

THE JUST WON'T GO AWAY FLOATER

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The only paper for boaters produced by boaters

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Vulnerable boater has his home invaded - boaters are warned to keep alert

Conman steals boat by posing as C&RT officer

by
Peter Underwood



A boater on the Birmingham Canals has had his boat stolen by a man pretending to be a Canal & River Trust enforcement officer.

The scam first emerged in a secret Facebook boaters' group when a member called Sterling Archer posted asking for advice to help an anonymous friend who he feared had been evicted by C&RT.

He said: "My mate has just been evicted, although under very strange circumstances and as far as I can tell it just doesn't sound very legal.

"He hasn't been issued with any court documents or any warnings, he is behind on his waterways license by three months, due to repairs he needs to do to get his boat safety certification, but surely they have to go through court?"

"He said a man called Dave Preston turned up and asked for his keys - he then entered the boat with a video camera without any permission.

"My friend is not exactly the brightest of sparks and nearly at retirement age and so just gave him his keys and this Preston bloke just left him out in the rain and said that he would be back tomorrow with people to take the boat. "Who would be the best person for my friend to get in contact with for legal help?" Other boaters swiftly passed on advice that C&RT had to have a court order to seize a residential boat and that he should contact the Trust and the National Barge Travellers Association for help.

Many suspected it was a scam and when Sterling Archer next reported back it was to say his friends boat had been taken from



C&RT enforcement staff uniforms in warm and colder weather

where it was moored near Walsall by the man calling himself Dave Preston Sterling said: "They told him that if he didn't give the boat over that they would get the bailiffs involved and that he didn't want that. They have told him that they are taking it a mile away to a C&RT lock-up where he can do the repairs to his boat during the day, but he can't live in it until he has done the boat safety certification, then insurance, then boat license. His also not allowed to take any of his stuff out of it either, other than the few things he took this morning.

"He's currently just heading up the cut to another boater up there just to get out of the rain and take a breather, it quite hard now to understand what his saying on the phone as his quite tearful and emotional."

Googling by other boaters showed a Dave Preston working for the Environment Agency, who do not function on C&RT Waters but it turned out that was simply muddying the water.

The National Barge Travellers Association legal officer, Nick Brown advised Sterling to call police and confirmed the Environment



Agency's David Preston is a Pollution Control Officer not an Enforcement Officer.

Within hours it was sorted out when Nick Brown reported: "OK so he has the boat back and Police are on it. EA do have someone called Dave Preston - this person was not him. "He kept taking about 'taking the boat to the Woolen Hall C&RT Pound'. He was in uniform, had an organiser and a camera. If you see someone like this report to West Midlands on 0121 687 4070 quoting 2477/1-06-2016."

Nick confirmed the man calling himself Dave Preston was not C&RT nor Environment Agency. He ended by praising C&RT's prompt action in getting the boat back to the victim. But that wasn't the end of it. Shortly afterwards Sterling Archer reported: "The person that conned him has just returned to try it again? He tried to take a picture of him but he cycled away, police are on their way though this time." As far as we know the conman has still not been caught.

The Environment Agency say: "All Environment Agency Officers will always show some form of photographic identification. This could be in

the form of a warrant card or a general staff identification card.

"We are concerned that there is a person who may be wearing our corporate clothing claiming to be working for the Environment Agency. If you become aware of similar events to this then please let us know by calling our 24 hour incident hotline number (0800 80 70 60). And C&RT said: "This incident had nothing to do with C&RT staff we do not operate in this way and all enforcement staff have ID cards. This was a bogus operation which we have been made aware of and the incident has been reported to the police. Further investigations and awareness of the named "Dave Preston" have been circulated and we ask that boaters be extra vigilant requesting ID for any to verify that they are a C&RT member of staff." The Trust says its Enforcement Team: "Do not remove any boater from their home without first applying to the Courts. All Enforcement C&RT staff have been provided with ID cards. "In the case of a boat being the owners home, we would not enter without owner's permission or unless we had a Court Order The Trust has also set out a guide on how to recognise genuine staff"

"The team wears black trousers, black jumper and white polo/shirt: all have the Trust's logo. In bad weather conditions they will wear coats.

