



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 2 April 2025

**Thames Lock Etiquette
Time for a New Campaign
Trustees Meeting Report**



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Contents

- 4 Editorial
- 5 In the Chair
- 6 Fly on the Wall
- 7 **NABO News:** Welfare report
- 8 Sue Tonious
- 10 **On The Cut:** The Macclesfield Canal breach, Restoration news
- 11 Braunston mooring proposal
- 12 Thames Lock Etiquette
- 14 Environment Change
- 15 **CRT News:** Trustee's meeting
- 16 Better Boating
- 17 Promise to keep the canals open
- 18 Time for a new campaign
- 20 Strawberry Island meeting report
- 22 RCR maintenance course
- 24 Mentions in the Houses
- 26 Fund Britain's Waterways
- 27 In my humble opinion
- 28 Rewind—Cycling on the towpath
- 30 Festivals and campaigns—diary dates
- 31 Letters to the Editor

Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, photos and cartoons are most welcome. Please email your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk or post to the Editor by 10th May 2025.

NABO Calendar 2025

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

Cover photo

This month's photo shows the Macclesfield breach, photo by David Thompson

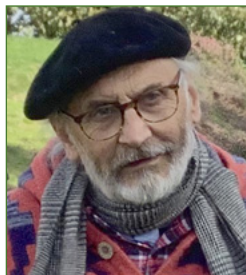
Please email your photos for the front cover of NABO News to the Editor, as JPG, ideally portrait with a file size of 5MB or larger.



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It was great news to hear about the Better Boating plan. At last we thought, CRT is going to fulfil its remit as a navigation authority.

As we try to give some thought to a cruise plan we realise that all is not well with the network. With continual reference to the stoppages and bad news arriving daily, I imagine that those waterways which are still navigable will be extremely busy. If the new Boaters Satisfaction survey 56% approval result is to be believed it can only be because more boaters are content not to move, which the lock-use figures tend to support as a theory. This will be a great help to the net-zero campaign, we'll be able to connect to mains power and dispense with diesel and gas supplies.

Cleaner, better boating?

Editor **John Sadler**

With some justification boaters will wonder why they don't economise on a boat and just enjoy the countryside in other ways. But what about those people who live on their boats? Well, they will just have to pay more to support the failing infrastructure. We will see what the independent licensing review comes up with, the results are due to be released in September 2025.

The creation of a charitable organisation to operate the UK canal network was at best a gamble. There was no statistical evidence to predict its failure or success, just a desire for the Government at the time to reduce its expenditure. No measures were put in place to assess the condition of the network after the move

to charity. So how do we judge the performance of CRT? What happens should the experiment fail? Did anyone ask that question in the first place, I'm sure someone did although I haven't seen a slide show on the subject. The Government of today seems to be quite happy to continue with the un-funding of waterways, so unless replacement funds can be generated, we are probably witnessing the run down of services and ultimately of navigable waters. The Fund Britain's Waterways campaign is doing its best to make government aware of the danger to a unique national asset which should be part of the infrastructure. It also attempts to highlight the deterioration that has already occurred and the increased affects of climate change. The campaign is requesting that there should be a review of all Britain's inland waterways and a workable solution found for the preservation of our canals and rivers for future generations. We can hope that the boats outside the Houses of Parliament will encourage MPs to listen and perhaps take some action.

On a recent trip on the North Staffs and Worcester most of the paddle mechanisms were well lubricated, a welcome improvement, but most lock gates were still leaking. Was the general condition of the locks also recorded by the person(s) greasing the paddle gear? The lack of acknowledgement and reaction to boater reports has, I believe, added to a general air of apathy and failure anticipation amongst boaters accompanied by undeserved better approval ratings at CRT.

What is seasonal boating?

Chair **Anne Husar**

Apparently, according to a certain navigation authority, the 'boating season' will start soon. New boaters must wonder whether they can cruise all year round or only in the 'boating season'.

Time to put a shout out—**There is no boating season, you can cruise every month of the year**, it's simply that there are busier times and quieter times. The amount of stop-pages you might encounter don't vary much these days though.

Apparently, according to that certain navigation authority, there is a 'continuous cruiser' (CCer) boat licence. I've heard of a boat licence,

a trading boat licence, a river only licence, a gold licence and I'm sure there's probably a hire boat licence, but I'm not aware of a CC licence that's allowed in the 1995 Act. But then, say something enough times and it will accepted as a fact.

It's quite therapeutic to home in on these little annoyances rather than the really big problems that are facing us all in the world at the moment. It's also therapeutic to go boating, on whichever UK navigation you find yourself, at whatever time of year, whenever you feel like it, whenever you can. Enjoy every moment, even the down the weed-hatch ones.



Lies, damn lies, and statistics?

Vice Chair **Andy Williams**

I'm always suspicious about 'statistics' not least because they are often badly used.

At the March 2025 CRT Trustees meeting a curious and possibly worrying 'statistic' surfaced. According to CRT records it seems that 29% of self-declared 'continuous cruisers' (CCers) are being pursued by CRT for some sort of misdemeanour. That's where the story ended. No indication of the type or variety or seriousness of the misdemeanours concerned. That's Bad Statistics. This unqualified number will and has raised a whole battery of questions not least 'Are CCers really as badly behaved as this number, almost 1 in 3, implies?'. Speaking as

a CCer myself I sincerely doubt that we are as bad as that raw figure implies. However for somebody with no insights this number could be taken to justify the aggressive approach that's prevalent these days when it comes to treating CCers. Even to mislead. I'm not saying that it is a deliberately misleading number, but it needs to be explained, broken down to see where it does or doesn't lead. As NABO's Vice-Chairperson that's what I'm now onto because there are just too many questions as to meaning, several with potentially bad answers.

I want to know if me and my fellow CCers are really such Bad Boaters. Watch this space.



Fly on the wall

Peter Braybrook observes proceedings at the Council meeting

The Council met on Saturday 22 March by Zoom. Anne Husar, was unwell so the Vice Chair, Andy Williams chaired the meeting. Mike Rodd was also absent and sent his apologies. The remainder of the Council were all present and our treasurer, Helen joined us for this meeting.

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted, the minutes of the meeting in January were also considered. Most actions had been completed. We reviewed the CRT document Better Boating and decided how to compare actual performance with the plans. We submitted comments on licensing to the CRT Commission on the Legal Framework of Licensing and noted that further contact was expected and hoped for in the near future.

The CRT National Boating Forum was attended by about twenty-five people of which at least four were NABO members. The topic was the new national organisation of teams for Enforcement and Welfare as separate entities. Peter Braybrook noted that this was the third time that he had heard the presentation as a volunteer, as an invited attendee at a webinar and as a boater. CRT are certainly trying to get the message out that they take both enforcement and welfare seriously and are taking an approach to improve their performance in both activities. We noted that CRT need to improve their communication as currently they are falling foul of the Equalities and Human Rights Acts in failing to make timely reasonable adjustments to their rules.

