. The caissons will be detached from the hydraulic rams and propped up to allow the 20-year-old cylinder seals to be replaced.

The ceramic rams will be re-polished and 12,000 litres of hydraulic oil will be changed. The work to ensure that the guillotine gates are safe is taking longer than anticipated, but each of the lift's ten gates will have two new 'fall and arrest' safety systems installed. The new designs have been engineered, approved by English Heritage and manufactured. When all repairs have been

carried out, there will be two- to four-weeks' re-commissioning and it is anticipated that the lift will re-open for boats at the end of March 2023. The lift also requires the introduction of a wireless computer control system to bring it up to current operating standards, and targeted steelwork repairs and a full repaint. CRT has applied for a £5 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and should hear whether it is successful before Christmas. If the bid succeeds, the lift will close in autumn 2024 for an 18-month programme of works, reopening again in spring 2026.

Winter work update

Following widespread criticism of the 26 changes made to the winter works' programme after its publication in August, CRT has explained that the changes were due to a number of factors, including emergencies and other work requiring priority action, factors outside of CRT's control—such as decisions by others such as HS2, withdrawal of applications for access from third-party contractors, and stoppages completed ahead of time by taking advantage of low water levels or sections already closed for other works.

For the latest changes, use the search facility on the Notices & Stoppages page of the CRT website, with 'update' added at the end of a notice alongside the date. This is updated each day. If you are signed-up to receive email alerts, you will get a notification every time a notice is updated or changed. There are details of where work will close canals over the winter: 48 waterways will have 172 large-scale works, including repairs to masonry and brickwork, and installing hydraulics and electrics at mechanised bridges. CRT's workshops are building 120 lock-gates, to be installed at 52 locks across the network. 72 stoppages will take place before Christmas and 93 are

scheduled for the New Year, with a small number over the intervening festive period. A summary is as follows:

- K&A: lock-gate replacements between locks 52 and 65 and work at Crofton Pumping Station;
- Oxford canal: gates replaced at Lock 3, Hillmorton, and hydraulics renovated at a number of lift-bridges;
- Worcester & Birmingham: lock-gate replacements on Tardebigge flight;
- Shropshire Union, gate repairs and replacements at Audlem;
- Grand Union in London: gate repairs and replacements on the Hanwell flight;
- Macclesfield (already underway): Bosley flight relining or replacement of lock-gates, work on cills, paddles and quadrants, creation of a new landing stage.
- L&L, Rochdale, Peak Forest and Huddersfield Narrow: gate replacements and repairs, relining, and masonry works to washwalls.

Other work includes investment to future-proof reservoirs, including ongoing work at Toddbrook and Barrowford.

CRT Exhibition to MPs

In November, Richard Parry launched a report to MPs at an exhibition hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Waterways at the Houses of Parliament, which describes the economic and social value of the waterway network.

To quantify the benefits, the Trust worked with social-value experts, Simetrica-Jacobs, using methodology that aligns with the 2022 HM Treasury Green Book valuation techniques. It finds that the combined annual economic and social value of the waterways amounts to £6.1 billion. This includes £1.5 billion annual economic value from water-based tourism and jobs, and annual social value of £4.6 billion, which includes a £1.1 billion cost-saving to the NHS from active use of the waterways and the towpaths. The report also finds that the integrity of the canal network's infrastructure assets (reservoir dams, embankments etc.) protects homes, businesses

and national infrastructure (electricity sub-stations, utilities etc.) which has a protection value of £42 billion. Additionally, canals help to cool cities in summer, move water around the country, provide low-carbon energy to heat homes in winter and sustainable traffic-free routes through towns and cities, with the potential for environmentally friendly water-borne freight to be revived. Richard said: "*Through championing the benefits of the network for low carbon transport and tourism, sustainable drainage, water transfer and generation of low-carbon energy, we can ensure that the next chapter in the history of the waterways sees them help society mitigate the effects of climate change.*"

The headline report, titled 'Waterways & Wellbeing—Valuing Our Waterways' can be downloaded from canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/valuing-our-waterways.

RCR Servicing

River Canal Rescue's engineers are available until mid-March, at set times, to come to your boat and undertake engine servicing and inspections, with prices starting at £150. This includes:

- Engine oil change
- Fuel & oil filter replacements
- Gear box oil top-up
- Anti-freeze and battery check
- Fan-belt check and adjustment

When you book a service, RCR will fit for free a 'Bilgeaway' filter (for sale at under £100), using its new simplified magnet system which makes it quicker and easier to fit.

RCR's filter removes contaminated water from bilges, preventing water pollution. RCR also offers a fuel contamination treatment service in which engineers clean both the fuel and fuel system.

rivercanalrescue.co.uk and [back page ad](#)



Photo: Helen Hutt

Book early!

The 40th anniversary Canalway Cavalcade will be held in London's Little Venice in 2023 over the early May Bank Holiday weekend. Booking for boats is now open.

waterways.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Cavalcade-Boat-Booking-Form-2023.pdf.