**All carry ID cards - we'd prefer not to show a copy as this raises the risk of a criminal copying it and the format may change in future.*

**We would never turn up single-handed for a boat removal, plus if a boat is lived on high court officials would also be in attendance.*

"If there is any doubt that the person is employed by the Trust, the boater should phone our customer services line to verify the person's identity (0303 040 4040).

It also says it's staff have all had general safeguarding training in how they should be dealing with vulnerable boaters.

IWA dumps Welch after 'inappropriate' communications

By Allan Richards

The IWA has got rid of one of its high profile members, calling on him to stand down from all of its committees on which he sits. In a press statement issued on June 20, the IWA states that it has asked Vaughan Welch to stand down from all positions he holds on national committees including chair of the IWA Restoration Committee.

The request follows communications by Vaughan Welch with the family of a deceased supporter of the Association that IWA's Trustees considered inappropriate and 'contrary to the best interests of

IWA and the inland waterways'. The decision was reviewed and upheld at a meeting of IWA's Trustees on June 18. According to the IWA, Mr Welch was invited to attend this meeting to put his side of events but declined to do so. Vaughan Welch, who has held many senior positions in the IWA, including Regional Chairman for the West Midlands, Trustee and National Vice Chair, is no stranger to controversy. In 2013 he was actively encouraging IWA members to spy on boaters and report those they believed to be non-compliant. His extreme views caused dismay amongst boaters and IWA members alike and led to calls that he should either resign or be removed from office. More recently he caused con-

troversy by standing and being elected as a boater's representative to C&RT's Council despite a gentlemen's agreement between IWA and the Trust that IWA trustees would not stand for election in return for being given a permanent seat on Council. The departure of Vaughan Welch was preceded by the resignation of another Restoration Committee stalwart, Geraint Coles. Dr Coles has in the past been very prominent in the Chesterfield Canal restoration. Unconfirmed reports suggest a deep rift between IWA trustees and the Restoration Committee has developed. It came to a head regarding the legacy of Tony Harrison, a former IWA consultant engineer, and Restoration Committee Chair. The

bequest asked that Vaughan Welch should advise on how the legacy be used. However, IWA trustees have disagreed with the recommendations made by its own Restoration Committee regarding use of the legacy.

Mr Welch has let it be known that he is no longer a member of the IWA but has taken on a senior role with a major navigation authority and expects to continue to work with waterways restoration projects outside the IWA. Who might that 'major navigation authority be? Currently C&RT says it has no knowledge of Vaughan Welch being offered any role beyond his position as a member of the Trust's Council. He is still listed as a member of the West Midlands Waterways Partnership



Departed: Vaughan Welch, left and Dr Geraint Coles, right.

Public unimpressed by C&RT say boaters - and they're not too keen themselves

After several weeks the full details of the latest boaters' survey by the Canal & River Trust have emerged, but only after a Freedom of Information request which was ignored and a formal complaint. Allan Richards has finally got some answers.

By Allan Richards



Reporting back from the towpath and elsewhere boaters have told C&RT that nearly half (45 per cent) of the people they meet are critical of the Trust, with just one in five talking positively about it.

These are the findings of a recent boating survey which is only now in the public domain following a complaint to the Information Commissioner that the report was being wrongly withheld. In June's Floater, the Trust was taken to task for attempting to put a positive spin on its survey which shows that almost four in 10 boaters don't trust C&RT to look after the waterways, more than half of boaters feel they don't know the charity and six out of ten feel the Trust does not have the right priorities on spending. However, that article just removed the spin from the Trust's press release which seems to have conveniently ignored some other crucial information. The base data from the survey reveals two important statistics which were missing from the summary given by the Trust, which may explain why the information was withheld until a formal complaint was made. Firstly, there is decreasing number of boaters willing to take part in surveys. One third of all boaters (about 11,000) were invited to take part in this latest survey but only nine per cent, 1,024 boaters, responded.

Strangely, C&RT attempted to convince Navigation Advisory Group (NAG) members at meetings in June that nine per cent was a 'positive' because similar surveys only received, on average, a five per cent response. That was a misleading claim that seems to have chosen to ignore C&RT's own recent experiences. Due, in part, to requests under the Freedom of Information Act, C&RT's previous survey results are in the public domain and reveal a completely different picture.