The experience of boaters under a six month licence was discussed. CRT maintained a remote, aloof and authoritarian attitude. Ken Hylins suggested that CRT do not generally assess cases individually with reference to the Equality Act. Some boaters have been forced into a marina. It is often only on intervention of a boating association that CRT act on individual circumstances.

The next forum will be at Crick Boat Show in May followed by an online forum on the 2nd September 2025. The regular meeting with

Matthew Symonds had been held on Microsoft Teams and was shorter than necessary. The topic was the CRT Better Boating programme and centred on the proposals to deal with deficiencies in planned preventative maintenance, paddle repairs, grass cutting, tree management, and waste management facilities. CRT need feedback on all these areas via their customer services number.

Anne had sent us a report on the activity of Fund Britain's Waterways. A flotilla of boats were due to depart from Strawberry Island Boat Club in Doncaster on March 29, growing to a flotilla of about 18 boats by the time it arrives outside the Palace of Westminster on May 7 via the IWA Cavalcade in Little Venice and the St Pancras Cruising club. The cruise will continue across the Wash to the Fens and return to the north later in the year with events planned on the way.

Malcolm Blundell reported on an EA forum and commented that the next one may become a little more interesting than normal as NBTA would be representing some boaters and their issues.

Peter Braybrook reported on meetings of the Boat Safety Scheme Technical and Advisory Forum while Ken Hylins, Welfare Officer happily reported an unusually quiet period with only one active case.

The finale was a discussion on problems that have recently occurred on the network. The Bridgewater canal breach will take 18 months to two years to fix. Tardebigge flight is closed by the imploding of the top lock wall which requires rebuilding; the Huddersfield Narrow canal is closed by a landslip. It was noted that Anderton Lift refurbishment has been postponed because of a lack of funds so that should remain available* until it fails! We will be closely monitoring mooring in Braunston where two 14 day moorings are being removed for a trial period to safeguard the junction walls.

** Editor: According to CRT notices and stop-pages it's been closed since January 3rd and repairs are ongoing and are anticipated to continue throughout the summer.*

Welfare Report

Ken Hylin

I have written previously on this desperate levy by CRT to charge continuous cruisers (CCers) more as they use services on the canal more.

This is the typical thinking of an out of touch management with no boating experience, apart from maybe a buddy-up cruise with a boater for ten minutes. They have no understanding of how they are making it difficult to live and cruise on the canals. My view is based on my experience living on the canals as a disabled CCer for twelve years. The thinking that CCers use canal services more than moored boats is a mythical idea generated by CRT with no data to support it.

Probably the only boater service areas with all facilities are only found in marinas, ie Elsan, pump outs, water and refuse disposal. On the canal these days, at best it might have a water point if you are lucky, Elsan, pump outs and refuse disposal are gradually all disappearing.

This gradual loss affects all boaters, however they use their boats. Hire boaters too, they all need to use facilities and have to move their boats further and further to get to them, CCer or not.

I have been quite concerned about this charge on CCers and its effects. I have contacted the Equality Commission with regard to the 2010 Equality Act and how it affects my protected characteristics under this act. The verdict was that CRT have discriminated against me. I've written to CRT about my concerns but they only requested further information on the matter.

I again contacted the legal and advisory bodies and was advised to write back to CRT to obtain a decision whether I should be exempt from this charge or not. I need a clear statement of either my exemption or a statement of how they justify discrimination against me. My last email was sent on the 5/3/25, I am still waiting on their decision.

A NABO appeal for help!

There was a limited response to our 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.



A hypothesis arising from two ten year plans

Sue Tonious sees through a cunning plan

Noting that no mention is made of upholding navigation in the CEO vacancy job description for CRT, a navigation authority, I checked through their glossy new ten year plan for the 'n' word. Nothing, zilch. Why could that be I wondered, what could have led to that, was there a link with CRT's first ten year's activities? Is there any evidence to support a hypothesis that this omission of CRT's arguably only role could have been the aim all along?

The evidence.

Managed Gradual Decline (MGD), the Tory/Cameron way?

The national asset that is the UK's canal system has suffered with MGD in the same way as so many of the UK's national assets have done over the past ten years, CRT have simply gone along with the government's expectations of them. This has been achieved in a number of ways. Soon after taking over, CRT made many skilled and experienced staff 'redundant', regularly used machinery and working yards were sold off and closed. None of these would be necessary to achieve MGD, they would in fact get in the way of this aim by continuing to keep the canals fit for purpose. They had to go.

CRT now had to find ways to spend their ample funds so that there was not enough left for maintaining the navigations, thereby achieving MGD. Contracting out, wellbeing, wildlife, new signage, new vehicle

livery, community programmes, cycling, canoeing, paddleboarding, fundraising, all took prominence over these years. So much easier to do and, with all the extra directors and support staff needed for these activities, the money was easily used up. In the meantime, MGD of the navigations continued apace. CRT's argument for introducing and concentrating on these activities was that they had to do it to get further funding from Defra. However, Therese Coffey, the minister at the time of the new grant being awarded, made no mention of this*, she only mentioned CRT's navigation responsibilities. Which rather suggests that it had never been required at all so why spend so much of CRT's funds in doing it?

Fundraising, has to be done to keep up the pretence of a charity so how can CRT make sure it doesn't make any money? Employ an expensive director with a humongous team under her helps to use some of it up, as well as never coming up with any ideas that would make money. This has been a successful strategy as it never has.

Still too much coming in to the coffers? Time to sell off most of the nation's (ie, that which belongs to all of us), estate of unique, often listed, canal property to the highest bidder. There's nothing to stop this, the appointed Protector, who rarely did, has gone and the Trustees nod everything through. CRT are confirmed in their totalitarian role as a

[*questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-07-10/hcws924](https://www.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-07-10/hcws924)

monopoly and can do what they like with no checks or balances, aided of course by their ever expanding and expensive team of lawyers, there, just in case of need. Developers and unsympathetic new owners take full advantage of the rock bottom prices that can be had, relieving CRT of any inconvenient tenant income but adding to their pension pots as funds from these sales cannot be used for helping divert the decline of the waterways, it has to be invested. Selling off all the BW marinas for completeness dealt soundly with the profits from that business.

Which brings us to boating.

With the hypothetical aim of MGD of the waterways, boating can be seen as a nuisance with navigational demands that CRT no longer want to meet so what can be done to discourage it?

Making cruising much less enjoyable should get all but the most intrepid boaters off the canals. Lots of frequent unplanned stoppages that prevent planning a cruise to any sort of timetable will encourage boaters with commitments to not dare leave the marina. That leaves the problem of what to do to discourage boaters with no commitments. Let's make them pay more to be attempting to cruise all year round without a mooring, they'll ei-

ther give up or get a mooring.

