



# NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners  
Issue 1 February 2025



**CRT CEO Standing Down**  
**CRT's Better Boating Plan**  
**HVO, A sustainable fuel**



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# NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

**Issue 1 February 2025**



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## Next NABO News copy date

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Articles, letters, photos and cartoons are most welcome. Please email your contributions to [nabonews@nabo.org.uk](mailto:nabonews@nabo.org.uk) or post to the Editor by 15th March 2025.

## NABO Calendar 2025

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15th March 2025 Zoom, 17th May 2025 Face to face at Tamworth, 19th July 2025 Zoom, 13th September 2025 Zoom, 15th November 2025 Face to face after AGM (Provisional Date) 15th November 2025 Face to face at Tamworth Cruising Club

## Cover photo

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This month's photo shows Tyrley Top Lock, photo by the Editor. Please email your photos for the front cover of NABO News to the Editor, as JPG, ideally portrait with a file size of 5MB or larger.



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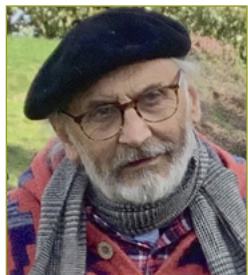
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**T**raditionally it's the time of year for reviewing the past and anticipating the future. While the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution were the headlines of the 1790s our canals were built by private enterprise.

They served their purpose well and Britain became industrialised. Ultimately a period of great change, driven by wealth creation, at least for a few industrialists. During the 'enlightenment' as this age became known, some were enlightened enough to provide comfortable living quarters for their employees.

## Democracy for liveaboard boaters?

Editor **John Sadler**

The pressure from rail transport started to make canals redundant for trade in the 1840s; by the 1900s many had become unused and derelict. The Government then nationalised what was left in 1948, possibly with the intention of mass closure, especially of the smaller canals. Decline continued until the great revival of the 1960s captured the attention of volunteers and campaigners, some of whom devoted their lives to the regeneration of the network. By this time responsibility for the remaining network, around half of its original length, lay with the British Waterways Board. The Transport Act of 1968 required the Board to keep commercial and cruising waterways open and fit for their specified use. Then following a period of development for leisure and recreation partly funded with public money, the ownership and re-

sponsibility passed to the Canal and River Trust charity.

Our traditional post revolution industries are in a period of major decline, canals are back in use but without a clear definition of their purpose or funding. They are used by walkers, fishermen, cyclists, navigators or as an alternative form of housing but how should the revenue be raised for their maintenance? For those who use the network as a home how should democracy be established? If householders don't like the way their council is run they have the option to vote them out. Although many of the services provided by CRT are similar to those provided by local authorities there are no elections or other controls of its powers.

Richard Parry CEO of Canal and River Trust has announced that he will be stepping down from the role in the summer. We thank him for his achievements over the years but as he has acknowledged, there is a lot still to do. NABO will continue to work with his successor to try to ensure the future of our waterways and navigations. However, it is unlikely that any organisations affected by the actions of the Trust will have any input to the selection of a new CEO.

2025 has commenced with storms of disastrous news. Of the headlines relevant to boaters, the breach of the Bridgewater and the closure of the Huddersfield Narrow by erosion, are currently the most serious. Both will have significant impact on cruising plans at least this year. The current failure at Dunham Massey is not far from the 1971 breach listed as the Bollin Aqueduct failure, which took 2 years and £250,000 (~£3m in today's value) to repair.

Tempora turbulenta!

As I type this, the ice that has held the canal here and everywhere else going by your pictures, is finally thawing, damaging storms are hopefully behind us. The fuel boats will have an easier time getting to us and cruising plans for the year become a more optimistic exercise.

It's been a dramatic start to the new year with the major breach on the Bridgewater Canal and the lesser but in its own way just as worrying storm and flood damage on the Huddersfield Narrow. Both events shine a light on the many threats to our waterways with maintenance neglect being a common denominator. And then there's the Boat Licence Review to throw in to the mix, all of which have rather eclipsed CRT's Better Boating plans. I note the 'meat on the bones' of these plans have now slipped from January to March, I'm hoping that these will be in place before our meeting with the CRT trustees that month.

The link between the two major stories in this boating new year, the Bridgewater breach and the CRT Boat Licence Review is the vast scope for pre-empting their outcomes. From catastrophising the worst to predicting the best, there have been plenty of posts and comments on the as yet, completely unknown. Nonetheless, in the best tradition of sensationalist journalism, they are being peddled all over the media with the worst scenarios gaining the most traction.

Is there any benefit in doing this, after all, many decisions we make and views that we hold are based on looking at past experience and what we know has happened before. For example, we have all seen how consultations held by navigation authorities, ostensibly to take in to account boater's views, are then seemingly ignored with changes

made of a pre determined, fait accompli nature, in the face of the results.

Nevertheless, pre-warned is pre-armed. Well maybe, with so much doom and gloom in the current time coupled with the knowledge of historical poor outcomes and continuing lack of UK wide waterway maintenance, I am personally aware how easy it is to pre-empt the worst scenarios. I am also aware how much easier it is then made for those with decision making powers to simply fulfil the worst that has been predicted, after all, that's what we all expected them to do.

## Catastrophe or hyperbole?

Chair **Anne Husar**

Far better surely to put forward a more rounded picture, not pre-empting and forecasting decisions but exploring all the possible implications as more facts are revealed. At present, The Bridgewater Canal Company Limited, (part of Peel L&P, in conjunction with the Bridgewater Canal Trust), operate the Bridgewater Canal, has confirmed that the breach will be repaired. However, as yet there's no mention of re-instatement as a through route, but it's very early days. As I type in mid January, CRT's Boat Licence Review commission have not yet ratified its terms of reference although this is supposed to happen this month. Its proclaimed independence is also questionable given that the chair of this commission has been both appointed and paid for by CRT.

NABO council will be ready to engage on all these issues on behalf of all boaters.



# Fly on the wall

**Peter Braybrook** observes proceedings at the Council meeting

**A**fter the usual preliminaries of accepting the previous minutes the meeting sped through matters arising so that Council could concentrate on the main issue of the day: the Better Boating plan that has been issued by Canal and River Trust.

Matters arising included reports from Council members on the activity that has been taking place since the last meeting with attendance by Council Members. EA meetings where Mike Rodd was encouraged recently by a change of attitude; CRT forums where we have also seen a change with boater's opinions being sought; steering groups of Fund Britain's Waterways and The Grand Union Water Transfer Scheme. NABO continues to be involved with the Boat Safety Scheme and Peter Braybrook will be attending both Technical Forum, in Mike Rodd's stead, and Advisory Forum meetings which are planned in the near future. Peter has also been invited to a CRT Trent Strategy meeting which is likely to be important as the River Trent may become the main link between the southern and northern parts of the Canal System following the breach of the Bridgewater Canal.

It was agreed to discuss the Canal and River Trust License Review Commission in a further Council Meeting on 1 February 2025 by which time we hope that the Terms of Reference will be known. NABO will not pre-empt the issues by making a statement in response to the CRT announcement. It was noted that NBTA have done this by issuing a damning statement sug-

gesting that the intention of the commission is to eliminate the travelling boater community. NABO has received confirmation that we will be consulted. David Fletcher remembers the process that led to the 1995 British Waterways Act and will get together some of the material from those negotiations. It was noted that some of the people involved on NABO's behalf between 1992 and 1995 are still NABO members and should be consulted.

The discussion on the 'Better Boating Plan' was extensive and each point was looked at in detail. The conclusion was that words are cheap and that the only way to hold Canal and River Trust to the commitments to paddle repairs, defect management, preventative maintenance, vegetation control and boater facilities was for NABO to watch out for real improvements. To do this each Council Member was asked to take on a section of the CRT canal system and keep an eye on stoppage notices and the effectiveness of CRT's response. This was agreed and the results will be collated and reviewed at our meeting in November.