In 2013/14 C&RT commissioned its bi-yearly survey, from the firm BDRG Continental, of Boat Owners Views (known as BOV). The June 2014 report from the survey gave a response rate of 26 per cent (1,364 responses from 5,100 invitations).

In 2014/15 C&RT commissioned a series of interim surveys to be held every few months from the same company. These surveys were called the Boat Owners' Attitude Tracker (BOAT for short). The key objective of BOAT was to measure advocacy (i.e. speaking positively about the Trust) over a two year period.

One of the main findings from the first BOAT survey was communicated to C&RT's Board of Trustees in November 2014 as follows – "Respect – only one in four (24 per cent) boaters say they feel respected by the Trust." A decline in advocacy for the Trust was also reflected in the number that responded to invitations to participate in the survey. It fell from 26 per cent to 15 per cent (615 out of 4,000). Two further surveys were carried out with broadly similar results before BOAT was quietly abandoned and apparently forgotten. There is no public record of

Weighted Total	1024
Neutral Positively	209 20%
Neutral Critically	461 45%

The percentage of people boaters find speaking critically of C&RT

4.5 Boat Owner Tracker Surveys

4.5.1 This new regular tracker survey is to monitor attitudes and 'advocacy' amongst boaters and identify the key drivers affecting it. The key results from wave one are:

- **Familiarity** – two thirds (65%) of boaters say they know very little about what we do; this indicates we need to promote a better understanding of the varied work of the Trust.
- **Respect** – only one in four (24%) boaters say they feel respected by the Trust; this will help drive the changes to our engagement, tone and 'culture'.

Just a quarter of boaters feel the Trust respects them

any action being taken to stem the fall in boater advocacy. And now we have the latest survey which demonstrates a further decline in advocacy, now shown at just nine per cent of 11,000 invitees responding. Surprisingly, there was no question in this particular survey about whether boaters thought they were respected by the Trust. That, too, seems to have been conveniently abandoned. However, Question 9 is enlightening. It asks: "Thinking

about occasions when you may talk with other people about the Canal & River Trust, do people mainly..." and gives a series of options.

A staggering 45 per cent responded that people 'speak critically' with just one in five saying that people 'speak positively'. That despite a massive spend on advertising on television, social media and elsewhere, along with substantial and expensive printed material handed out to the pub-

lic. But perhaps not as shocking as the 26 per cent to nine per cent fall in the number of boaters willing to participate in these surveys over just a two year period. And not as disturbing as the antics of C&RT in attempting avoid full public disclosure of this and earlier surveys which have turned minor embarrassments into a full-blown public relations disaster. Is Richard Parry losing his usual sure touch with public relations?

Rochdale reopening still far away

Just about now boats may be able to cruise out of the Rochdale Canal onto the rest of the network for the first time this year.

The Canal & River Trust is still dealing with the aftermath of the Boxing Day floods in the Calder Valley and there has finally been some progress with the larger, more challenging engineering projects.

In June the canal became available for use from Hebden Bridge to just above Lock 14 near Todmorden.

The next section of waterway to reopen will be the Calder & Hebble Navigation at Elland and Crowther Bridges where work is being undertaken to open the canal allowing people to navigate out of the Rochdale Canal onto the rest of the network. Both bridges were badly damaged by the force of the floodwaters and have had to be dismantled and completely rebuilt. As many of the interesting features as possible are being reused in the new bridges. It took longer than anticipated to install the temporary dams at

Crowther Bridge and the Trust is now aiming to reopen the canal to boats by July 4.

However, the canal is still closed to through traffic and will be for most of the summer and probably beyond.

This is due to a breach near Todmorden on the Rochdale Canal. Here a section of canal wall was washed out causing the canal to breach. Works have only recently started to repair the breach, rebuild 250 metres of collapsed wash wall and carry out repairs to Woodhouse Weir. The project will cost around £700,000 and is expected to be completed in August.

More problematically, a landslide nearby also caused the surface of a slope to slide down on and into part of the canal, blocking the way with earth, trees and debris and damaging the canal.

Since then the Trust has been talking with the owners of the slope, with a view to reopening the canal as quickly as possible, but progress is slow. C&RT reports: "Whilst discussions continue regarding insurance, one of the landowners has, in the meantime,



The aftermath of the Boxing Day floods was devastation

agreed to grant permission for us to access the slope. This means that we can help with the important job of assessing whether the damage caused has resulted in any further movement of the land.