There are many other imaginative options to reduce the enjoyment that boaters might otherwise reasonably expect from a navigation authority. These include neglecting the vegetation as well as implementing the policy of 'wait 'til it breaks'. The risk of breaking an ankle stepping in to a hidden hole hidden by waist high weeds getting off the boat or plummeting in to a lock when the rotten beam finally snaps under their weight should also help. Threatening overstay emails, even when inaccurate, is a great way of replacing what was a serene activity with an anxiety making one. And as a final flourish, food waste stinking and rotting in the bow in a hot week in August with the opportunist rat coming on to the boat, because the facilities that were marked on the map is one of the many taken away over the years.

For a while there will of course be new, innocent boaters who will be tempted to have a go. Overall however, boat numbers are dropping very satisfactorily, as is the numbers of boats cruising. The aim of MGD is being met by discouraging boating, with the double achievement of less funds for maintenance from fewer boat licences and less need to maintain fit for purpose navigations if so few are using them.

Has the hypothesis been proved?

Macclefield breach
Photo: David Thompson



The Macclesfield Canal Breach

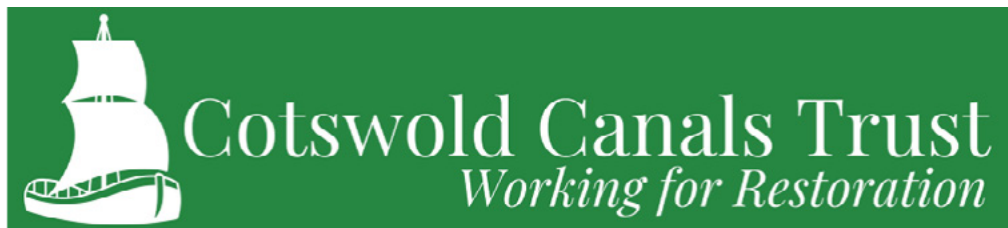
John Sadler

I've had reports about this breach being a long time in the making. Reports were forwarded to CRT by various boaters over a five year period and temporary fixes put in place.

According to those near the breach it has now become an attraction for gongoozlers who are even prepared to remove CRT fencing to get photos. It has also become apparent that there is no consideration given to boaters that are stuck facing the wrong way. They are still expected to

abide by the two week rule. No understanding of how difficult it can be to reverse a boat even if there's no wind blowing. Perhaps a little compassion by CRT would go a long way to help their image of being a navigation authority.

There's nothing like a photo to show the scale of damage, the ones on the cover and throughout the magazine were taken by David Thompson using a drone without causing any further damage.



Restoration News

From The Cotswold Canal Trust

Work continues across several key sites. The stretch of canal between Bonds Mill and Blunder Lock has seen major work from both water and canal side to remove overhanging trees and vegetation. At Newtown Lock, repairs to both the upper and lower gates are in progress.

Pike Lock was recently drained so a very comprehensive survey could be carried out towards procurement of lock gates. At Dock Lock, restoration is well underway, with scaffolding erected, new ladder recesses cut, coping stones lifted so that vegetation can be removed and renovation progressed.

At Oldbury Brook Aqueduct, works have started with a temporary dam installed, the outflow being fed into the nearby pound. The old concrete bridge and extensive spill weir have been broken up. Next we will prepare the bed of the stream so pipes can be installed which will then form the route for the Oldbury Brook when the canal is constructed over them, joining up to John Robinson Lock.

The A38 compound has seen progress, with a road completed to improve access to Occupation

Bridge. Here, work by teams of volunteers have inserted tie rods to strengthen the structure and also remove vegetation. Major work at Fromebridge starts in April with the large scale environmental project following translocation of water voles. A new pond is being created which will have canal vegetation transposed to provide a base as a new home for the legally protected creatures along with habitats for lots of other wildlife.

Other Works

Maintenance and restoration work continue throughout the length of canal, with small works to fix problems, and also carrying out the less exciting but nevertheless vital tasks of fuel runs (we use about 500 litres of diesel a week with excavators, dumpers, pumps and other equipment).

Volunteers have also been busy continuing to clear Prentice Field, fixing broken towpath paving, selling our scrap metal, and carrying out building repairs. These ongoing efforts ensure that the canal and its infrastructure remain in good condition while preparing for future development.

NABO's Objection to the Proposed Mooring Changes at Braunston.

Peter Braybrook

To West Midlands Canal and River Trust.

I refer to your Navigation Notice; Notice of Mooring Change, Braunston Junction.

In our opinion this is not the way to make a mooring change particularly in this very busy part of the system. We would expect you to go to consultation on a matter as important as this.

The changes, as described are confusing. The notice says two mooring places opposite the customer service facilities are to be removed to protect a listed wall at the junction. The map does not show the mooring places to be removed but seems to indicate no mooring on the junction where there is already no mooring possible.

The customer service facilities are approximately 250 ft north of the junction. There are no CRT 14 day visitor moorings opposite. This is possibly the widest part of the canal and no problem to anyone with any basic navigational ability. I have personally moored my boat on these moorings for 14 days without any harm done at all, from what I remember.

At the time, in October last year, it was the **only** mooring available. I had been travelling from Hillmorton and needed to leave my boat for a period. On entering Braunston there were **no** moorings available. I took the turn and headed toward Napton turning my boat at the Wolfamcote winding hole and returning to Braunston to moor outside the village. I was fortunate to find a hire

craft was just leaving the last mooring on the north Oxford canal closest to the junction. I think that might be one of the moorings you wish to dispense with!

14 day moorings are as rare as hen's teeth in Braunston between April and October. Losing them is not reasonable. This is not a "small change" but a significant degrading of the availability for 14 day moorings in this popular area.

If navigation is a problem at that point of the canal I can only imagine that it is by novice boaters on wide beam craft heading to a residential mooring in Dunchurch Marina never to return again! Such passages on this narrow canal should be forbidden without being escorted. At present they do have to be booked. For almost 200 years only narrowboats have been allowed to navigate on this narrow canal. This, I believe, shows that you have lost all knowledge of what lies below the surface of your canals. When "widened" the Grand Union Canal locks were widened to allow two narrowboats to work through side by side. The channel was only dredged wider for 140 feet from the lock outside of flights to allow narrowboat pairs to return to in line operation. The remainder of the channel remains wide enough for two narrowboats to pass safely but not for a widebeam boat and a narrowboat: one will risk grounding. The North Oxford Canal remains a narrow canal.

Please retract the notice and give appropriate thought and process to the proposal.

CRT Navigation Notice

canalrivertrust.org.uk/notices/30874-notice-of-mooring-change-braunston-junction

Thames Lock Etiquette

How to avoid river rage

Malcolm Blundell

We all know the days of a lock keeper being on duty at each lock is consigned to history. Last year so far was markedly so. We travelled through six locks one lovely June morning without a single keeper.

It falls on us boaters of all types to make sure we get through the locks as efficiently and safely as possible, co-operating with each other. There are those of us that frequently use the locks and know their idiosyncrasies and those that do not. Sometimes a new (to the Thames) boater may press the wrong button and cause issues for all concerned. We were all new once so we give them some slack. Setting aside the manual locks, although etiquette still applies to them, the busier automatic locks need us to maintain order particularly during the season.