Any Other Business included discussion on the ways to avoid the Bridgewater breach, an opportunity to lobby MP's in January, the need for proof readers for NABO News, the availability of NABO window stickers (£1 each) and the use of NABO Archives to fill the gap left by Howard Anguish's well loved "Rewind" articles in NABO News.

## A NABO appeal for help!

There was a limited response to last month's appeal for help by the Council

But with the upcoming changes more help is needed to ensure we have an affordable, navigable canal network in the future.



## On The Cut

Looks like access to the north west from the south could be rather limited for a while. The Macclesfield canal is scheduled to be closed in February for repairs to the Marple flight, and thereafter water issues may cause further delays, if we have a dry spell, unless reservoir repairs are completed.

A Mersey passage is not attractive in the winter, certainly not for the faint hearted.

Going over the Leeds and Liverpool canal or Rochdale and down the Trent is an adventure in

itself. The Huddersfield Narrow canal is awaiting repair.

### What is a boater to do?

Lift out to get around the blockage?

That was the preferred solution last year when the Lancaster Canal had a breach.

The tidal Trent may have a surge in numbers, when not in flood, its not too daunting a prospect and, though it's a much longer distance doesn't add too much in the way of locks.

## Morco Safety Alert

Morco's escalated important safety warning concerning specific open-flued water heater models published December 2024.

This matter concerns your personal safety and that of the boat crew and anyone in the immediate area of the boat due to a potential gas leak from specific models and years of manufacture of Morco LPG water heaters. Morco is stating that the specific appliances listed on its website should not be used with immediate effect, and the gas supply to such appliances isolated.

This safety warning notice applies to all the affected appliances on the Morco list, including any that have had an upgrade. This latest safety warning from Morco (Dec 2024) replaces, updates and escalates its advice from earlier this year concerning specific models of its open-flued water heaters.

Morco's concern is that the water heaters can potentially leak unburnt gas that could cause fires or explosions, that may result in burns and injuries.

It is offering to arrange a refund for affected people, or owners can register for a free replacement product when one becomes available.

Identifying affected models; some have additional model labels including Innovita and Primo. The water heater's data plate indicates the model, serial number and year the appliance was made.

If you look underneath the appliance, you should be able to see this data plate at the bottom of the appliance on the right-hand side of the back plate.

The water heaters which are affected by the notice not to use are Primo 6 (MP6), Primo 11 (MP11), EUP6 and EUP11.

These are the same appliances as those detailed in the recent safety upgrade, which does not make them safe to use. If you are not sure which water heater you have, please follow the Morco identification guide to find out whether you own one of the affected appliances.

Please note the EUP11RS is NOT affected by this notice not to use.

The indicators show that there may be several hundred boats on BSS implemented waterways with the appliances that fit the model description provided by Morco, please check your appliance and make sure you are safe.

# News from East Anglia

By Peter Early

**You can read more here:**

[facebook.com/share/p/14CKqL7RbH/consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/st-ives-and-brownhill-staunch-sluices-information/](https://facebook.com/share/p/14CKqL7RbH/consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/st-ives-and-brownhill-staunch-sluices-information/)

What a year 2024 has been. It seemed to start raining at the end of 2023 with the rivers promptly closing and not reopening until June. Of course, there were some periods of caution during that time but the stoppage at Brownhill Lock meant only limited cruising.

While in the marina we decided that it was time to go lithium and bought two 200 amp LiFePo batteries with the Battery Management System pre programmed to suit a hybrid system. It was a pity they were delivered to the nearby garden centre but eventually we found them! With 40 years as a vehicle electrician I understood the pros and cons of hybrid and felt perfectly capable. I had never liked the way the original batteries were installed and secured so the first thing after removing the old batteries was to manufacture a battery box to retain the two LiFePo, a new lead acid and the original starter battery. At 40kg each I had to get a much younger neighbour to lift the old ones out. I also moved the supply to the bow thruster split charge relay from the domestic bank to the starter battery to prevent it being held on by the higher voltage of the lithiums. New cables made up and connected with suitable fusing and all good to go.

At the same time I replaced the original immersion heater in the calorifier with a dual voltage one with a heavy duty relay and switching. When cruising in the summer months if moored more than a day, the water is often not hot enough for a decent shower. With the new arrangement and our 1.3 kW of solar the water is often back to tem-

perature by late morning and the batteries back to full charge.

The downside of being gas free is not being able to use the generator at unsociable times. Although the old 560 amps of lead acid batteries were able to boil a lowish power kettle or toaster it often meant waiting until after 8am before breakfasting. The new batteries handle these loads with ease.

We were booked in for a lift out and blacking in mid-September, the plan being that this would be on our return to our home moorings. Unfortunately our summer cruise was cut a bit short by mobility problems so we returned about four weeks early meaning a short cruise back downstream for blacking. The lift out and blacking all went to plan. This was first time out after launch and we were pleased to see the hull and original two-pack in good condition. Every thing went to plan until the time came to go back in the water. The heavens opened and once again the EA promptly declared the river in the red and the locks closed.

Westview Marina is actually on a short tidal section of river and consequently low lying and slow to drain. The sudden rainfall caught everyone out with a number of hire boats stranded upstream. The river rose, the banks went under water and it was a case of wading through deep water to get from boat to land. And that was how it remained for four weeks before being able to get home. A misty day when we returned with the water still covering the flood banks, the poles marking the edge of the channel looming out of the mist. Challenging again but not quite so exhilarating.



And now the river is back in the red. Again.

Don't let any of this put you off visiting the Great Ouse, it's still a lovely river. Salters Lode and Denver Sluice will be dredged by the Spring although the visitor moorings at Denver have been temporarily closed due to subsidence with no indication as yet of when they will be repaired. The Jenyns Arms public house at Denver remains closed after its refurbishment. The EA are hopeful of finding a tenant but the prospects aren't good in my opinion.

Upstream Queen Adelaide and Toms Hole moorings remain closed. Westview Marina have taken over the EA visitor mooring on the river outside and responsibility for the pump out machine. Previously free it will now cost you £20.

Further upstream at St Neots the pontoon visitor moorings outside the Priory Centre are closed until 30 September whilst the centre is rebuilt. There is plenty of mooring on the opposite side at the park, either side of the road bridge. The status of the water point is unclear so if you plan to moor for a while ensure you fill your tank at Buckden or Great Barford.

Baits Bite Lock on the River Cam has been closed for some time due to subsidence problems. The immediate stabilisation work is likely to cost around £1.5 million per lock, with the need greatest at Baits Bite. Rebuilding the locks is likely to cost at least £5 million each, probably more. Work has been progressing and it is hoped the lock will reopen in April or May 2025 although complete rebuilding will still be required in the future.

There are no planned lock stoppages on the Great Ouse but you are advised to check those on the Nene.

Flooding on The Great Ouse

Those who are familiar with

the river will know that flooding is becoming more severe and prolonged these past couple of years, the Bedford to Earith section being closed or in caution from October 2023 until June 2024, causing a number of boaters to relocate to the Ely section or to The Broads. And, of course, much comment on social media about licence value for money and the poor performance of the Environment Agency.

But, drainage of the river has always been difficult with the first serious attempts of improvement being way back in the 1600s, the problem being the low lying nature of the land with consequent lack of fall. Indeed, here at Huntingdon, 50 miles from the open sea, the river is only 10 metres above sea level. One of those early improvements was the digging of the Old Bedford River running some 30 kms from Earith to Denver to take excess water quickly to sea. This was supplemented later by the New Bedford River running parallel, with the area in between allowed to flood. With the exit from these Washes being tidal, once flooded they are slow to drain.