"These investigations have started and as soon as we know how stable

the slope above the canal is then remedial work and clean-up plans will be implemented.

"We'd like to thank everybody in the area for their patience and would ask them to please bear with us a little longer given the precarious nature of the situation."

The Floater

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The written word is still a best seller on the waterways

The Floater takes a look at canal traders – people creating businesses on our canals and rivers. Their numbers are increasing almost daily and the chances are you will see a floating market or a sole trader on the canal this summer. Our latest trader is The Book Boat - Jill and Brent Dale's narrowboat which also functions as a travelling bookshop.



By Peter Underwood

One thing about boaters is that a much higher proportion tend to be readers than you would find in the general population.

Perhaps it is because part of being on board is putting the trappings of modern life – like television – behind you or it may be a power-saving routine when you are off-grid. Whatever the reason, books are important to many boaters – although not many go as far as turning their vessel into a bookshop.

That's what Jill and Brent Dale have done and now tour the country selling second-hand books from their home, the Sarah B, better known as The Book Boat.

Jill, 63, and Brent, 65, have been married for 45yrs and the boat is named for their daughter.

Jill recalls how it all started: "Brent retired early, at 52, and I was jealous as he spent all his time golfing, fishing and shooting. The only way we could afford for us both to stop working was to sell up and get a boat, to keep our costs in line with the major drop in income."

"When the derogation came in, we heard that if you were a trader you could claim diesel at 0 per cent. So we started from there."

It seems Jill had always harboured a fancy for the book business. "I have always loved books, I always wanted a bookshop – just never thought about a floating one before."

Brent, an engineer by trade, looks after the boat's requirements and built all the brackets and shelves which hang off the side of the boat to display the books.



The Book Boat in Paddington Basin - above and below



Space is, of course limited and Jill admits that every nook and cranny on the boat is stuffed with books. Even

then the skill is in sifting through and only displaying those that have a ready market on the towpath.

Jill explains: "Friends and family bring us their books when they come to visit. A surprising number of boaters bring us their books too, there are sometimes some hidden gems in there."

"I have quite a good eye nowadays for what will sell, and I enjoy the challenge of looking round charity shops for quirky books, plus canal, transport and military books. "If I get books which are unsuitable to sell, I either leave them at book swap points along the canal, or take them to charity shops. Sometimes we set up book swaps ourselves where we think the books will be appreciated."

The couple have been trading for nearly a decade but don't regard it as a living. "It pays for diesel, licence, insurance and that sort of cost, so allows us to continue to travel," says Jill.

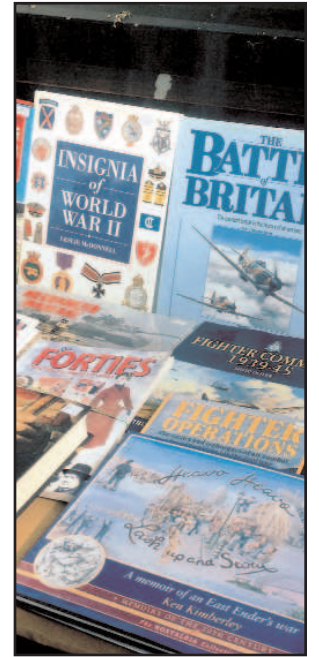
"We will trade for as long as we can. We're not getting any younger and the set up and break down is quite hard work. Books weigh a ton. "We have to be careful when we set up to make sure that the exhaust doesn't go under the water!"

The way boat traders do business varies, some operate as a solo business in 'hot spots' while others prefer using special events and floating markets.

Books sell everywhere and Jill says: "We usually trade on our own, as we are totally dictated to by the weather. Books do not like the wet stuff."

"We usually cruise and keep an eye on the weekend weather, and try and be somewhere with a decent footfall. This is why we don't usually do festivals, it's too easy to be rained off."

"Having said that, we did the floating market in Paddington basin in June. It's only £20, unlike some of the festivals, and as we are heading to the Thames we felt it would be



Browsing at Berkhamstead



too good an opportunity to miss."

The couple began their boating and trading on the northern part of the network but say they now prefer to be in the south.

It is not a business that's likely to grow – at least not if they want to keep their boat afloat. Jill explains: "We couldn't expand, the books are already taking over all the living space."