Nothing I am about to suggest should be contrary to the boaters handbook, lock rules or maritime navigation regulations. This is about how we manage ourselves at the lock.

We know that at most locks there is a one press rule for raising and lowering the paddles/slucices others have a two minute rule before pressing again. A couple have a differing rule for filling and emptying.

Like it mentions in the boaters' handbook there should be one person in charge of a vessel, it can change, but only one at a time. For this reason usually the first to arrive at a lock takes control and this should remain until that crew has exited the lock with their boat.

Should other boats enter the lock then the crew at the console should confirm each helm is ready for the lock to operate a simple thumbs up seems appropriate for the OK signal. This would then mean that the first boat out would be the one with the crew at the console and they would have to moor up to collect the crew. Efficiency here would dictate if another boat is going in the opposite direction they would offer to control the exit console, take over control of the lock and allow the initial crew member to get back aboard and continue cruising. This could also occur if more vessels are going in the same direction but unable initially to get into the lock and no other boat is waiting to use the lock in the opposing direction.

I am not one who supports this but many boaters in the lower Thames leave gates open as they exit, it certainly is not the safest practice. We would always close the gates. However the position of the sluices is another matter. If for example you are cruising downstream and the top gates have a leak closing both gates and all sluices will eventually fill up the lock but probably not before another boat arrives. This then means that if they are going upstream they have to go through the whole cycle of emptying the lock as if it were full even if it only has an inch or two of water above the lowest level. On public mode you have to go through the sequence before the gates will re-open even if a boat has only recently left. Not quite the same with the lock keeper present but even they leave the sluices open if there is a leak in



the lock. So for this reason many leave the paddles/sluices open but shut the gates. During the summer season this approach is not without merit. Towards the end of the season and at the end of the day closing all locks and sluices is the way to go.

On arrival at a lock, take control as if you are a lock keeper, be polite and ask others skippers before any action is taken. Be prepared to take control if you are familiar and others are not, but don't start pressing buttons before you ask the "first to arrive" temporary "Lockie". We are all in this together. Don't make assumptions at locks, it's far too dangerous, and keep an eye on your lines and gunwales at all times. Just because its a hire boat or the name suggests a boat from foreign

parts does not mean the crew is not skilled.

Should you be in a position where you are filling or emptying a lock and another boat arrives you might find yourself in a position where you face a disgruntled crew member. Just bear in mind the situation where the lock level is just a little over the sensor, you still have to go through the whole emptying sequence just to let them in. Explaining that may go some way to easing tension with the other crew.

Don't forget in an emergency situation you can close sluices but unless in lock keeper mode it will take time to fill or empty a lock dependent upon the situation.

Hopefully there will be a lock keeper at the next lock?

You never know who you might share a lock with
Photo: Louis Jankel

Environment change

John Sadler

I've renamed this column to reference what is, or should be, important to all of us, our environment. Many of the threats from our way of life result largely from the same source, the burning of fossil fuels. This produces carbon dioxide CO₂ and various oxides of nitrogen lumped together as NO_x.

The so called greenhouse effect is (in simple terms) caused by difference in wavelength of thermal radiation emitted by the sun and earth. The sun's surface temperature means that most of its energy is emitted as shortwave while the earth's lower temperature means that most of its energy is emitted as long-wave. Each layer of the atmosphere with greenhouse gases absorbs some of the longwave radiation being radiated upwards from lower layers. It also emits radiation both upwards and downwards, in equilibrium with the amount it has absorbed. This results in less radiative heat loss and more warmth below. Increasing the concentration of the gases increases the amount of absorption and emission, and thereby causing more heat to be retained at the surface and in the layers below. Earth's atmosphere absorbs around 23% of incoming radiation and 90% of outgoing. The gasses which can absorb and emit long wave radiation are known as greenhouse gasses. Carbon dioxide is understood to be responsible for the dip in outgoing radiation.

According to UK government information, there is a danger from NO_x to health and habitat. Short-term exposure to concentrations of NO₂ can cause inflammation of the airways and increase susceptibility

to respiratory infections and to allergens.

Road transport contributed 30 per cent of emissions of NO_x in 2023, 68 per cent of the NO₂ concentrations at the roadside originated as NO_x emissions from road transport. Emissions of NO_x have decreased by 79 per cent since 1990, to 602 thousand tonnes in 2023. Emissions of NO_x from non-road transport (aviation, rail, and shipping) decreased by 49 per cent between 2005 and 2023 and contributed 16 per cent of total NO_x emissions in 2023. Most emissions from this source derive from shipping (which alone contributed 11 per cent towards total NO_x emissions in 2023). Emissions from shipping have been on a downward trend since 1999, falling by 62 per cent from 1999 to 2023.

In 2023, fuel combustion in energy industries contributed 19 per cent of total NO_x emissions, whilst industrial combustion contributed 14 per cent. Emissions from power stations (part of the energy sector) and industrial combustion plants have reduced substantially, reflecting a long-term trend away from the use of coal and oil in favour of natural gas and renewable energy sources. Annual emissions of NO_x from fuel combustion in energy industries have decreased by 77 per cent between 2005 and 2023, while emissions from industrial combustion decreased by 59 per cent over the same period.

So is the targeting of inland waterway boats a way of generating some encouraging government statistics or would it be a decisive move towards net-zero?

CRT 'Trustees' meeting

Anne Husar and John Sadler

There were representatives from RBOA, IWA, AWCC, HNBC, AWA (plus service dogs), NBTA, NABO's Anne Husar and John Sadler. CRT had two secretaries, a boat manager Alex Hennessey, Matthew Symonds (MS), Julie Sharman, Richard Parry and David Orr.

We felt we were there under slightly false pretences with only one trustee present at what was publicised as a trustees (plural) meeting. The next one however will have the new CEO in attendance.

Firstly the same powerpoint was presented about the Better Boating plan as at our previous meeting with MS. The only bit of news was the 20 sites that can't be upgraded in April to the 'Simpler Recycling' bins will continue to have general waste bins until a different arrangement can be found.

Boat licence review—Simon Greer (NBTA) pointed out at length, and quite interestingly, that he had been there and involved when the format for the 1995 Act was discussed and forensically examined in Parliament. He alleged that definitions of movement had been deliberately left vague to aid both boaters and BW with their cruising patterns. Nothing had changed since then so what was CRT hoping to achieve? CRT's reply was that the context has changed as there were fewer liveaboards then to legislate about. Now those numbers have increased so significantly, CRT have to legislate anew, although the Equality Act and Human Rights Act have to be taken in to account these days, they didn't exist in 1995. There are

(a staggering!) 29% of ccers in enforcement, therefore according to CRT, the law may need to change. A continuous cruiser (CCer) licence (a what???) doesn't work any more and probably needs changing (how can something that doesn't exist be changed, Anne wondered?). Transport and Works Act Orders (TWAO's) have been looked at to see if that was a way forward with enforcement.

CRT claimed that the 'Friends of CRT' are now up to pre-covid levels at 32,000. The enlargement of the fundraising team continues apace.