Non-Tidal Thames Motor Boaters' Survey

Motor boaters based on, or visiting, the EA-managed non-tidal Thames during 2022 are invited to participate in an online survey of river usage and satisfaction levels, which is open until 31st December.

www.tmba.org.uk/machform/view.php?id=19138

Funding for the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals

The Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust has secured funding of £116,200 from the European Regional Development Fund and the HS2 Community and Environment Fund for work at the Darnford Moors section of the canal to make habitat improvements—and it will also enable them to put the canal channel into water to the east of the liftbridge.

All to be completed by February 2023.

lhcr.org.uk/news/news Nov23 2022.html

The waterways environment under threat

More problems due to HS2

The HS2 (Crewe—Manchester) Bill for Phase 2b West received a second House of Commons reading in June and was referred to an HS2 Select Committee to hear petitions from those directly and specially affected.

The Bill affects the Middlewich Branch and the Trent & Mersey canal. The plans include three viaduct crossings of the Middlewich Branch and three crossings of the Trent & Mersey canal north of Middlewich.

In each case, the canals would be subject to excessive noise unless improved mitigation is provided. Noise levels close to HS2 bridges from passing trains will be extremely high and will propagate over a wide area unless acoustic barriers are installed. Although HS2 Ltd. includes noise barriers to protect residential properties, it continues to misrepresent all canal users as ‘tran-

sitory’ and thus not included. Most crossings in rural areas are given no protection and will be subject to high noise levels.

On the Middlewich Branch, permanent moorings at Park Farm and visitor moorings at Yew Tree Farm are affected. On the Trent & Mersey canal, visitor moorings at Bramble Cuttings, moorings at Billinge Green Flash, and permanent moorings at Oakwood Marina would be particularly affected.

At each canal crossing, there should be four-metre high noise barrier fencing across the viaducts and on adjacent embankments. Although Parliament failed to address this issue for Phases 1 and 2a, the same mistakes should not be repeated with Phase 2b.

waterways.org.uk/about-us/news/iwa-response-to-hs2-april-2022

Proposed Regent's canal developments

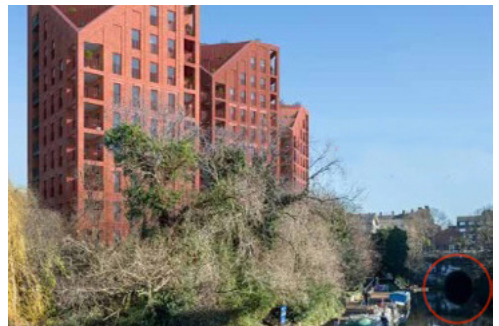
The Regent's Canal is under assault again from high-rise development. Islington and Tower Hamlets councils have received planning applications for three bulky towers in Barnsbury and a seven-storey block at Mile End. These proposals will dramatically overshadow the west portal of Islington Tunnel and the Lock Keeper's Cottage at Mile End.

Developments like this affect everybody because our waterways are promoted as open spaces with an emphasis on public wellbeing—the closest approximation to the countryside within a city—but yet again the spaces are being absorbed into urban high-density developments.

The plan for tower blocks in Barnsbury is particularly aggressive and controversial because the developers have already conceded that their heights exceed the local guidelines. However, they have made it clear that they will sustain a prolonged fight to overrule any decisions to adjust their plans. In other words, this is a hostile development with no respect for the canal, the conservation area, the neighbouring residents or council policies.

The plan for a seven-storey structure at Mile End Lock is a second attempt by Queen Mary University to extend its footprint upwards. It is an improvement on the previous plan, which included demolition of a listed building, but it is still an unwelcome contrast to the existing more modest buildings that fit in well with the surrounding trees and historic buildings

friendsofregentscanal.org/projects/planapps/Barnsbury-Estate/2022-1898.html



Proposed Barnsbury development

Photo: Friends of Regent's canal

When, not if. An accident waiting to happen

A kayak, a two-man canoe, and a rowing boat with outboard, but zero lights, just came through Islington tunnel West to East (plus two young kids with them), about 30 minutes after a wide-beam went through and 15 minutes before a narrowboat. They emerged proclaiming: "That was fun wasn't it". In seven days on the eco-mooring, I've now counted ten individual 'trips' through the tunnel in unpowered or unlit vessels, and two aborted attempts who were dissuaded.

There would be a Coroner's enquiry, if or when there was a fatality, involving any boater involved, which would seek out any contributing factors such as functionality of headlights,

whether cabin lighting was also on, whether a horn was sounded on entry, speed of travel and ability to stop in an emergency. Given the frequency of these events I'd suggest making sure you've covered your ass before going through tunnels until CRT can sort the situation out.

Posted on NABO's Facebook Page

Anne Husar comments

A worrying scenario for boaters when the inevitable happens and it goes to the Coroner's court. NABO re-iterates that we must report all these occurrences to CRT and copy in Jon Horsfall, Head of Customer Service Support, too.