There was a saying in the south that northerners kept their coal in the bath. We keep cases of books, stacked to the roof as well as under the bed, and in corners which we didn't know existed." How helpful or otherwise is C&RT to traders, we asked

them? "We have CC'ed since the very beginning, 12 years now. CRT are OK with us at the moment, but we do wish we had never lost the lengths-men, a treasure nearly completely gone now."

"Volunteers are OK, but do not have the breadth of experience that has gone forever." Like many traders social media is a key part of involving customers in the business and Jill and Brent have set up a Facebook page which encourages discussion and banter about their stock-in-trade.

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Book-Boat-1688751748080566/>



Jill and Brent Dale

Draconian new rules for boaters 'disappoint' IWA

A massive property business, one of the UK's biggest, with a portfolio worth £2.3bn, has decided to arbitrarily overturn a decades-long reciprocal agreement that benefited boaters on Canal & River Trust waters as well as those registered on its own canal, the Bridgewater. C&RT seems to have been surprised and taken aback by the swift change of rules whilst the Inland Waterways Association has launched a campaign against them. In a move reminiscent of C&RT's recent imposition of new Terms & Conditions, the Bridgewater Canal Company, a Peel Holdings subsidiary, hiked fees for boats licenced on their canal, introduced a substantial additional fee for boats wanting to live on their boats for any extended period of time and introduced a charge for visiting boaters if they took longer than a week to traverse the Bridgewater or returned within a month. In the North West of England there has long been a reciprocal agreement allowing boats licenced on the Bridgewater Canal to access local C&RT waterways, and for C&RT licence holders to use the Bridgewater Canal to travel between the Rochdale, Trent & Mersey and Leeds & Liverpool Leigh Branch canals, without charge. Mike Grimes, head of boating at Canal & River Trust, said: "I was surprised and disappointed to hear about the recent changes made by Peel Holdings. We have asked Peel to stop enforcing immediately and meet with the Trust to discuss a better way forward. "The reciprocal agreement has benefited all our licence holders and I am hopeful that we can resolve this situation in the best interests of the boaters who want to enjoy the Bridgewater Canal as well as the Trust's wonderful northern waterways and beyond." The IWA is also concerned that the new rules may affect

Violence between boaters and enforcement officers may have played a role in hard line new rules - claim



The Bridgewater at Worsley where the first canal of the Industrial Revolution was built by the Earl of Bridgewater. Picture by Adrian and Gillian Padfield

boaters with C&RT licences who wish to use the Bridgewater Canal to access other C&RT waters for a short period and then return the same way.

'Discouraging'

The Association's North West Region is lobbying on behalf of all boaters and businesses in the area in an effort to mitigate any adverse affects from the changes. At the same time Peel Holdings has dramatically increased its enforcement effort which has become so heavy handed the IWA says it already seems to be 'discouraging C&RT licenced boaters from making the transit from Preston Brook to Leigh and Manchester as they may be charged a £40 supplementary licence fee for the return journey'. It predicts that if this trend continues the local businesses along the Bridgewater will suffer as visitor numbers reduce. Paradoxically, C&RT had recently extended the reciprocal agreement to allow additional time for Bridgewater licenced boats to visit Liverpool, and the IWA says it

is 'particularly disappointing that there seems to be no 'reciprocation' from BCC to encourage C&RT craft to visit the Bridgewater Canal'. Mike Carter, IWA North West Region Chairman, said: "IWA is campaigning for a system that allows suitably licenced boats to be able to visit all locations surrounding the Bridgewater Canal, including Manchester, Liverpool, Wigan, Blackburn, Middlewich, Barbridge and Kids Grove. IWA considers that both C&RT and BCC should be encouraging visitors to the area by maintaining a reasonable licensing policy that avoids isolating these locations for both Bridgewater and C&RT licenced craft". The first boaters on C&RT's waters knew about the change was early June when the Trust issued a stoppage notice saying: "We have become aware that Bridgewater Canal have changed their approach to enforcement for Canal & River Trust licencees. They have confirmed to us that they are only allowing Trust licencees a

7 consecutive day access to the canal without charge, no return allowed within 28 days. After the 7 days is expired people will be required to purchase short-term licences. Canal & River Trust is seeking to review this change with the Bridgewater Canal and will advise further when this is done."