Latest Boater Satisfaction survey results are now at 56% with what CRT regards as a high response rate, nothing further as yet but MS was sure it was as a result of the Better Boating plans. John would like to believe it was that rather than improved targeting and maybe rewording.

Anne asked why no mention was made of 'navigation' in the CEO job description. Apparently it's because it's self evident, so there you go.

On a personal note, Anne was intrigued to learn that MS is liaising with his European counterparts to see how other countries 'regulate' their liveaboards. This saddens her as one of the refreshing things about boating in Europe was the *laissez faire* attitude to how boaters used their boats but this is now changing. Rex from the RBOA is very concerned that no fixed abodes (NFAs) will be regulated out of existence soon. He may well have a point.

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

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.

Calveley rubbish bins
Photo Ian Hutson



CRT's Promise to keep the canals open for boating

"We will demonstrate to boaters that keeping our canals open for navigation is at the heart of what we do." Sadly it looks like heart failure to most boaters.

Closed to navigation at the time of writing:

- Dudley No 2 canal, Blackheath Bridge
- Huddersfield locks 5 to 1E
- Huddersfield Narrow Canal Lock 11
- Macclesfield canal
- Kennet and Avon lock 101
- Kennet and Avon Lock 10 to Lock 1
- Kennet and Avon River Avon
- River Severn Bevere Lock
- Leeds and Liverpool Lock 90-91
- Leeds and Liverpool Lock locks 7—11
- Worcester and Birmingham Tardebigge Lock 58
- Oxford Canal Dukes cut
- Walsall Canal Tame Valley No 1 bridge—Birchills Junction
- Rushall Lock Flight, sluice failure
- Lancaster Lock 7 Glasson Branch
- Lancaster Canal Ribble link, sea lock failure
- South Stratford Lock 40 Wilmcote Top Lock
- Chesterfield Canal Worksop town Lock approach wall
- Anderton Boat Lift
- Navigators are further hindered by closures not under CRT:
- River Avon to Stratford
- Bridgewater Canal

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.

Time for a new campaign

Margaret Clark

I have read with great concern the Waterways Bulletin of 2025 which has been sent to me by Howard Worth with whom I am working on the campaign to restore Rudyard Reservoir.

The waterways network is now in dire straits—worse than at any time since I first came onto the cut in 1960 and I fear that we may lose the system that we love, and that the IWA was first set up to preserve and restore.

Although BW were far from being good guardians it was not until 2012 when CRT took over that the situation deteriorated catastrophically. They made redundant the local maintenance staff who kept the locks and reservoirs, walked the lengths and did the day to day tasks of water supply and drainage, repairs and clearances that probably too many people took for granted.

In the report of 1975 by Peter Frankel and Partners, who were consulted by the BWB, it is stated on page 141 that the Section Inspector 'is the key man in the maintenance organisation. He must have a personal, complete and up to date knowledge of all structures and works in his Section from 60 to 80 (but some up to 100) km of waterway. He would have foremen, tradesmen and other outdoor staff to enable the carrying out of work. Frankel describes on page 137 the concepts of "preventative" and "breakdown" maintenance and points out that waiting until breakdown could have 'very serious—perhaps disastrous consequences'.

When CRT took over they got rid of section inspectors and their

staff and with them made redundant their knowledge and skills. Their place was taken by an increase in middle management with bank work left to volunteers together with a very small group of roving workers who are often poorly instructed by managers who lack background knowledge. These staff usually have little motivation and are frequently based many miles from a trouble spot. There may be just five persons to cover the area that once was two or three sections.

Recent results of this policy have been the costly failure of the spillway at Toddbrook reservoir and the inoperable state of Rudyard, also bank failures on the Huddersfield Narrow, also at Middlewich, Easenhall and Woodseaves. Fortunately there has been no loss of life but there have been enormous costs.

CRT are very good at incurring costs. They make inaccurate podcasts, put up far too many useless notices and hold unproductive open days. Their latest efforts are the events to publicise a water transfer scheme which cannot work in its present form. If the 'Fund Britain's Waterways' campaign raises money it will only be squandered by the inept management on wasteful schemes. CRT is like a black hole—insatiable and unfillable. What is required is a change of policy and this is what I advocate.

The most immediate need is to collect the knowledge and expertise of retired skilled workers. Unfortunately many of these have been evicted from their homes and jobs and have no desire to be helpful in case it infringes their NDAs or



Macclefield breach

Photo: David Thompson

undermines their pensions. Maybe some guarantee of fair treatment and remuneration for their help could produce results. The near disaster and subsequent enormous costs at Toddbrook were attributed by Professor Balmforth to poor maintenance and lack of managerial supervision following the dismissal of the reservoir keeper six years earlier.

Lack of knowledge is a common fault of most of the over-populated middle management—do CRT really need eleven lawyers? Few of these office workers actually get on the towing path, let alone on the water. Drastic pruning could be very cost-effective. Many projects are held up or even prevented by unnecessary surveys, over-zealous interpretation of health and safety regulations or just the red tape of ‘method statements’ and ‘risk analyses’ that cannot be conducted by phone.

Volunteers are not used effectively. A volunteer ‘lock-keeper’ will greet boaters and perhaps assist at a few locks of a popular flight but will not grease the paddles, ensure that gates go into their recesses or weed saplings and other vegetation from the gates and chambers. But they will plant boxes of bedding plants at places where they impede navigation! Volunteers are not paid as such but they receive generous expenses, free clothing and training for various tasks—some of which make you

wonder about the competence of the trainers.

This unwieldy and unworkable structure has been excused by organisations such as the IWA, HNBC and various canal societies saying that CRT should be given chance to prove themselves. Unfortunately they have proved themselves incompetent and unfit to be in charge of the waterways.

Advisors from the boating community have been appointed to assist CRT, however these individuals have been hand-picked as yes-men (or women) and have merely repeated the messages given to them without checking their validity. Few organisations like to be argued with, but such criticisms are necessary and in the long run generally helpful.

A new concerted campaign is required jointly from IWA, NABO, NBC, canal societies, boat clubs, canal dependent businesses and indeed all waterways enthusiasts. A meeting should be convened at a central location and as soon as possible.

Now that Richard Parry has announced that he is stepping down it is the right time to press for changes so that his successor does not repeat the iniquities of the last twelve years. I will gladly support such a campaign to the best of my ability.

I saw the rescue of the system in the 1960s and would hate to see its demise in 2025.

Q & A from the CRT meeting at Strawberry Island

Duncan Wright based on replies from Sean McGinley

Q On 13th December last year a blown cill on a lock on the L&L between Newlay and Kirkstall caused a navigation closure. Despite the fact that the navigation was also closed at Leeds until the middle February nothing was done in preparation or planning until after River Lock was reopened (itself suffering an 8 week overrun on the stoppage). Work was supposed to start on 3rd March, but has been further delayed due to third party construction nearby limiting access. Why was there such a delay between the failure and the planned work commencement? What is being done to work with the third party contractors, access the site and expedite the repairs? Why couldn't the repairs have commenced much sooner, so that the overall navigation closure was minimised?