Reflections Flotilla

On 24th September, there was an evening illuminated 'Reflections Flotilla' in the Pool of London, comprising 150 or so vessels, as a tribute by the river community to mark the passing of Her Majesty the Queen and the accession of King Charles III. The event aimed to raise up to £20,000 for the RNLI, supporting the construction of a new lifeboat station at Waterloo Bridge.

thamesfestivaltrust.org/reflections-2022.

Photo: Thames Festival Trust



CRT's Annual Report

Paul Monahan struggles with the numbers.

All figures are taken from CRT's Annual Report or other current CRT publications, except for the estimated values used in calculations for dredging and lock-gate replacement.

The Annual Report can be found at canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/news/annual-report-and-accounts-2021-22 and the Boater Report canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/original/46962-2022-boater-report.pdf

Foolishly as ever, I volunteered to our editor that I might write a critique of the CRT Annual Report in an effort to make it more accessible. I think that I will now start reading party political manifestos for a little light relief. After all, this report could so easily be mistaken for one!

CRT's Annual Report can also be viewed as a masterclass of its type; for, as many will know, the purpose of an annual report is not to reveal the true position of an organisation, but to hide unwelcome facts under an impenetrable top-dressing of candyfloss. I have at least discovered what the CRT logo represents—the annual report. Like the logo, it goes round in circles, is half-observed and has a hole in the middle.

There can be no doubt that the Trust is short of money; whether its income is spent as wisely as it should be, whether it is spent on ensuring the waterways are maintained for the future in the best possible state, whether “*boaters and the boats that navigate the network remain central to our work*” [Boaters' Report, 2022] are questions where the opinions of boaters are often in disagreement with those of CRT.

It is possible to extract some details of interest to boaters, for example, lock gate replacement, dredging and 'visitors'.

Lock-gates

The report states that 132 gate 'leaves' were replaced in the year.

A quick calculation using CRT's count of 1582 locks and an estimate of an average of 3.4 'leaves' per

lock—(some have two, most narrow locks have three, broad locks four, and a few six or even eight) —gives a replacement interval of 41 years. Unfortunately, a separate CRT report states that the life expectancy of a lock-gate is 25 years....!

Dredging

From the Boaters' Report: 125,375 tonnes of silt were removed over 37km of waterway. Sounds impressive!

However, a rough calculation using the values of a cubic metre of saturated silt weighing 2.1 tonnes and a nominal channel width of 7.5m suggests that this will result in a layer of silt measuring only 21cm thick being removed over that distance. Further, if we allow for some lengths, such as the Ribble Link, needing annual dredging, then over a total of 1913 miles of waterway, we could expect to see a dredger about once every 100 years at the current rate. Of course, one hopes that CRT will prioritise the worst stretches, but almost all waterways will silt up over time.

Visitors

This statistic is often derided, but to analyse it in more detail: we are told that there are 786 million 'visits' (undefined) to the canals each year.

Since even boating involves the occasional excursion onto the towing path, let us assume that the path receives all 786 million visits. Spread evenly over the 1710 miles of path, this equates to 1260 visitors per day, every day, for each mile of towing path. Of course, such an average is

superficial; we can all recognise that a sunny August Sunday at Camden will attract more visitors than a wet February Monday in the countryside. Even so, if we allow for all those empty days and empty miles, then the figure becomes even more questionable. No matter! It is an official statistic and therefore must be true.

Occasionally, there are curious statements which may mislead. Try these three extracts:

“Heritage assets are defined as tangible property...”

“The assets within the Waterways Infrastructure Trust and the museum artefact collection and archives fall within this definition and are accordingly categorised as heritage assets.”

“Waterways heritage is for everyone and the heritage within the Trust’s care is free to access and use.”

Taken together, this must mean that canal museums are free to enter. No? No.

Ellesmere Port £9.75, Gloucester Docks £8.50, Stoke Bruerne is free. Adult entry fees from CRT’s website

I support the principle of nationally important museums being free to enter, but equally recognise that museums need to raise funds from somewhere.

There are occasional encouraging signs, such as some with staffing:

- Engineering staff up 6% to 479
- Operations staff up 4.6% to 951
- Support staff up 10.5% to 137 (which may or may not be a good thing)
- Museum staff, regrettably, have reduced by 7.1% to 39

Overall, staff numbers have increased by 4.72% to 1665 FTE (Full Time Equivalent).

How many of these are directly relevant to the waterways, or below ‘managerial’ level, is not revealed. What is stated however is that 83 staff are paid more than £60,000



with two paid around £250,000 each.

Further examination of the financial statements would take up the whole magazine—and probably be no more readable than the report itself. If more information is needed, several of the online discussion sites give detailed analyses of the report and changes made to it.

Where does this leave us? There is little—read ‘no’—good news for boaters, although it is a report on what has happened, not a view of what might happen, so we can only make an informed guess at the future direction, although the continued shortfall in income and lack of concern for navigation does not bode well.

What of CRT itself? Is it fulfilling its real objectives? Without knowing the true, perhaps unrevealed, purpose of the organisation—which does not necessarily match its declared aims—this is impossible to say.



And so to the Medway ...at last!

Helen Hutt ticks off another waterway on her bucket list.