The two lowest locks on the Bedford Ouse are St Ives and Brownhill. St Ives has seven powered sluices to allow flood water to drain. Over time many of these have failed with only three now operable at St Ives and one at Brownhill so although the river above St Ives may be open to navigation one cannot go further. There has been some confusion as to whether these are necessary for flood defence or purely for navigation purposes, the classification of which affects the funding available. Brownhill has now been accepted as cost beneficial and a funding decision is expected by September 2026 but St Ives remains unresolved although a request for funding has been made.

## RESTORATION NEWS

# The Wilts and Berks Canal Trust

### Please Sign

The Wilts and Berks Canal Trust [wbct.org.uk](http://wbct.org.uk) have launched a petition which currently has over 2,000 signatures—but more are needed. Please sign and share it to friends and family via email, Facebook or any other media you fancy. [change.org/p/act-now-to-save-swindons-canal-restoration](http://change.org/p/act-now-to-save-swindons-canal-restoration)

**T**here is a campaign to save the route of the Wilts and Berks canal.

The route of the canal is in jeopardy; threatening the restoration project. Two sections in Swindon were restored about 20 years ago; another is being dug out right now and three more will be restored as a Planning condition in Wichelstowe. We are being encouraged by the Council to restore the original canal route from Kingshill to Wharf Green.

Plans currently submitted for the redevelopment of the Oasis site at Swindon ignore the need for the reserved route of the Wilts & Berks Canal to be of sufficient width. Permitting this development as proposed would preclude the canal's restoration for several generations, thereby denying the residents of Swindon the proven environmental, economic and health advantages a restored canal would bring to the Town.

## Climate Change

It's easy to think that after five named storms this winter and more forecast, the climate is worsening. However last year there was twelve named storms, the worst winter storm number since

2015/16. The active jet stream is probably responsible for this year's batch of storms, with a risk of storm clustering to batter the UK during February.



NABO member's boat Joanie M Too in the flooding at Westview Marina.



St Ives Lock and Sluice showing how the stream from the sluice in strong flows, can push boats against the bulge in the entrance wall.

Photo David Mercer

# HVO, a sustainable fuel for your boat's engine

If you care about the environment, you will be considering how to minimise your carbon footprint when out on the water. Like most inland boaters, your current boat is probably powered by a diesel engine, and you may not be ready to transition to electric drive.

Fortunately, there is a way to dramatically reduce the CO2 emissions of your current diesel engine.

In line with their commitment to the sustainability of boating, the Inland Waterways Association is working with the Royal Yachting Association, British Marine and the Cruising Association to raise awareness about the environmental and safety benefits of switching recreational vessels from fossil diesel to a cleaner, greener, sustainable fuel known as HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil). They have formed an HVO Joint Working Group to seek to change government policy and increase the use of HVO in existing diesel engines across the whole UK recreational boating sector.

HVO can be used immediately in your boat's current engine to significantly reduce carbon emissions and is:

- Tried and tested in a range of modern and traditional canal boat engines
- Approved by the leading marine diesel engine manufacturers
- More resistant to 'diesel bug' than mineral diesel, and especially the 'FAME' biodiesel currently being added at 7% to mineral diesel
- Clear, colourless and odourless
- Cleaner than mineral diesel, with lower particle emissions
- More biodegradable than mineral diesel
- Safe to use as a drop-in replacement for mineral diesel, at any concentration, with no engine modifications required
- Suitable for supply and distribution using the existing marine infrastructure

There are two key barriers to the adoption of HVO in the leisure boating sector, limited availability and inconsistent price. Despite a Government managed subsidy, the Renewable Transport Fuel Certificates, ('RTFCs') the price



Historic nb Spey using HVO

of HVO is very volatile and usually more expensive than mineral diesel. As a result, boaters are reluctant to buy it and suppliers are reluctant to stock it.

An additional problem is that the current addition of 7% 'FAME' biodiesel to mineral diesel is giving problems in the marine environment. 'FAME' biodiesel is more hygroscopic (tending to absorb moisture from the air) than mineral diesel and deteriorates in storage, particularly in fuel tanks over the winter. The result is choked filters, injectors and fuel pumps leading to expensive engine failures and, in some cases, safety issues. HVO solves this problem.

The Joint Working Group now invites all boaters to help to promote HVO. We need your support as a boater to help increase demand, expand supply and stabilise the price of HVO to encourage the adoption of the biofuel in the leisure boating community.

Please:

- Use HVO whenever you can get it.
- Inform your fuel supplier (marina, boatyard, hire base) that you would buy HVO if they stocked it.
- Lobby or write to your MP asking them to pressurise the Government to support our campaign to adopt policies that will make HVO available and affordable to leisure boaters.
- For more information, see the IWA Sustainable Boating webpages



## Richard Parry CRT CEO to stand down

After serving 12 years in post, the Trust's chief executive, Richard Parry has announced that he will stand down this summer.

"It has been an honour to lead the Trust through such a key period, working to build a sustainable future for our historic canal network, increasing the number of people benefiting from it and wider appreciation of its value to the nation. I have loved working with such committed colleagues and a rising number of amazing volunteers who together deliver the ongoing care that the 250-year-old canal infrastructure demands—and making so many friends amongst those who use our canals and share our passion for them.

After 12 years it is the right time for me to hand over to a new chief executive to lead the Trust on the next stage of its journey, alongside our Chair, David Orr CBE who took up his post two years ago. My departure this summer will fit into a cycle of succession, so that David and the new chief executive can look to the longer-term future, including strengthening the Trust's partnership with Government with over four years of the current parliamentary term to run.

There is a huge amount of work for the Trust to do over the coming months and I will be focusing all my efforts on delivering our priorities until I hand over later this summer."

—Richard Parry

Trustees Chair David Orr, CBE commented: "Richard has made a fantastic contribution, establishing the Trust as a much-admired national charity. He has led the organisation through many challenges and chalked up many achievements over the past 12 years. He has been dedicated to the national treasure that is our canal network, venturing across the country to be a visible, engaging leader.

We face many more challenges in the years ahead, and the Board and I will be looking to recruit a successor of the calibre needed to follow on from Richard, to take the Trust forward on the next phase in our journey, to grasp the wonderful opportunities we have to use our canals to support many of our national priorities and improve the lives of millions of people."

A recruitment process for our next chief executive will get underway shortly.

### NABO Chair responded:

The announcement that CRT CEO Richard Parry will be stepping down in the summer has been met with a wide spectrum of responses, both positive and negative.

Whatever your view, we must hope that his replacement will have keeping the UK's unique waterways open and navigable as their priority.

### Diary Dates CRT Meetings

Disabled Boater Forum

Wed Feb 19 2025

Online meeting

Navigation Advisory Group

Thu Feb 20 2025

Venue TBC

National Boater Forum

Wed Feb 26 2025

Online meeting

London & South East Customer Forum

Wed Mar 26 2025

Venue TBC

London & South East Regional

Advisory Board

Thu Mar 27 2025

Milton Keynes

North West User Forum

Wed Apr 09 2025

TBC

Navigation Advisory Group

Wed Apr 09 2025

Venue TBC

West Midlands Customer Forum

Wed Apr 09 2025

Online meeting



# CRT's Better Boating plan

## *Getting the basics right*

Boating should feel easier, with locks and swing bridges better maintained and easier to use. There should also be fewer unplanned stoppages that disrupt cruising.

CRT will fix all outstanding broken paddles by spring 2026 and set a target from April 2025 to repair any paddle faults arising as soon as possible (but no longer than four weeks). If a paddle repair cannot be fixed as it requires a longer stoppage, a repair may be deferred until the next works stoppage period.