The pound between Stegneck lock & Bank Newton bottom lock has been drained to find a leak. (According to local boaters it's been leaking for years) All privately moored boats at the bottom of Bank Newton received a letter advising them back in January to move their boats to the Visitor Moorings at Gargrave (which would be suspended for visiting craft) before 17th February when the work would commence. There was nothing put up on the CRT stoppage pages. NABO Twitter asked CRT Yorkshire & NE to clarify the situation, but received no response. A notice went out on the 13th February at 4pm only 4 days before the stoppage, informing

boaters of the imminent stoppage but not that the VM at Gargrave may be suspended. To make matters worse Bank Newton was shut from 4th November until 20th December for planned repairs. Why couldn't the additional work have been done then?

The above two issues are particularly disappointing as Matthew Symonds had said only last year that the Trust would be taking a more holistic approach i.e. undertaking several repairs at once during a stoppage. Obviously this is not happening.

A In terms of resources, it was the same team who were at River Lock, who are completing the work at Bank Newton hopefully tomorrow and then starting on the Kirkstall job on Monday, hence all these works could not take place at the same time. If we were able to have done them in parallel, we would have done so. The third party works which prevent vehicle movements down the towpath were approved in advance of the planning for the Kirkstall job and statutory undertakers have powers to enter our land and carry out works even if we say no, so although we spoke to them to see what could be done, changes were not possible and we had to accept that they needed to finish first.

There has indeed being (sic) a leak at Bank Newton for a while and the draining of this section was needed to determine the cause of the issue. I apologise for the mess up

with regard to notices; we will learn from this—I think having three significant projects on the same canal at the same time (and some other matters) stretched us in many ways.

It is always best to contact us via enquiries.yorkshirenortheast@canalrivertrust.org.uk rather than Twitter (X), as there are limitations with social media.

Q What are CRT doing to address the drop in cruising numbers in the Yorkshire and North East area?

A The drop in cruising numbers is not just a YNE issue; we're seeing changes in how people are using the network all over the country. We're currently completing our annual boat count and once we have the results of that (in May) we'll be considering the development of a longer-term strategy for boating across the network.

Q How are the CRT supporting the FBW campaign cruise that sets off from SIBC at the end of the month?

A I'm planning to be at Strawberry Island on Saturday to see the cruise set off. In more general terms, FBW are keen to be seen as independent and took a deliberate decision not to allow navigation authorities to be eligible for membership, so that FBW would represent the interests of the inland waterways sector but wouldn't be seen as asking for government funding for itself. That said, they remain grateful for our support for their events. In summary; We are supportive of the Fund Britain's Waterways campaign and encouraging of their efforts as we all want the same thing.

■ We welcome the broad endorsement from FBW members of the value of our waterways and importance of securing future funding.

■ We respect the fact that navigation authorities are not members.

■ The FBW campaign complements the Trust's own #Keepcanalsalive campaign—the two are mutually reinforcing, towards a sustainable future for the waterways.

Q Outside of our area, are the Anderton Lift 150th anniversary celebrations going ahead, despite it being broken yet again? Why can a stock of key essential spares not be kept locally to facilitate quick repairs? And regarding that, is there not the need for an in-house engineering facility to reduce unnecessary delays. This is not just relevant to Anderton Lift but also for Oddies Swing Bridge (L&L Br210) which requires 'additional machinations' whatever that means.

A We're looking to getting a video made to communicate the challenges at Anderton and the longer term proposed refurbishment project. I'm not an expert on the lift as it is not in my patch but I am reasonably sure it is not a parts issue, rather something relating to the design of the system. We will be going ahead with the celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary—the planning for these have been a long time in the planning and it is a really good opportunity to highlight the historic importance of the lift and garner support (including hopefully financial support) for the refurbishment. Oddies is now open as you may have seen from the notice; the machining was needed to the pintel as unfortunately each of these bridges has its own characteristics making a one size fits all answer difficult at times. If I could go back in time I would not have built the canal with swing bridges as they are quite a challenge, but if we had to have them I would have made them all the same.

RCR maintenance course

John Sadler

For more information:

River Canal Rescue is now taking bookings for its two-day maintenance courses, running at its Stafford HQ on: 23/24 April, 7/8 and 21/22 May and 11/12 and 25/26 June.

To find out more, call 01785 785680, email enquiries@rivercanalrescue.co.uk or visit rivercanalrescue.co.uk

My wife entered the recent RCR competition and to our great surprise won first prize—two places on the maintenance course.

It is an excellent course run by two experienced engineers. The material was based on what most often goes wrong and results in a callout. Very useful as a reminder to check all those things you've been putting off and in future, planning preventative maintenance. We were also given a list of essential and suggested spares to carry. I will be ordering some extra parts soon. Boat security also came under discussion with alarming evidence of an increase in the amount of theft from boats.

We were given hands-on training on a variety of engines, all but one of the students were boat owners, all very keen to learn and exchange their experiences.

I'm really looking forward to the next oil change, I won't have to get my hands dirty!

RCR maintenance courses

The boat and engine maintenance course covers how to maintain diesel engines and the systems within a narrowboat, such as propulsion, cooling, engine servicing and fault finding, and will be led by RCR's Kerry Horton and Dave Bull, both long-standing RCR employees with a wealth of knowledge and experience.

The course costs £300, with an additional charge of £15 for RYA certificates. Tailored courses are also on offer to groups and clubs, with discounts for boat clubs.

Attendees receive an RCR certificate and a copy of the company's Narrow Boat Engine Maintenance and Repair book—a practical guide detailing how to keep engines operational and boats moving.

Personal courses

RCR also offers a personal engine maintenance course with one-to-one tuition from an engineer/qualified

Photos: Mark Lovatt-Harris RCR



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.

Electrical sessions

Dates for RCR's monthly £340 electrical sessions, run by Kerry and senior engineers/electrical specialists, and covering fault-finding, repairs and Boat Safety Scheme/legislative requirements, are yet 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.



Mentions in the Houses



Emma Hardy

Emma Hardy, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, responded to a question of what recent discussions have taken place with the Welsh government on the limit of water abstractions from the river Usk.

Water abstraction licensing in Wales, and conditions that may be

attached to licences, are a devolved matter for Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh Government. Defra and the Environment Agency do not have a role in that. Issues of concern about the supply of water for the Monmouth and Brecon Canal are an operational matter for the Canal and River Trust, as the independent charity owning the canal, to resolve with Natural Resources Wales.

Mon and Brecon canal water abstraction licence restrictions

Paul Thomas, IWA South West and South Wales Region Secretary.

The Mon and Brecon canal in Wales is at risk of closure at key times of the year due to water restrictions imposed by National Resources Wales (NRW).