Above: Full steam ahead for the Waverley

Photo: Waverley

Below: Passing the Dartford Crossing

Opposite: Waverley being turned by tug in the Medway

Tower Bridge opened at night

Photos: Helen Hutt

When I first set off cruising in my narrowboat Pipistrelle in 2006, my ambition was to cover the whole navigable network.

By the end of 2019, only the Rochdale Canal and the Medway remained unconquered. This October (after three previous failed attempts to get to the Medway on my own boat) I finally made it—on the fabulous paddle steamer Waverley—and wickedly ticked it off my bucket list. Only the Rochdale to go, then, but that's for another time!

The Waverley, run by a charitable trust, is the last seagoing paddle

steamer in the world. Launched in 1946, she served the London and North Eastern Railway until 1973, when she was gifted to the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society for £1. Driven by a massive 2100 horsepower triple expansion steam engine—the largest ever fitted to a Clyde steamer—the Waverley now offers pleasure trips to thousands of people every year, from various locations around the east coast and the Thames.

Catering on board was good, if basic, with a self-service dining saloon, tea-room and two bars. We were blessed with fine weather so were able to enjoy the ever-changing views from the decks throughout the cruise.

Our voyage started at about 10am from Tower Pier and, of course, the first major attraction was the opening of Tower Bridge to accommodate Waverley's funnels and masts. After that, we enjoyed a near-constant, and often amusing, commentary on the landmarks and ships we passed from one of the volunteer crew. There were stops at Gravesend and Southend-on-Sea, where the spectacle of docking—in-





cluding some impressive rope-throwing—was a sight to behold.

At the entrance to the Medway, we were met by a pilot who climbed aboard mid-channel to much applause. Half an hour later, Rochester and Chatham lay ahead; this was the limit of Waverley's draught. A tiny (by comparison) tug boat met us—more impressive rope throwing—and pulled us round 180° so that we could head out of the Medway estuary again.

And so, back up-river as the afternoon turned into evening and the lights of London played tricks on us as we followed the loopy Thames. Canary Wharf is to port ... now it's to starboard ... now it's to port again! But the most spectacular sight was the final one, as the magnificent ship steamed under Tower Bridge again at 8pm.

What a spectacular experience. Rather glad I did it on the Waverley and not on Pipistrelle.



The Waverley

PS Waverley is the last seagoing passenger-carrying paddle steamer in the world. Built in 1946, she sailed from Craigendoran on the Firth of Clyde to Arrochar on Loch Long until 1973. Waverley was withdrawn after the 1973 season as she was too costly to operate and needed significant expenditure.

The Paddle Steamer Preservation Society (PSPS) had been set up as a registered UK charity and had bought the near-derelict small River Dart paddler PS Kingswear Castle.

CalMac, Waverley's owners, keen to ensure that the ship was preserved, sold Waverley to the PSPS for the token sum of one pound. Neither side really believed that the vessel would return to steam but, just in case, it was stipulated that she should not sail in competition with their remaining cruise vessel, TS Queen Mary.

A successful public appeal was launched to secure funding for the return of the Waverley to service. She was restored to her 1947 appearance and to operate passenger excursions around the British coast.

Since then, Waverley has had a series of extensive refits and much restoration work, including a new boiler and improvements to meet modern safety standards. She has circumnavigated Great Britain and every year makes extensive sailings around the country.

Since 2003, Waverley has been listed in the National Historic Fleet by National Historic Ships UK as "a vessel of pre-eminent national importance".



Welfare report

Ken Hylins summarises his work for NABO over the last year.

This year has been a busy one for me: I have been contacted for help on several occasions, be it for advice or to actually get involved to resolve boaters' issues and concerns.

There has been a common theme to all of the issues I have dealt with: a boater tells the respective navigation authority's welfare and support officer of a problem and there seems to be no resolution. Then I contact the same people and tell them exactly what the boater has said, and then we get to solve their problem with NABO's intervention.

The other issues are a lack of trust by boaters of the respective welfare officer, where I, on behalf of NABO, advise them of how to proceed with their issue and what resolution they should expect.

The right to be treated with dignity

There has been a long-running case involving an eighty year-old boater, who in my mind was not treated with the dignity and compassion he deserved.

However this case has now been successfully resolved and he is getting the care and support he needs. A second case I have been supporting is still active; the boaters in question were treated badly and had lost all trust in the managing authority. Their health is slowly deteriorating and I am active in monitoring their treatment and supporting them through each step. The strangest case of the year was when I had to represent myself. This was a stressful exercise, but it demonstrated to me

how problems can arise when your health changes. There was a lack of compassion in my view but again we have resolved the issues.

Dual enforcement

I still have concerns about dual enforcement (emails that are centrally generated and those from regional officers, which sometimes give conflicting messages), which I have to return to time after time.

I advise people to challenge the messages, as they become a marker on their record for when they renew their licences.

My other area of concern is the process of putting boaters on a six-month licence when it is clear that they are ill, disabled or getting old. This causes a lot of distress to the boaters and, as they are often protected under the Disability Act, in all cases I have got them a full licence again, with CRT reasonable adjustments.