CRT will target more resources on planned preventative maintenance (PPM), prioritising re-greasing and clearing vegetation at locks and swing/lift bridges in the spring and early summer ahead of the busier period of boating.

CRT will spend more delivering improved grass-cutting in 2025/26. They will also review where and when they cut grass—ensuring grass is cut at locks and mooring sites and cutting more towpaths to the water's edge, making it easier for boaters. They'll update their tree management standards and programmes to increase tree surveys. This will inform more winter tree works and assign higher priority to the clearance of fallen trees blocking navigation and towpaths.

## Boater facilities

CRT acknowledge that boater facilities are important, so when they do break, they'll work quicker to fix them. Combatting overflowing bins and fly tipping will improve the experience of using these facilities. CRT also acknowledge that many boaters care about recycling, facilities will be adjusted to make it easier.

CRT will review refuse collections at their busiest sites to reduce overflowing bins and take measures to help tackle fly-tipping. They'll roll out segregated waste, recycling and food waste collections at their sites in England by summer 2025.

If water, Elsan or pump-out boater facilities break, CRT will fix them promptly.

## Better communication & customer service

The Trust want to make it easier for boaters to tell them if there is a problem so that they can

fix it. Being able to find up-to-date information is important, so they'll improve the communication and customer service providing more opportunities to meet and talk with them.

CRT will develop a Boater App to make it easier for boaters to access the online services provided, when and where they want. For example, this will enable fault reporting and find out what has already been reported.

The stoppage notices system will be improved, making sure that the information for boaters is clear and accurate—adding photos so that boaters can see the cause of the stoppage and what is being done to resolve it. The booking system for operated structures and pre-bookable moorings will be updated to make it more customer-friendly and easier to use.

CRT plan to improve how they communicate with boaters. The Boaters' Update e-bulletin will be updated, and they'll increase their social media boating activity. They'll provide more opportunities for boaters to meet and speak with colleagues. A 12-month calendar of boater meeting dates will be published.

**Editor Any boaters out and about are welcome to contact NABO News if they find any of the Better Boating promises broken.**

## CRT's promise to keep canals open for boating

"We will demonstrate to boaters that keeping our canals open for navigation is at the heart of what we do."

This is CRT's commitment to boaters, from the top of the Trust, that boating will be central to their long-term plan. The Trust's chair, David Orr CBE, will chair a new boating sub-committee of the board that will oversee the implementation of a better boating plan and general boating issues. Keeping canals open for navigation will be central to their next ten-year strategy.

# The Future of Boat Licensing Review

There are several concerning elements to this review. Among others, its independence is highly questionable. The statement that there are two boat licences, one for continuous cruisers (ccers) and one for home moorers is totally inaccurate and not allowed for under current legislation; the possible use by CRT of a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) to change the legislation has been raised in Parliament where it was not denied.

NABO's position is that it will not be drawn in to pre-empting the findings but rest assured, we are very aware of the need to be as involved with the review as we can possibly be and to seek our own legal advice when necessary.

Changes made as a result of this review will affect every boater on the waterways, regardless of their status. It is essential for us to gather comments. NABO would really appreciate comments from members on the published Terms of Reference which for convenience are reproduced below:

## 1. Purpose:

1.1 The purpose of the Review is to consider options for potential changes to approach to boat licensing, to identify and evaluate alternative models for how to regulate the use of the canal network for boating that reflects the changes to its use over the past 30 years and the likely range of future uses.

1.2 These Terms of Reference set out the scope and principles of the Review to be carried out by an independently led Commission to be convened by the Trust.

## 2. Context:

2.1 The Trust's statutory navigation, boat licensing and enforcement functions are currently contained in a patchwork of legislation, inherited from British Waterways in 2012, including provisions from original canal enabling legislation going back hundreds of years, overlaid with a number of 20th century private and local acts of Parliament.

2.2 The use of the Trust's waters has changed considerably in the last 30 years or so since the last Act obtained by British Waterways (in the form of the British Waterways Act 1995), which first introduced the current 2 categories of boat licence based on home mooring or continuous cruising, the latter intended to cover a small group of truly nomadic boaters who navigated continuously around the network, typically carrying and delivering goods as their predecessors had done for over 100 years, and successfully petitioned Parliament in the bill state of the 1995 Act to remove their need to obtain a home mooring.

2.3 The biggest change of use over this period

has been the steadily increasing numbers of boaters licensed as continuous cruisers and use of vessels for full time residential purposes. In reality, a significant and growing number of those boats licensed as a continuous cruiser cannot reasonably be said to be genuinely navigating throughout their licence period and, instead, remain in one relatively small part of the network for most if not all of the time, to live and work in that area without obtaining a home mooring.

2.4 These vessels tend to be concentrated in areas of high demand (driven largely by the cost of home moorings or alternative accommodation in those areas and the economic opportunities available) which has created challenges for the Trust both from an operational, financial and reputational perspective.

2.5 These trends have resulted in high levels of non-compliance and consequent enforcement action which can result in the Trust removing residential boats from its waters, sometimes in difficult circumstances, creating tension between the Trust and boaters subject to enforcement action and other boaters and local stakeholders who expect the Trust to actively manage non-compliance and congestion by continuing to uphold the full requirements of the current legislation.

2.6 The current legislation predates the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010 which both have significant implications for the Trust's boat licensing and enforcement approach, particularly in relation to continuous cruisers and residential vessels.

2.7 The current legislation does not take ac-

count of the Trust's status as a charity with a prescribed range of charitable objects and finite resources, independent from Government—with declining Government funding.

2.8 In court proceedings, judges have commented on the complexity and lack of coherence and clarity in the legislation and have urged the Trust to seek reform and consolidation.

2.9 boat licensing legal framework is, therefore, considered to be in need of review and reform in order to enable the Trust to adapt to the present and likely future use of its waters.

### 3. Principles

3.1. The Review will look at the issues created by the current framework and consider what improvements and outcomes should be sought by the Trust as well as options for reform of boat licensing and enforcement which could be taken forward within existing legislation or by seeking new legislation by the Trust in accordance with the following principles:

3.2 Clarity—clear and understandable for the Trust, boaters and other stakeholders.

3.3 Fairness—secure a balanced approach to different boater uses and navigation patterns, with boaters collectively and individually making a fair contribution to the cost of navigation operation and maintenance taking account of the varying utility and intensity of use

3.4 Sustainability—reflect and cater for the long-term changes in boater use and demand, in the context of impacts on navigation, the wider local community and the environment and taking account of the Trust's long term financial position.

3.5 Effectiveness—enable the Trust to better manage its inland waterways to respond to changes in use and take proportionate and timely enforcement action more effectively and efficiently based on a broad consensus of views around the Trust's management of its inland waterway network.

### 4. Approach

The Review will:

4.1 Approach the issues from objective and neutral perspective, bringing a fresh perspective, seeking to build and learn from experiences of other areas of regulation and reform.

4.2 Benefit from internal and external input from customer service, operational, legal and other expertise.

4.3 Be informed by evidence and data on boat licence and enforcement figures and evidence of wider socio-economic, operational and environmental factors, which drive a number of the current challenges and will inform the choices open to the Trust for reform.

4.4 Seek the views of boaters and other stakeholders through consultation and other forms of deliberative engagement.

4.5 Consider the appropriate legislative vehicle for meeting any procedural requirements such as consultation and publicity.

### 5. Governance

5.1 The Review will be carried out by a Commission, led by an independent chair appointed and funded by the Trust, with one appointed boater representative, likely to be an existing Council member, and one appointed Trustee, supported by a dedicated secretariat comprised of legal and boating team colleagues and others as required.

5.2 The Review will be overseen by the Board Boating Committee and the Commission will provide regular updates to this Committee.

5.3 The Review will produce a report, with a series of recommendations endorsed by the Commission, supported by technical information produced by the Trust.