The Mon and Brecon navigable canal runs for 35 miles from Brecon to Five Locks in Cwmbran. The canal is a contour canal with 6 locks. The majority of the water for the canal is

taken from the river Usk in Brecon, and the water makes it way east and south along the canal before it eventually ends up back in the Usk.

Under the 2003 Water Act CRT had to apply for water abstraction licences for 7 water sources that feed the canal. These included the main feed at Brecon from the Usk, and the Trosnant Spring at Pontypool. The 2 licences for Brecon, and the Trosnant Spring had conditions attached that restrict the amount of water that CRT can take, especially during the summer period when the Usk has lower flow rates. The restrictions are to safeguard the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) that applies to parts of the Usk.

CRT appealed the restrictions in several ways, including the fact that the canal had taken similar amounts of water for the last 225 years, and that they had a legal obligation to maintain navigation rights on the canal. Their appeals were rejected in November 2024.

At the end of February 2025 CRT wrote to all boat related businesses on the canal warning that they may have to impose water and navigation restrictions for long periods to meet

The local campaign group can be found on Facebook at facebook.com/preserve.protect.mon.brec/

Usk Water Inlet
Photo Paul Thomas



the licence requirements.

For now, the canal is operating normally and it's business as usual. However, the next 6 months may highlight the water shortage issues for real.

Mentions in the Senedd

Sioned Williams Plaid Cymru The previous climate change Minister highlighted the risks associated with the reductions in funding made to the Canal & River Trust by the then Tory UK Government, such as the loss of sections of the canal network and the negative impact on biodiversity. For canals not owned by the Canal & River Trust, such as both the Neath and Tennant canals, the risk of losing access to and benefit from these canals is even greater. The benefits of canals touch on almost every portfolio within Welsh Government, so what conversations are being had across Government, including with the UK Government, to ensure our canal network is preserved, protected, supported and celebrated? Diolch.

Huw Irranca-Davies Labour Thank you very much for that supplementary. Can I just begin by joining you in praising the work of those many volunteers across our whole canal network in Wales, and across the UK, who do so much? I remember that the inception of the Canal & River Trust model was very much predicated on that idea that, if I recall correctly, the UK Government could draw on some real estate capitalisation, because they own some massive Treasury houses like parts of the Docklands in London and so on, and use that to drive investment, but also draw on volunteers and the goodwill that exists from volunteers who are interested in the archaeology of the canals, as well as wildlife,



biodiversity, access, fitness, well-being and all that sort of thing. People have a real stake in this.

But you are right: my understanding is that a decision has been taken. I've got to stress that this is not a devolved matter, but the decision has been taken to review the funding model for the Canal & River Trust, so moving it from a 15-year period of tapering to a 10-year period, so that it's accelerated. We need, in Wales, to continue to monitor what we can do in our contribution to the canals, and that does, by the way, involve not insubstantial investment in things like the active travel network, but also, specifically, in places like the Montgomery canal, camlas Maldwyn, in biodiversity projects running into the hundreds of thousands of pounds. So, we do recognise the importance of these and we'll keep doing what we can here, but, meanwhile, I think it's vitally important that the UK Government work with the Canal & River Trust to make sure that that goodwill is translated into continuing investment, maintenance and, as some volunteers want to do, the expansion of the canal network as well.

Llangynidr

Photo Paul Thomas



Sioned Williams



Huw Irranca-Davies

Fund Britain's Waterways

The Canal & River Trust continues to engage with Government to secure future of the UK's waterways



FUND BRITAIN'S WATERWAYS

For further information about Fund Britain's Waterways contact: info@fundbritainwaterways.org.uk

As part of its work to secure the future of the historic canal network it cares for and keep the canal network safe, navigable and available for people, the Canal & River Trust is continuing to present its case to government to emphasise the vital role of the canal network in delivering key national priorities.

In its comprehensive submission to the government's current Spending Review process, the charity is making the case for a contribution to its funding sufficient to ensure that its canals can continue to provide the significant economic, environmental, and social benefits it delivers into the future.

This follows the publication of the Trust's 2024 Impact Report in December illustrating the wide range of positive outcomes the Trust delivers, and the submission of the Trust's first Climate Change Adaptation report to Government last month demonstrating how the Trust's ageing infrastructure is requiring substantial future investment to keep it open and safe.

The UK's canals and associated infrastructure—including reservoirs, docks, and embank-

ments—offer strategic opportunities to support issues of national importance, such as water security, flood protection, climate resilience, and economic growth. However, these assets face growing pressure from reduced funding, rising maintenance costs, and the increasing impact of extreme weather events. The Trust believes that a modest increase in government investment, to maintain its real terms funding, would unlock even greater benefits, ensuring the canal network remains resilient for generations to come.

At present the Trust receives around 22% of its funding from government and this is set to decline to around 10% by 2035, a loss of funding of around £300m in real terms over the next ten years.

Richard Parry, chief executive at Canal & River Trust, said: "Our canals and navigable rivers are an extraordinary national asset, supporting the economy, providing water security, supporting nature, protecting against flooding, and offering green and blue spaces that benefit millions of people. However, the pressures on this ageing infrastructure are growing and, without adequate investment, there is a real risk to the benefits they provide. As a charity we must raise funds through many different routes and part of this is by engaging with the government in a thoughtful and measured way, to show how targeted funding could help to future-proof these vital assets and ensure they continue to support communities, the environment, and the economy long into the future."

Swivel-eyed illogic

by Ian Hutson

Terminology is important. Terminology is revealing. Rarely is it more important and revealing than with ill-conceived, ill-led, confused and chaotic institutions.

On a wholly unrelated note, the Canal Company Ltd now defines a price-band of boat licence as being for those boats without what it terms a 'home mooring'. The Canal Company Ltd then forgets its own definition and refers everywhere else to 'continuous cruisers'. When I buy my licence I am asked whether I am a "continuous cruiser" or not and the drop-down menu offers the unequivocally binary choice of 'yes' or 'no'.

It is quite easily possible to possess a year-round mooring and while you might indeed cruise nowhere, you might still also cruise everywhere each and every day of every month of every year. You might refrain from using water, pooping, or producing domestic rubbish—or you might use service areas each and every weekday and twice on Sundays if you feel really full of it.

A Canal Company Ltd "official" "Winter Mooring" for five of the twelve months in a year doth not a 'home mooring' constitute and yet while you possess such you might not move an inch and thus, again putatively, according to the Canal Company, burden the canal infrastructure nought. Spend huge extra moolah on a company mooring to "save" over 40% of (putative) "wear and tear" and still pay 25% more on your licence than most. Wozzat?

Are you an abstemious body-mass-challenged Jesuit monk living a largely lonesome life with nobbut a pet nylon sock called Eric, or are you

a sociable family of fourteen Sumo-supremos with more visiting each sunny weekend? No account taken. Not a shred of logic enters.