There have also been cases when a welfare officer sends a boater a message to say that there is an issue about their cruising pattern. Then the officer is on a two-week holiday and the boater has to wait, adding unnecessary stress before the issue is resolved. I have raised this with a local welfare officer to tell his manager of this issue.

I think that in the coming months I will be helping many boaters with financial issues and I have kept up to date on the costs of boating so that I can give accurate advice. I also keep constantly up to date on the benefits available to help boaters where these are needed.

A Carol for the Trust

Paul Monahan

Be cursed ye wretched gentlemen
Let all things you dismay,
A plague on you for what you've done
To close our waterway.
You're fixing all the towing paths,
The cut just rots away.
Bad tidings of stoppage and drought
Stoppage and drought,
Bad tidings of stoppage and drought.

The Trust then at those tidings
Rejoiced much in its mind,
And left their locks a-leaking;
Had contracts to be signed
They went straightway to Milton Keynes
Their bonuses to find.
Bad tidings of stoppage and drought
Stoppage and drought,
Bad tidings of stoppage and drought.

Some of us remember
The cut was whole and sound
There was lots of water
In each and ev'ry pound.
But staff are in their offices,
There's few upon the ground.
Bad tidings of stoppage and drought
Stoppage and drought,
Bad tidings of stoppage and drought.

The lengthsman had a vital job,
His length he would survey.
With his trusty monkey wrench
And dab of puddle clay,
He'd fix the broken paddlegear
And keep the leaks at bay.
No tidings of stoppage and drought
Stoppage and drought,
No tidings of stoppage and drought.



Photo: Gillie Rhodes

Pelsall Stop Stable Block

Peter Fellows looks askance at vandalism by a planning authority.

With grateful thanks for information from Philip Sharpe, Chairman & Planning Officer, IWA Lichfield Branch, and Brenda Ward of the BCN Society

Frequently in NABO News, we have reported on the loss of waterway heritage due to CRT selling off its assets (which seems to have slowed or even stopped in recent months).

However, this is the first time we have come across a local authority actively trying to reverse the good work of an individual to revive a dilapidated canalside building and find alternative uses that would ensure its preservation.

The former stables at Pelsall Stop on the Cannock Extension Canal are part of a small group of canal structures, including Friar Bridge, the stop-lock where cargoes were

collapsing, until the building became derelict, with trees taking root in and around the structure.

The building was sold in 2014 and the new owner removed the invading vegetation and collapsed roof. In 2015, a planning application was made to rebuild the stables in keeping with their original appearance and to use them as offices, giving them a new canal-related function. It then took over three years for the Walsall planning authority to make a decision. Meanwhile, work began and the building was stabilised and restored, with brickwork carefully repointed in lime mortar, the roof timbers and natural slate roof replaced, the windows reinstated with historic box sash-windows, and the original brick paving of the whole site reinstated. As a result, this authentic restoration has secured the existence of the stables.

In 2018, after the three-plus years' delay, the planning application was refused by the local authority, with four reasons given: drainage, parking, access and the green belt. Of the first three reasons, drainage could have been covered by planning conditions, there is no evidence that parking would create any problems, and use of the access track would not be materially increased by the proposed use. Further planning authority suggestions that the windows, door, roof-lights and gutters should have been of different materials or design seems pedantic, as this is not a listed building.

But it is the Green Belt argument that is wholly unconvincing nonsense—the statements that

“the replaced roof has a materially greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the building in its previous state of disrepair”

gauged, the toll collectors' cottages, and the stables and workshop buildings. This historically important survival of a related group of buildings shows how the canals were originally used by toll-paying horse-drawn boats, transporting coal from the Cannock coalfield to the industrial West Midlands. As horse-boats gave way to motor-boats, many of the once-common canal stables fell out of use and very few smaller stables like this one have survived.

The toll collectors' cottages became residential homes, but the stables continued to deteriorate, with the roof timbers rotting and



‘repairing a building amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt’ does not make any sense and ‘the replaced roof has a materially greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the building in its previous state of disrepair’ is patent nonsense. To suggest that repairing an historic building, which was present before the Green Belt, amounts to encroachment on the countryside defies logic. The Council then issued an enforcement notice, demanding removal of the roof and partial demolition of the walls, and even removal of the pointing, so returning the building to a derelict state, which beggars belief. Had the Council not had a belated outbreak of common sense and dropped the most extreme demands, this would have condemned the stable block to eventual destruction, as no-one would take on its restoration after such an action. However, the continuing demand to remove the windows and doors would expose the building to the elements and the ultimate outcome—its unnecessary destruction.

No-one can endorse non-compliance with the planning system,



but the responsibility for allowing a situation to develop, in which the works were undertaken without specific authorisation, is due to Council negligence by taking nearly four years to decide on the application. After eight years of struggling with appeals, the owner has decided to call it a day and sell up. He will be putting the building up for auction with a £90k reserve and is seeking an organisation that would purchase it and finish what he started.