5.4 Upon completion, the Board of Trustees will receive the conclusions and recommendations from the Review and will respond to its findings, setting out any proposed legislative reforms to be sought by the Trust and any other changes that are accepted.

5.5 The Review will be carried out in an open and transparent manner subject to the need to preserve a space so as not to inhibit internal discussions and the need to preserve legal privilege in respect of any legal advice provided to the Review

### 6. Timing

6.1 The Commission will be convened by January 2025 and will seek to report to the Board of Trustees by September 2025

6.2 The Trust will seek to implement any reforms, including any required legislative changes as soon as possible after the conclusion of the Review.

*November 2024*

# RCR 2024 call-out figures

## To find out more

Call 01785 785680,  
email [enquiries@  
rivercanalrescue.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@rivercanalrescue.co.uk)  
or visit [rivercanalrescue.co.uk](http://rivercanalrescue.co.uk)

**R**iver Canal Rescue (RCR) reports it responded to 171 major incidents in 2024; emergency situations involving submerged, partially sunken or grounded craft, plus salvage work.

The figure is 41% higher than the 121 incidents RCR reported in 2023, which MD Stephanie Horton, attributes to a busier than usual summer and sinkings due to unsecured weed hatches/seal issues and boats getting stuck on lock cills. Similar to last year, RCR experienced a quiet period between January and March.

There were also 3485 general call-outs, for electrical, fuel and engine issues, flat batteries, over-heating and gear box failures etc; a 4% increase from 3335 a year earlier. 567 call-outs were return visits requiring additional work.

RCR engineers responded to 86% of call-outs; 14% were handled by approved-contractors, and its Canal Contracting service organised 521 visits to undertake a variety of work, including: plumbing and electrical installations, gearbox replacements, inverter, solar installations and general engine maintenance.

592 engine inspections were booked in, nearly 15% up from 2023; 437 of these were combined inspections with services.

RCR subsidiary, Key Diesels, whose team fits and supplies new and refurbished engines nationwide, sold 45 new and used engines direct to customers – a 200% uplift from the previous year - worked on 18 customers' engines and refurbished/provided 21 gearboxes.

## RCR maintenance course dates

RCR is taking bookings for its two-day maintenance courses, at its

Stafford HQ on: 18/19 February, 4/5 and 26/27 March, 10/11 and 23/24 April, 7/8 and 21/22 May, 11/12 and 25/26 June.

The boat and engine maintenance course covers how to maintain diesel engines and the systems within a narrowboat, such as propulsion, cooling, servicing and fault finding, and will be led by RCR's Kerry Horton and Dave Bull, long-standing RCR employees with a wealth of knowledge and experience. Course attendees receive a RCR certificate and a copy of the company's Narrow Boat Engine Maintenance and Repair book.

RCR also offers a personal engine maintenance course with one-to-one tuition from an engineer/qualified trainer who will visit the boat and advise on how to undertake a basic service and help with engine familiarisation. Instruction includes how to change the engine oil and filter, gearbox oil, air and fuel filters and water traps, check the alternator belt, raw-water pump impeller and stern gland, and top-up and test batteries, alternator performance, coolant and anti-freeze strength.

To ensure owners get the most from this experience, attendance on a maintenance course, prior to booking, is essential.

Dates for RCR's monthly electrical sessions are to be confirmed.

Sessions for marina and boat yard staff are available upon request and will focus on fault-finding and developing skills for electrical work, stripping and rebuilding gearboxes, understanding internal engine and gearbox components, and exposure to injection systems. Tailored courses are also on offer to groups and clubs, with discounts for boat clubs.



# Mentions in The Houses

**The Lord Bishop of St Albans** raised the question to Government of what assessment they have made of the report by the Canal & River Trust *Our Climate and Adaptation Report\**, published in December 2024; in particular, the roles that canals could play in 1. biodiversity, 2. decarbonisation, and 3. climate adaptation.

To which **Baroness Hayman of Ullock** replied: No assessment has been made. As a charity independent of government, the Canal and River Trust is responsible for its operational matters and decisions. The government does not have a role in that, but does provide an annual grant of £52.6m towards maintaining the canal infrastructure that helps the Trust to deliver its charitable objectives in line with the Waterways Trust Settlement. The Government recognises that the Trust has an important role to play in contributing to the Environmental Improvement Plan, alongside other government priorities.

*Editor—A well presented 30 page report dismissed in seven lines.*

**Cat Eccles** asked the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues to ensure that the children of families of boaters without a permanent mooring have daily access to education without falling under enforcement of the Canal and River Trust and other navigation authorities.

**Emma Hardy** The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs responded: Navigation authorities are responsible for operational matters on their waterways, and boaters using navigable waterways are required to comply with the terms of

their licences for the benefit of all waterway users. The country's largest navigation authority owning the majority of the canal network, the Canal and River Trust, has provided assurances that appropriate enforcement action on its waterways is only used as a last resort in response to persistent non-compliance, to ensure fairness to all boaters. Those with children who choose to live on a boat without a permanent mooring are responsible for ensuring they have access to education; the Trust provides reasonable adjustments for anyone who qualifies under the Equalities & Human Rights Act.

**Baroness Jones of Moulsecoome** asked Majesty's Government whether they plan to take steps to ensure that boat dwellers without a mooring are not subject to disproportionate enforcement action by navigation authorities such as the Canal and River Trust.

To which Baroness Hayman of Ullock replied:

All navigation authorities in England and Wales are responsible for operational matters on their waterways, including setting fees and charges for those using them and the use of corresponding enforcement powers, under the relevant statutory provisions. The Government does not have a role in that but recognises that boaters using navigable waterways require a valid licence from the relevant navigation authority and are expected to comply with the terms of their licences for the benefit of all waterway users. The Canal and River Trust has provided assurances that appropriate enforcement action on its waterways is only used as a last resort in response to persistent non-compliance, to ensure fairness to all boaters who do comply.



Lord Bishop of St Albans



Baroness Hayman



Cat Eccles



Baroness Jones

Download the Climate and Adaptation report  
<https://rb.gy/xbs2cq>

# Fund Britain's Waterways

**F**und Britain's Waterways (FBW) recognises Britain's inland waterways as part of the national infrastructure and a unique national asset and welcomes the opportunity to make a representation to the Spending Review 2025.

Our aim in doing so is to reinforce the widely acknowledged benefits that our inland waterways provide, to explain the need for increased government funding, and to request an urgent and comprehensive review of inland waterway funding.

## Benefits and value of inland waterways

Britain's network of 5,000 miles of canals and navigable rivers is a unique national asset. Almost 80% of local authorities have a navigable waterway or a waterway under restoration, disproportionately so in more deprived areas, and waterways touch the lives of millions.

In 2022 an estimated 8.9 million people took part in an inland boating or watersports activity, according to British Marine research. The Canal & River Trust (CRT) estimates that more than 10 million people use its 2,000 miles of waterways and towpaths each year. Millions of hours of volunteer effort have already gone into restoring derelict waterways, and volunteers around the country are continuing restoration projects or helping to maintain and operate active waterways. Widespread media coverage is helping to highlight the importance of waterways to local communities, as well as their contribution to the environmental resilience, heritage, health and well-being and economic prosperity of

the nation. Visitors from around the world are attracted to Britain by our unique canal system and other beautiful waterways.

In economic terms, the inland boating sector and its wider associated tourism generated a combined economic contribution to the UK of £7.6bn and supported over 340,000 jobs in the year 2022/231. The combined annual economic and social value of the waterways managed by CRT alone has been quantified as £6.1bn, including cost savings of £1.1bn for the NHS from active use of the waterways and towpaths. With current annual government funding for CRT at £52.6m this equates to a benefit:cost ratio of 116:1.