To add to this confusion most Share Boats are out and about cruising each and every week of the year and always have been so. Between you, me, and the next bridge-hole, share boats are known for their propensity for squeezing as much "share value" from their week as is humanly possible at 4mph. The big Holiday Hire companies are increasingly installing heating stoves on their fleet to supplement the diesel heating, and it is now quite common to clasp hands, sigh, and see manifold miscellaneous hire boats similarly rushing about at any and all times of the year. Hire boats are renowned for just quietly mooring up around the corner from Base for the week and for not using any services or causing any infrastructure damage.

So I have to ask. If this more expensive "Continuous Cruiser" licence demonstrably has nothing at all to do with cruising or not cruising, nothing to do with mooring or not mooring, and nothing to do with using or not using service areas, then is it really true that when the white elephant in the Chief Executive's lavatory takes flight it morphs into a shocking-pink pig, sings arias from La Boheme, and poops sparkling anti-missile fairy dust chaff on its landing approaches to Absurdistan International Airport? That sounds every bit as legit.



Marina'd boats



Rewind

From the NABO archives

Cycling on the towing paths

Excerpts From a BW Paper

Policy review and proposals for consultation september 1992

Harmony between different users calls for mutual understanding and courtesy. BW's series of Waterway Codes is the main vehicle for educating all towing path users. BW needs to stress that the cyclist should be primarily responsible for his or her own safety. The use of very long roach poles by anglers is one of the most frequently mentioned obstacles to harmonious path sharing. These can cause inconvenience both walkers and cyclists when extended back across the towing path. Such obstruction is a byelaw offence, and anglers are specifically reminded to be considerate in this respect in the Waterways Code.

Codes already exist for boaters, anglers, and informal visitors, while advice to cyclists is contained in the cycle permit application form. The latter requires revision and strengthening. The key to achievement of harmony however lies in effective distribution of the Waterway Codes.

BW objectives—criteria for policy evaluation

BW's considered, overall objective is to allow safe cycling on suitable towing paths. As far as possible, the implementation programme should be self-funding.

A number of options were evaluated, including retention of the status quo and outright banning of all cycling on towing paths. The two options which scored most favourably however were:

Controlled free access: abandon cycling permits and allow free use

of those towing paths designated as suitable.

Controlled access with a national permit: cycling permitted on suitable lengths, subject to purchase of a national permit.

Option A comprises the following elements, subject to refinement resulting from consultation.

- A national audit of all towing path sections and their designation as either available for cycling, or cycling prohibited. Guidelines for classification by the local Waterway Manager to embrace Physical condition, likelihood of conflict, and legal status, Views of Consultees on the formulation of suitable criteria would be welcomed.
- Lengths along which cycling is prohibited to be clearly signed at access points. Signs to be clear and strategically located. Lessons to be applied from Countryside Commission and other agencies' experience. In adopting this approach, the presumption will be that cycling is Permitted unless otherwise signed.
- A cyclists' Code of Conduct to be published and distributed free of charge, using an appropriate marketing programme.
- Subject to interest and investment by a suitable publisher, a 'Cyclist's Guide to the Waterways' to be published, including maps and listings of all towing path cycleways, and links with other designated cycle routes (including recommended routes to avoid cycling on prohibited stretches)
- Cycling on permitted towing

paths to be free of charge, subject to compliance with the Code of Conduct.

- Enforcement to be the responsibility of Waterway Managers via Patrol and other bank staff.
- Local Waterway Managers to open negotiations with interested local authorities with the aim of increasing the lengths suitable for cyclists, and increasing the capacity of paths already designated.
- Classification of towing paths to be reviewed regularly.

Option B has most of the elements of Option A with the following exceptions:

- In place of free of charge, cyclists to purchase a permit which would be valid for all of BW's towing paths designated as suitable. A fee of £10 p.a. would be proposed, with special rates for families and block permits for members of national cycling organisations. The permit would be issued in respect of the bicycle, not the individual. To reduce administrative costs, longer period Permits would be offered at incentive rates, with a possible 'life-cycle' permit.
- The permit would be issued together with the Code of Conduct and a BW sanitary station key.
- Consideration could also be given to including other added-value items such as a distinctive BW bell or hooter, the 'Cyclist's Guide', and cycle insurance, with the permit fee adjusted accordingly.

- Cycling on stretches supported by local authority or other agency funding would not be subject to the permit.
- Commercial cycle hire operations renting bicycles for use on the towing paths would be subject to a special licence agreement.

Recommendation and implementation proposals

Waterway Managers will be required to undertake a full audit of towing paths under their control to assess the suitability of individual sections for cycling.

Their resultant recommendations to be summarised in two schedules which would then be circulated to members of the local waterway user group and (at the Waterway Manager's discretion) to local district councils for consultation. Comments should be considered by the Waterway Manager, and any cases of doubt may be referred to an advisory panel of experts for advice.

In deciding on suitability, the Waterway Manager will use his or her judgement, taking account of physical characteristics, needs of other waterway users, legal status of the towing path, and nature of any existing agreements with local authorities or other statutory agencies.

The national office of the Cyclists' Touring Association have offered the services of their local groups to assist with the audit. Waterway Managers will also be encouraged to seek advice from local authority cycling officers.

The Future of Boat Licensing Review

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.

I name this boat ... A Cat Stevens fan afloat?



Festivals and campaigns

Andrew Phasey of St Pancras Cruising Club

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 Pancrasc.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

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.



Letters to the Editor

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

Limited water is available to keep Monmouthshire and Brecon canal in water.

The Mon and Brec is supplied with water from a number of feeders, the main one being from the river Usk, however this is subject to abstraction licence regulations, restrictions on which limit the abstraction at times of low rainfall to preserve the integrity of the river Usk and the Severn estuary.

It is expected that without significant rainfall the abstraction will be limited during April which is likely to affect the normal working of the canal to possibly include restriction on lock usage.

Monmouthshire Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust (MBACT) is a charity whose aim is preservation and regeneration of the Mon and Brec in support of the canal owners. Richard Dommett MBE, past chair and Vice president of MBACT is working closely with Canal and River Trust to share some of his experience of managing the canal network to address some of the issues currently of concern. They are working to identify alternative feeder sources of water to

supplement the water abstracted from the River Usk.

The Mon and Brec is a significant employer in the navigable sections with several boat hire companies operating on the canal. Within Bannau Brycheiniog Brecon Beacons National Park the Mon and Brec is the most attended visitor attraction. South of the navigable section through Torfaen, Newport and Caerphilly the canal remains an extremely important natural resource, part of the active travel network and a leisure resource for many. It is for these reasons that keeping the Mon and Brec in water is so important.

There is currently a Senned petition open, and MBACT is actively encouraging interested parties to sign this to raise awareness amongst our politicians.

Monmouthshire Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust

petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/246570



Come and join us for our

25th Anniversary Celebration

8 June 2025

Stafford Riverway Link Grounds, Baswich, Stafford, ST17 4FR

LIVE MUSIC

FOOD & DRINKS

PRIZE DRAWS

BOAT JUMBLE

8am - 12pm

ROVING TRADERS

EXHIBITOR STALLS

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www.rivercanalrescue.co.uk | 01785 785680



FOR MORE INFORMATION