Hopefully, a fresh face and somebody who hasn’t rubbed the council up the wrong way will stand a better chance of success.

The derelict stable block in 2005 and the restored building in 2018

Photos: Brenda Ward

So that's all clear then...

The EA responds to complaints by **Mike Rodd** and other boating organisations.

Bonfire of the abbreviations

NWF
National Waterways
Forum

*NNUF
National Navigation
Users' Forum

**NWAG
National Waterways
Advisory Group

***TNUF
Thames Navigation
Users' Forum

Following the inaugural meeting of the EA's National Waterways Forum (NWF), Mike wrote to the responsible EA manager.

Dear Mr Gould,

Following discussions with colleagues from other boater representative organisations, I wish to express NABO's deep concern about the recent NWF meeting which we found to be depressingly frustrating.

registration charges etc. However, this contribution seems now to be largely ignored, the influence of a wide range of non-contributors to the Forum being preferred.

The inaugural NWF meeting was useful in that we were able to introduce ourselves to colleagues, but only ten minutes were allowed for members' input. This does not in any way seem to be the basis for 'collaborative working' and did not allow everyone to bring themselves and their own perspectives to the meeting. Personally, I felt the meeting was a total waste of my time.

The EA has now proposed that the next meeting should be 12 months away, with one-to-one meetings between member organisations and the national team. I had never heard any previous mention of these one-to-one meetings, but they seem to me to be a strange way of encouraging collaborative working. This 12-month delay will prevent any general discussion on the EA's waterways policy and will result in a further delay to any report by the EA on its progress on the Business Plan. In twelve months' time, it will be three years out of a five-year plan, with no indication as to whether the EA has made any progress against its objectives.

Together with my boater representative colleagues, I must request that you review this approach and call a first truly consultative meeting of the National Waterways Forum to receive a report on progress against the business plan in the next three months and also structure the meeting so that members can have a

[We] questioned the effectiveness [of the meeting] and sought to find ways to address these concerns. However our views were then totally ignored.

We certainly were in the past concerned about some aspects about how NNUF* meetings were being conducted and questioned their effectiveness, and we thus sought to find ways to address these concerns. However, this was ignored by the EA and last year's meeting only described one option, which we did not support, but our views were then totally ignored.

I repeat the concern of the boaters—no other users make any extra contribution beyond general taxation to EA's funding. Our members who are based on your waterways will each contribute significantly per annum to EA funding through

significant input.

Finally, I wish to repeat the statement I made in the brief ten-minute session: the relationship between NWF and NWAG** is still unclear. Are they linked and if so who is tasking whom? If they are not directly linked, what is the relationship?

And the EA responded

Dear Mike,

The one-to-one meetings were mentioned on the diagrams circulated earlier in the year to NNUF members in our stakeholder engagement review update in May, and in our NWF members' handbook, which those invited to the NWF received in advance of the meeting.

The meetings will allow collaborative working because they will allow the EA, Defra and NWAG to discuss the key issues raised and collaborative solutions to be identified going forwards where possible. The individual meetings will give a voice to those who don't get chance to raise their points in open meetings as there are always going to be too many people and opinions in such meetings to allow everyone to get the chance to speak (regardless of the breadth of membership, which I note you are not happy with).

As we stated in the NWF meeting, business plan updates will be provided in our newsletters which come out quarterly so it won't be a year before you receive updates on this.

We want to be clear about how much we value the role of boating and its importance to the future of our waterways. On your point about boaters paying their registration fees and that the membership has been watered down to include those that don't pay registrations, we believe



Photo: Peter Fellows

you are missing a crucial point. 100% of the capital funding (£67m over the period 20/21 to 23/24) used to update and make major repairs to navigation assets is Grant in Aid from government; as such the registrations contribute nothing directly to this. In addition, 35% of the revenue funding for staff and everyday maintenance comes from non-registration sources and therefore it is absolutely right that, as a government funded area of work, the stakeholders on the group should represent the full breadth of users of the waterways not just boaters.

The relationship between NWF and NWAG is as follows: NWF members raise topics of a national significance at their one-to-one meetings with the EA, the EA and Defra collate the breadth of topics raised and identify and prioritise

which ones are within their sphere of control. These topics are then discussed with the NWAG group members who have been selected to work together collaboratively using their experience, knowledge and skills to represent the breadth of topic areas that impact our waterways (as detailed in the members' handbook). Technical working groups may then be formed to try to work through solutions that may help the EA to be able to address the issues raised. The NWAG group and the smaller technical groups will then report on any outcomes from those discussions via the newsletters which will be sent quarterly to all NWF members (and anyone else that wants to receive them) and then once a year there will be meeting of the NWF, the agenda for which will be influenced by the NWAG group plus any other pressing issues at the time.

As was discussed in the NWF meeting, if we find that following the initial meetings with NWF members (which are the main opportunity for representatives from these organisations to have significant input and time to speak, not the NWF meeting itself) and the next NWAG/technical meetings that will follow, it is appropriate to schedule an additional NWF meeting then we will do so.