In terms of broader benefits, the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the value of Britain's inland waterways as people sought blue and green spaces to help recover. This was acknowledged in Defra's own Environmental Improvement Plan. Our waterways thus provide levelling up, economic, environmental, health and wellbeing benefits in a wide variety of ways and across multiple government departmental areas including business, culture, education, energy and net zero, environment, health, housing and transport.

On top of this, the inland waterway network is a critical part of the national infrastructure. It already helps ensure a sustainable supply of drinking water, it provides a route for cables and utility pipes, it provides flood protection, and it enables low-carbon freight transport as well as heating and cooling. In each of these areas there is the potential to do more to help increase national resilience.

### Impact of climate change on waterways

On New Year's Day 2025 sustained heavy rainfall in the North West caused the collapse of embankments on both the Bridgewater Canal and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

Repairs will be complex, lengthy and expensive. The resulting extended closures will have a substantial impact on cruising opportunities and consequently on businesses and local communities. The embankment collapses were accompanied by widespread flooding on river navigations across the country, again causing damage and impacting use of the waterways.

This was not an isolated incident. Extreme weather events are becoming much more frequent and severe as a result of climate change. CRT has reported spending an additional £10m in emergency repairs after the eight named storms in three months over winter 2023/24. The four named storms at the end of 2024 have also caused significant damage.

The Environment Agency estimated that in order to future-proof critical assets maintenance budgets may need to increase by 30-80% compared with present levels. Recently CRT concluded that its network is likely to need a similar level of increase.

### Effects of inadequate funding

Despite the understanding of their value, government funding for the inland waterways is already inadequate, at a time when the impact of climate change is combining with ageing infrastructure and the ongoing effects of recent high inflation make further demands on waterway budgets.

Management of Britain's 5,000 miles of navigable inland waterways is fragmented. CRT has the greatest responsibility covering 2,000 miles,



# FUND BRITAIN'S WATERWAYS

and together with the Environment Agency and Scottish Canals is one of only three navigation authorities to receive government support for navigable waterways. CRT is already in a difficult financial situation with a fixed government grant of £52.6m per year until 2027, when the government plan resulting from the last administration is to apply a 40% cut in real terms. Other waterways face similar problems. The Environment Agency is operating with £22m per year, one third of its identified requirement, and reported in its last Navigation Business Plan a capital requirement of £143m to "reverse managed decline and sustainably manage our assets". The most recently reported figure for Scottish Canals' outstanding maintenance work was £112m.

The consequences of the current inadequate level of funding are beginning to become clear as the condition of waterways is deteriorating and business are suffering. CRT's annual Boater Satisfaction Survey shows a substantial decline in the proportion of boaters who are satisfied with their experience, from a peak of 76% in 2017 to 46% in 2024. Its National Boat Count for 2024 reported the first reduction in the number of boats on its waters since its formation in 2012.

There are also wider consequences of failing to maintain waterway infrastructure. Major structures such as embankments, aqueducts,

For further information about Fund Britain's Waterways contact: [info@fundbritainwaterways.org.uk](mailto:info@fundbritainwaterways.org.uk)

tunnels and reservoirs often directly affect the safety of local communities. This was clearly demonstrated by the need to evacuate 1,500 residents of Whaley Bridge in 2019 in case the dam at Toddbrook Reservoir collapsed. This event has resulted in the need for CRT to increase its spend on reservoirs to up to £25m per year—almost half of its current government funding, which is thus no longer available for operation and maintenance of the waterway network.

### The FBW campaign

In May 2023 more than 20 waterway-related organisations met to discuss concerns about the level of government funding being made available to maintain Britain's canals and navigable rivers, and the lack of certainty about future funding.

It was agreed to be timely to launch a dedicated, time-limited, action group—with the stated intention of significantly widening membership to any organisation or individual with an interest in using or supporting inland waterways whether canal, river, tidal river or estuary but excluding navigation authorities. The sole purpose of FBW is “campaigning collectively for an increase in government funding of Britain's inland waterways to avert their decline, and to promote awareness of the huge economic, environmental and social well-being value they provide”. This is not only about boat enthusiasts. The founding organisations agreed that this is a critical moment for the millions of people who work, live, study or simply enjoy rivers and canals each year.

FBW now has a membership of 145 national and local, large and small organisations representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways. It continues to campaign for national

and local government to act now and protect the public benefit and natural capital of all our waterways.

### Summary of representation

FBW recognises the poor state of the country's financial position. Yet to fund our inland waterways properly would cost a small (in government terms) investment measured in millions not billions of pounds. In return the country will continue to obtain billions of pounds of benefits for health, economic and environmental benefits, much of the benefits in less well-off areas. Government spending needs to be carefully targeted to achieve best value. The return achieved from a small additional investment in waterways makes it money exceedingly well spent.

We are already seeing the waterways deteriorating and businesses suffering. If underinvestment continues this will become worse until a tipping point is reached and waterways have to be closed, wasting the benefits as well as the millions of hours of volunteer time and millions of pounds of public money that have gone into the current network.

We therefore request that:

- 1 the importance of our inland waterways as a unique national asset and part of the national infrastructure are recognised
- 2 the deterioration in condition that is already happening and the threats posed by climate change are acknowledged
- 3 a comprehensive review of government funding for all our inland waterways should be carried out as a matter of urgency, with the aim of defining a sustainable funding solution which will enable the current benefits of our canals and rivers to be maintained and enhanced for future generations.



# Keeping heads above water

## Forces Veterans Afloat

**F**our years ago a comment on Facebook sparked 'The Forces Vets Afloat Project', with the aim of renovating an abandoned boat and giving it to a homeless armed forces veteran.

The group is now the 'Forces Veterans Afloat' (FVA), has nine boats and has just become a registered charity. The boats range from a 70ft, 104 year old former coal butty, to a 38ft cruiser.

The Canal & River Trust requires an enhanced BSS, like a hire boat, which is expensive, as is insurance. Now the FVA is a charity it is hoped many more will donate to establish a revenue stream in 2025 that will allow the preparation of more boats.

Once refurbished, a search is then started for a veteran to be loaned it, free of charge, for a minimum of a year. FVA works with partner charities like SAFFA and the Royal British Legion, to find veterans who would benefit from being on a boat.

FVA only takes veterans who are in the care of another charity, who will look after their physical, mental and financial wellbeing, while FVA maintains the boats and trains the veterans to use them.

More information about how this works can be found here: [www.forcesvetsafloat.co.uk](http://www.forcesvetsafloat.co.uk)

What happens after a veteran's been on a boat a year? It's hoped that they will have been able to save enough money for the deposit on land-based home, or to buy their own boat, something all the veterans currently on boats say they aspire to. That year can be extended, if say, a veteran has almost enough money for what they want to do, but isn't

quite there.

The FVA's other major achievements: three veterans were homed in refurbished boats and more boats were donated. The group featured in vlogs, the press and was involved in a special project, to be revealed in late spring. All this has been done entirely by volunteers.

The new charity's Trustees are its original Facebook commenters, Boat Master, Pete, Acquisitions Manager, Andy, and Communications Officer, Lizzie, who will be joined by two more Trustees later this year.

Chrissie and Graham, both in from the start, are the Boat Movement Co-ordinator and Maintenance Advisor, Johnathan came aboard as Project Manager, Sharon as Treasurer, and Iain as Veteran Liaison & Assessment officer. The hunt will be on for a Fundraising manager and a Secretary early this year—if you'd like to offer your services, FVA would like to hear from you, via their website.

And what of 2025? Boats will be refurbished—if you'd like to help, drop an email to the project manager via the website, as regular working parties will be held throughout the year. A narrowboat will be refurbished as accommodation for volunteers, emergency housing and assessment, a meeting place and charity showcase.

A range of merchandise is planned as well as stands at waterways gatherings.

From being told "no one will give you a boat", FVA is well and truly living up to its motto, 'Keeping Heads Above Water'.



# An experiment...

by Ian Hutson

**O**bsessive behaviour is clinically defined as the presence of obsessions and compulsions that significantly interfere with daily life.

According to the NHS, obsessions are unwanted, unpleasant thoughts, images, or urges that repeatedly enter a person's mind, causing anxiety, disgust, or unease. The annoying thing about corporate obsessions, especially in remote and aloof monopolies, is that the corporation has the actual pathology while its customers suffer the effects.

The Canal Company demonstrably suffers from a clinical obsession with boats sans permanent moorings (especially so live-aboards). As one such I feel little love directed towards me. Indeed, the attitude of the Canal Company seems to imply that I am responsible for all waterways ills system-wide (and possibly beyond, my probably being personally responsible for the arid condition of the canals on Mars too). There's much lip-service to the diktats of "D.E.I." (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) but I have observed that this means little if your D or your E or your I is to actually be diverse enough to live on a boat while also being averse to living in a marina. Accused of not moving enough yet also cruising so much that we strain the system, cause undue wear and tear, and overwhelm such services as are still provided. The Canal Company wants rid.

Well, let us assume that the Canal Company's new "Commission" is entirely successful in scrapping the 1995 Waterways Act and in breaking the shackles of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010 for I kid you not, those are among

their stated whines. What then, eh?

Monumental legal bills incurred during implementation of the clearances. Six thousand fewer boaters and the total loss of that licence income (about twenty percent of total plus surcharge!). Nowt to use as background photographs for the corporate website except horribly undistinguished hire boats and nice people who look exactly like the people running the Canal Company (salary men, with anodyne fashion sense and hair by appointment). Miles of towpath so beloved of soya-munching joggers and latte-sipping dog-emptiers and joyful anglers then denuded of all boat life and back to being the cold, dark, no-go areas that they used to be.

Except that unless you bring in the Army AND solve the cost of living disease in all of London and the Home Counties you haven't got a chance in Hell of somehow, for any reason, getting "rid" of itinerant boats and boaters in those or any other areas. Much effort, nil effect, vastly negative returns on the expense. Years of boater-funded corporate battles against boaters just to fail to achieve something inexplicable. The PR fibs (IMHO) may well slip past most of the public but we live on the canals matey. Come clean, tell us nicely, honestly, what your REAL problem is, and perhaps we can help find real-world, sensible, sane solutions. Engage in civilised adult-adult conversation and soon or I fear a disastrous (and expensive) demonstration of Social Physics will occur... that of an Unthinking Force (the Obsession) meeting an Immovable Object (itinerant boaters with few or no alternatives) head on.



# Standedge

A poem celebrating a successful cruise through Standedge on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

by **Duncan Wright**

Just up ahead it looms black as night  
Primordial darkness, an absence of light  
Longest, highest and deepest hole  
To pass right through is our intended goal.

The roof top is cleared and pram hood is down,  
The tank is filled up to lower the prow.  
Chimney removed and the fenders are up  
The last thing we need is for us to get stuck.

A face appears, we meet our guide,  
Trevor's his name he'll take us inside  
A yardstick he uses to gauge height, draft and width  
To confirm for our safety the boat it would fit.

Not everyone's taste deep, dark and enclosed.  
Some nerves wouldn't take it they'd feel too exposed.  
Take it or leave it, it's Marmite some say.  
An adventure for friends who have come for the day.

There's bacon and eggs to fatten our guests,  
As gracious hosts we could do no less.  
A glass of white wine or cup of hot tea.  
A slice of cake, what more do they need?

There's 600 feet both above and below  
Carved through the Pennines our journey will go.  
8 feet wide and 10 feet high  
The water takes up a third of that size.

Barring no more, the gates swing out wide.  
Forward so slowly we slip deep inside,  
Swallowed up whole by that gaping maw,  
The light of day falls behind us for sure.

A ceiling so low, hard hat as a crown  
A dent in my skull would cause me to frown.  
Sometimes there's room to stand up on high,  
a rare event though for such a tall guy.

Sometimes the roof's concrete, brick mortar or rock  
Preventing it falling the tunnel to block  
Seventeen years to finish the delving,  
It finally opened in 1811

Three miles and a quarter our journey will take,  
S-bend in the middle, just like a snake  
We wiggle and wriggle and then there's a jiggle  
As we wend our way from Marsden to Diggle

A window appears, we pause for a time,  
A break in our journey, a call on the line.  
Two more times they'll check us, the watchers that  
wait.  
Just to be certain that we are OK.

Defying all logic, a boat underground  
Finding those places that shouldn't be found  
A brief interlude down here is alright  
Not wanting to live here without any light.

A sudden headwind, a train yonder tunnel does take  
It passes unseen though we feel it's wake.  
One water, three rail, on four holes we depend  
Conquering mountains to speed journey's end.

What's that up ahead a figment of light?  
Surely it's not the tunnel end that's in sight?  
Out of Stygia we emerge from the earth  
Where watchers once more await our rebirth.

No more in darkness, once more into day,  
An hour and a half, no record today.  
Too slow and our guide would have been bored  
Too fast and our paintwork would have been scored.

Our adventures just starting, so Jolly they'll be,  
But all things must end, our guests we must leave.  
By train they depart to return to their home  
We'll take ours with us, onward ho!

# Festivals and campaigns

Here is a brief outline of the Fund Britain's Waterways dates and events planned, thus far, in May and June.

## Thursday 1st May

### May Day Reception

The St Pancras Cruising Club is hosting a reception for members, visiting boaters and invited guests. This is the day prior to our departure for Canalway Cavalcade at Little Venice so the club will be very busy. The reception will begin at 4 pm and continue until late. The Social Collective have generously agreed to be involved, so we can expect to learn more in due course.

## Friday 2nd until Monday 5th -

### Canalway Cavalcade at Little Venice

A splendid weekend organised by IWA with the active involvement of the club. Details and booking form via the IWA website.

## Tuesday 6th at 1900

### Safety Brief and supper.

To be held at the Cruising Association, adjacent to Limehouse Lock. The brief, followed by the customary communal supper, will provide all necessary information for the Campaign Cruise and Dispersal Cruise.

## Wednesday 7th

### Campaign Cruise to the Palace of Westminster

Depart from Limehouse Lock to arrive at the PoW from 1030. Transit time from Limehouse is nominally 45 minutes, a distance of 4 miles, passing under 10 bridges, with high water Westminster Bridge at 1100. After a suitable interval of making our voices heard, we'll return downriver to overnight moorings in West India Dock, 7.3 miles from Westminster.

As a concurrent activity, FBW will be hosting a breakfast reception at the Palace. At the appointed time, guests will be invited to view the boats from the terrace. As of today, 18 boats and crews have committed to joining the cruise.

For those who're unable to participate on the

river, people will also assemble on Westminster Bridge to view the boats and offer their vocal support.

## Thursday 8th

### Dispersal Cruise

The dispersal cruise will enable campaigning boats and crews to disperse to Limehouse, Brentford and Teddington. High water Brentford and Teddington is at 1300.

A number of these boats will continue their campaigning cruise on CRT and EA navigations, with a variety of events being held at AWCC clubs en route to Lincolnshire for a Wash Crossing between Boston and Wisbech.

## Sunday 8th June

### Wash Crossing

One month from the dispersal cruise, June 8th is the first date of the tidal window for a campaigning cruise across the Wash. The club last cruised these waters in 2019, so it's definitely time to do it again. (Many of you will recall that inclement weather delayed that departure for a week.)