We have always been open that we will keep the progress of the new groups under review and I think it is rather too early to condemn them. I would ask that you support us by allowing the time for the groups and their work to establish, and we can then properly review how they are operating; and make changes if that appears beneficial or required.

Kind regards,

Jo Scully and Omoniyi Green

National Navigation Managers,
National Navigation team

The boating organisations subsequently replied to the EA:

We write to express our disappointment that, while the model review paper tells us you have consulted widely within EA management and staff, you have waited until now to consult with stakeholders and appear to be seeking a very quick rubber stamp on the proposals.

The time constraint of the Teams meeting, the break out format, and detailed definition of questions to address does not make best use of our time or achieve proper consultation.

Contributions—all users contribute to EA costs through general taxation, boaters are the only group that contribute directly through their registration fees and thus have a good claim for greater involvement. NNUF and TNUF** both have Navigation in their names and the dilution to Waterways, whilst expanding the remit, also dilutes clarity of purpose.

The proposed engagement model, clearly reflecting the CRT model, is intended to be widened to include other groups but there does not seem to be any detail of the gaps that you want to fill. Is CRT's National Users' Forum annual meeting distribution list typical of the invitees you would want to include?

We seek an open review of the plan to explore options and a further joint EA and stakeholders' review of the future engagement model.

On behalf of and directly supported by: Charles Foster, Chair, Residential Boat Owners Association; Mike Gibbons, Chair, DBA—The Barge Association; Roger Lill, Chair, Great Ouse Boating Association; Mike Rodd, Chair, National Association of Boat Owners; and Mark Smurthwaite, Chair, Medway River Users Association.



Papal Indulgences

Ian Hutson has some home-truths on mooring rules.

Many moons ago, The Canal Company Ltd, produced and launched a Great Big Policy on what they termed 'inappropriate mooring'.

This included mooring near bridges, causing an obstruction, not having sufficient marigolds on the roof, that sort of thing. Such behaviour would, they warned, result in their taking action (stop laughing!) including licence restriction or refusal. All ostensibly laudable, if a tad overly school-marmish, with tut-tuts and foot-taps abounding.

We've all been annoyed and disconvened by folk who get full-Suez across the canal, stern pinned on the towpath, bows on the offside. We've all muttered Latin curses and summoned vengeful demons to work on our behalf when meeting "oh—just overnight when no-one's about" or "using the washing machine" at water-points.

More than one of us has made good use of a lump hammer, a shallow grave and a sack of quicklime to deal with boats moored on compound blind triple-S bends associated with shallow oxbow lakes and fast-flowing inside legs.

The problem is not boats nor even really the people on those boats—for such people spend their entire lives inconveniencing others, who drive and park their cars in the same ridiculous manner, who have never once in their lives returned a supermarket trolley to the pinfold, or poop-scooped after their dog has dumped. They will never change.

However. How-the-heck ever. Just one granny-knot-tying minute.

Akin to Papal Indulgences or Parliamentary favours it seems that you may do whatever you will so long as you pay.

Don't moor slap bang against bridge holes—unless you're an on-line moorings 'Marina' and giving The Canal Company Ltd a significant cut of the fees...

Don't block the navigation—unless you're a large corporate holiday hire-boat company and giving The Canal Company Ltd a significant cut of the fees...

Don't even get me started on closing off great swathes of moorings because you are a club that wants to hold some sort of 'my fish is bigger than your fish' competition.

Incomprehensible signage and massive boater inconvenience notwithstanding.

It seems then that we've established the nature and extent of The Canal Company Ltd's actual stance, and now we're just dickering on price. As ever, the corporate world gets not a free pass but certainly one that they can afford, while the low-hanging fruit of the private individual is threatened and hectored from pillar to post by Canal HQ twice before breakfast and three times on Sundays for any occasional genuine misjudgement.



Rewind

Issue No 5 2007

Howard Anguish reviews NABO News from 15 years ago.



The editor starts this edition of NABO News with a heartfelt plea to the Waterways Minister (again) to appoint a '**Leisure Navigation Champion**' to BW's Board of Directors to ensure that BW cuts money wastage and abides by its published standards, thereby "providing a network fit for purpose, and include these standards in its legal obligations to licence holders". Recent reports in 2022 strongly suggest that in many areas CRT need to be reminded of this.

The **BW standards** (what happened to them?) were set out in full in this edition of NN and members were

asked to respond to a NABO survey, giving their views or suggestions for any improvements. I would suggest that if this exercise was repeated in 2022 the responses would be interesting, to say the least!

NABO was showing increasing concern about keeping up with the rapid expansion of '**Digital**' in all its forms and how to keep pace with the changes. At the same time, there was the dilemma that some members have a perfect right to choose to have nothing whatever to do with electronic communications, and NABO has equally to serve the needs of all members, as far as possible. This was expressed in the hope that NABO Council continues to maintain the correct balance between all members.

Dressing for the job! In 'YOU SAY' this snippet appealed to me: "*We ar-*

rived at one lock on the Thames as the lock keeper was just finishing his maintenance. We had to wait while he went to change his shirt before he could pen us through. He is not allowed to operate the lock unless he is wearing his white shirt—blue shirt for maintenance, white shirt for lock operation." Maybe CRT's service to customers might improve if they issued DJ's to all staff?

Finally, there was a **seasonal recipe** by an anonymous contributor, which will certainly bring out the Christmas 'Spirit'!

Method:

Sample the brandy to check for quality.

Take a large bowl. Check the brandy again. To be sure it is of the highest quality, pour one level cup and drink. Repeat. Turn on the electric mixer, beat one cup of butter into a large fluffy bowl. Add 1 tsp sugar and beat again. Make sure the brandy is still OK. Cry another tup. Turn off the mixer. Break two eggs and add the bowl and chuck in the dried fruit. Mix on the turner. If the dried fruit gets stuck in the beaters, pry it loose with a drowscriver

Sample the brandy to check its ton-sisiticity Sift in two cups of salt. Or something. Who cares? Check the brandy. Next sift the lemon juice and strain your nuts. Add one table. Spoon. Of sugar or something. Whatever you can find. Grease the oven. Turn the cake tin to 350 degrees. Don't forget to beat off the turner. Throw the bowl out of the window. Check the brandy again and go to bed.

Merry Christmas!

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.

BSS experiences in 1997

Dear Nikki,

This is actually the first time that I've written to NABO Newsletter (or any other publication for that matter), but a number of things crossed my mind and I thought it was about time I put PC to paper so to speak.

First of all, congratulations on an excellent Newsletter. I look forward to each issue for an immediate read. It is without doubt the best that I receive (among others from National and Local IWA, 195 from Friends of President, The Steamer). NABO Newsletter is not only well written, sometimes funny and always interesting, but it actually deals with the realities of waterways today, whereas the other newsletters and the boating press seem to me to gloss over the difficulties somewhat. It is hard hitting and to the point—keep it up.

In the December issue, Dominic Miles put forward his opinions in an article titled 'Just Say No!' I would be grateful if you would pass on to him my support for his views. As I read through the article, I could hear myself saying 'Yes, that's right!' I agree that we should all offer payment for our licence fees when they are next due, but not supply anything else. This is direct action that we should all support. It is time that a supine boating community made its feelings known to BW about the BSS. I shall certainly be doing so. Thanks Dominic for putting the idea into our collective minds—I hope sufficient others follow suit and that NABO could take a lead on this.

My own experiences of the BSS continue to be fraught and I thought that Nigel Parkinson may be interested in the following:

I had my narrowboat (a 40' steel hull and fibreglass coated wooden superstructure—a lovely little boat!) surveyed in 1991 by Ian Burgoyne. As it was built in 1978, I was not too surprised when it failed on a number of points. None was especially serious, but they took time and about £700 to put right.

By 1995, we had moved moorings from Calcutt

to Northwich and another surveyor was recommended. He surveyed the boat and, to my dismay, annoyance and frustration, found an entirely different set of things to be put right. I queried four of the items that I found particularly irksome, but he would not change his views. The one that particularly annoys me concerns the ventilation on the boat. It is fitted with louvre windows throughout, which are very good at preventing condensation, although they are draughty when it's windy. There is no way, however, that the boat could be considered poorly ventilated. So I questioned the need to fit low-level ventilation grilles to the bow and stern doors (which are actually located at a high level anyway as steps are needed to reach them).

The reply was laughable: "As the windows could be 'considered' as high-level ventilation.... it is appropriate that vent warning labels are fixed near to a few of the windows". This is bureaucracy gone mad! I am considering my next steps before April when the licence is due—I will probably not get the ventilation done and wait to see what happens.

Anyway, I have copied the correspondence and enclosed it for Nigel in case it is of any use in fighting these 'jobsworths'.

Peter Fellows

14.1.97

End of an era

Twelve years? Strewth, I was a young man then. It has been a thoroughly enjoyable gig, working with Peter Fellows, and I am amongst many when I say I shall miss his style. No mean feat to chivy the NABO council and members to produce thirty-two pages of interesting and engaging material six times a year, a truly Herculean task. And I shall definitely miss his gentle removal of my more libellous subheads.

Good luck in Ireland, Mr Editor, Sir, it's been a real pleasure.

Chris Pink

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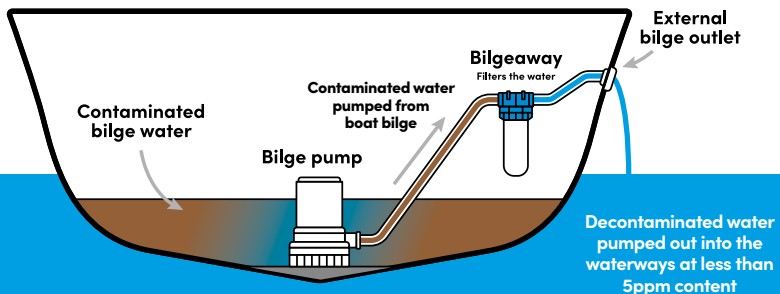
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