As of today, 17 boats and crews have committed to joining the cruise. (As an aside, Frances and I met Pilot Daryl, and Ali the Grand Sluice Lockie on 29th Jan, at the Boston Lock Café, to continue with the planning. The café have also agreed to host our safety brief and provide our communal supper prior to the crossing.)

## Summary

Planning has been in train for several months. CRT are committed to help as much as they can, and for the Thames events, the Port of London Authority and Metropolitan Police are aware of our plans.

You can see that, taken with the club's busy social and cruising programme, there's a lot happening at the club. We continue to greatly appreciate the time, effort, and treasure many of you expend in ensuring these activities are safe and enjoyable.

Over the past months, we've received lots of expressions of interest in joining these cruises



and associated shore-based activities. For those who expressed interest, now is the time to let us know that you're participating. If you've not already told us, please send an email to: [andrew@stp Pancrascc.co.uk](mailto:andrew@stp Pancrascc.co.uk) and let us know your intentions.

The options are:

- 1 Reception;
- 2 Campaign Cruise;
- 3 Westminster Bridge contingent;
- 4 Dispersal Cruise;
- 5 Wash Crossing;
- 6 Competent Crew for any of the above;
- 7 Incompetent Crew for any the above.

As usual, we'll provide updates as necessary for all the activities, and ask for your help as we identify the need. If you have pressing questions; please just shout.

#### Further information

Frances & Andrew

07734 038 297 / 07850 753 633

#### BCN Society

The BCN Society invites you to join them on their Icicle Cruise on Friday 11th and Saturday 12th April 2025.

Following our successful visits to the Fens Pools and Parkhead Locks, we have planned a short cruise to the top of Perry Barr Locks and the CRT facilities located here.

There is no charge for the event but we do ask anyone who wishes to enter a boat to complete the booking form.

Please email me for a booking form [sk63@btinternet.com](mailto:sk63@btinternet.com). Scan or photograph and return it to me by email

For those cruisers who appreciate little reassurance and company, we are planning to meet at the top Ryders Green on Friday morning, cruise down the locks and moor together at Ocker Hill for Friday evening. On Saturday we'll then cruise the Tame Valley. CRT have told us that their facilities and meeting room will be open and we're hoping that they will arrange a guided walk on Saturday afternoon for anyone who wishes to take part. We'll arrange our own entertainment for Saturday evening.

Boats will disperse on Sunday.

Please note, there is no winding hole at the top of Perry Barr Locks. Options for turning include

Rushall Junction or descending the locks and using the first available winding hole (or continuing your journey back to Birmingham via Aston and Farmer's Bridge—as the author will be doing.

I do hope that you are able to join us?

#### June cruise places,

There may be a few places left on the June cruise, May and July are fully booked.

#### Further information

Michael Smith-Keary, Secretary,

BCN Society 07785 551299

The BCN Society, a Company Limited by Guarantee, is a registered charity (1091760) first formed in 1968, which exists to conserve, improve and encourage a wide range of interests in the 100 mile network of Birmingham and Black Country waterways known as the Birmingham Canal Navigations.

Take a look at our website [bcnsociety.com](http://bcnsociety.com)

#### Gnosall C'Fest

Following a really great festival last year with an estimated footfall of over 1500, the Gnosall Towpath Restoration volunteers are already working on C'Fest 2025. It's pencilled in for 18-20 July, so make a note in your diary.





## Rewind

From the NABO archives  
DWG 13 January 1993

## Who ~~the hell~~ needs NABO?

Where an organisation has a monopoly or a near monopoly of the product or service it provides, there must always be a temptation to abuse that position. Where an organisation has conflicting demands made upon it by various categories of users, it will naturally tend to ignore those groups who do not make their voices heard.

It is essentially because of these two facts that the National Association of Boat Owners (NABO) was formed. Its sole objective is to provide effective representation for the owners of craft on Britain's inland waterways. Everything it does is either directly or indirectly seeking to achieve that purpose. It does not seek to be a social club but rather a lobbying organisation aimed at getting the best possible result for boat owners from discussions and consultations with waterway authorities, politicians and government officials.

The majority of members use waterways managed by British Waterways but NABO has not ignored the needs of those based on waterways controlled by other authorities. It was, for example, instrumental in persuading the government to change some of the clauses in what is now the Transport and Works Act 1992 which, as originally drafted, could have had dire consequences for all boat owners. In addition NABO has provided detailed comments to a Department of the Environment review of the navigation functions of NRA and BW, to the Middle Level Commissioners on proposals for a particularly iniquitous set of bye laws, and to NRA on congestion at certain locks on the Thames.

In its short life NABO has achieved recognition from BW, NRA, the Departments of the Environment and Transport and from other user groups. It is petitioning against parts of the British Waterways Bill and takes the view that BW should have only those powers which it needs to properly manage the waterways in its charge rather than the excessive powers proposed in the Bill. Meetings have been held with BW's Chief Executive, Solicitor and Parliamentary Agent as a result of which BW has agreed a number of changes to the Bill and other changes are under consideration.

In NABO's view, whilst BW has some excellent people, the organisation as a whole is not trusted by a significant number of users. If trust is to be established, then it must be earned by improving consultation procedures and by turning fine words and promises into waterways fact.

NABO has provided detailed comments on a wide range of consultation documents from BW including their Leisure and Tourism Strategy, draft Customers Charter, moorings policy and proposed policy for cycling on towing paths.

NABO stays in touch with its members. It is managed by a nationally elected Council but encourages continuous two way communication with the membership. Members are welcome to attend Council meetings as observers and receive either

a newsletter or a magazine (The Boater) about every six weeks. Because we can be flexible with publication dates, we can, in most cases, provide information to members before it is available from any other source. We encourage members to become involved as far as they are able, for example we recently asked that members should write to MPs concerning the BW Bill and we provided them with a complete lobbying pack and framework letter. The response was excellent. We will also, on request, send members copies of major consultative documents and our responses for the price of the postage and photocopying.

NABO is forthright in its criticism but equally likes to give praise where it believes it to be due. Whilst there is no formal regional structure, certain Council members have responsibility for specific regions and co-ordinate local activity within them including attendance at local consultative meetings.



## Letters to the Editor

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

### The 'lighter' side of a CRT public meeting

I'm glad that Sue Tonius derived some amusement from my question to the CRT Annual Public Meeting in November 2024 [NABO News, December 2024, page 21]. However, there was a serious purpose behind it. In the light of discussions between CRT Trustees, Executive and DEFRA about CRT's proposal to obtain an Order under the Transport and Works Act 1992 (TWAo), I wanted to know whether CRT planned to use it to further restrict the right to use and live on a boat without a home mooring. The discussion of the TWAo in Trustees' meetings during 2023 included "current challenges around the Trust's legislation"; "applying enforcement measures" and obtaining a TWAo would "avoid a full Parliamentary process". Whether or not David Orr gave an honest answer, we now have a public assurance that we can hold CRT to. This will be important given the forthcoming

In carrying out its work, NABO can only have credibility and expect to be listened to if it has a substantial membership base. To encourage as wide a membership as possible, the subscription has deliberately been set at a rock bottom level which every boat owner should be able to afford. Annual membership costs just £8 with other people living at the same address who share in the ownership of the same boat being able to join for £4. These "family" members have full membership rights but only one copy of The Boater and newsletter are sent to the address registered in our membership records.

If you own a boat on the inland waterways then the answer to the question at the top of this article is "YOU DO!" Please join us.

*Editor...and that is as true now as it was in 1993*

Future of Boat Licensing Review and any legislative reform that may follow it.

**Pamela Smith**

*The minutes of the CRT Trustees' meetings can be found on the Meetings Calendar on the CRT web site; however CRT has not published the Trustees' minutes since January 2024.*

### I name this boat ...



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