Meeting planned

Towards the end of the month it announced a minor concession from Peel Holdings, saying it would 'forward details of any licence holders wishing to use the Bridgewater Canal as part of passage to a festival this summer and we will pass these on'. A meeting is now planned with representatives of the Bridgewater Canal Company in July but the Bridgewater Canal Company seems to have made up its mind. It has said: "Please note we are now operating a no return within 28 day restriction under the reciprocal agreement with C&RT."

"We have been working on these changes for a year and BCCL have now decided to bring them into play this summer to reinforce our enforcement work and to protect the Canal from abuse. "To help prevent further exploitation we have introduced a no return policy to the reciprocal agreement which now reads as; 'C&RT licenced crafts are permitted up to 7 consecutive days free navigation on the Bridgewater Canal. No return within any 28 day period'. "For clarification after 7-days from first arriving on the Bridgewater Canal a permit will be required to remain on the Bridgewater Canal. Any return within 28 days from the date of leaving whether leaving after three days or five days or up to seven days you will require an additional permit. "We are in discussions with

C&RT and have agreed with C&RT that for 2016 any boaters who are registered to attend the Liverpool Festival or another bona fide canal festival will be permitted to return navigation on the Bridgewater Canal at no cost subject to their registration details being provided to BCCL by C&RT or IWA. "It is possible that a return ticket for a reduced fee may be introduced. Any return ticket information will be placed on the Bridgewater Canal website when it is available."

Conflict

Peel Land and Property Group own and manage 1.2 million m² of property and 15,000 hectares of land and water, mostly in North West England but also in the Clyde, Yorkshire and the Medway in Kent, with a total portfolio

value of £2.3 billion. So why has it suddenly become excited about a handful of boaters on a canal where commercial traffic is long gone, and which it would have probably handed over to BW or C&RT long ago were it not for the property assets alongside the water? One answer may be a new broom running the canal and there are those who suggest that overstaying boats from adjacent C&RT waters in central Manchester that came into sometimes violent conflict with Peel's enforcement officer have played a role. It remains to be seen whether C&RT can help boaters both on and off the Bridgewater to persuade Peel Holdings that their draconian approach is only damaging the canal and the businesses that benefit from it.

New family CCing policy to take account of schooling needs?

Is the Canal & River Trust moving towards a policy that takes account of the needs of young families living on boats with children in school?

There are signs of progress on the Kennet and Avon Canal where Richard Parry, the Trust's CEO, seems to have become personally involved. Boater Daniella Carrozza? posted on the Kennet and Avon Canal Boaters Society Facebook page telling of a meeting with Parry during June. She wrote: "Dear fellow boater families with kids in school or nursery. Last week a number of interested people gathered for a meeting with the CEO of CRT, to discuss the issue of getting children to school amongst other things. "He suggested I put together a proposal for mooring guidelines for those with kids in school, as to what we think is manageable for the kids. "This proposal is based on children commuting on a bike or in a car. I'm looking for feedback from families nationally and looking for support from professionals in the field such as school heads, teachers, health care practitioners and the like." Daniella said the proposals related to families with children aged two and above in nurseries, pre-school or school. The idea seems to be that families will continue to meet C&RT's guidelines for boaters without a home mooring and move a minimum of 15-20 miles in their licence period, as well as moving every 14 days in accordance with British Waterways Act. The suggestion is that there might be 'special dispensation' covered by the wording in the act which allows adjustments if they are 'reasonable in the circumstances'. The concept on the Kennet and Avon is that there might be a term time cruising pattern, with families navigating a range of four miles either side of their child's school, however navigation of the river is not included in this agreement as it may be too dangerous to use in flood. Initial responses from local families show some enthusiasm for the concession, although there is, as yet no guarantee that C&RT will buy the idea. On Facebook Lae Linz Furness said: "I think that the point here is the welfare of our children, home educated, or in school and their right to an education." Other boaters are now contributing to the debate and Daniella is planning to go back to C&RT with firm proposals this month.



Castlefield Basin, the Bridgewater's terminus in Manchester and the place where some suggest conflict between overstaying boaters and Peel's enforcement officers triggered the new restrictions.

London's boaters firmly part of the local community

The liveaboard boating community in London is steadily becoming a colourful cultural addition to the already trendy communities of the capital city, especially in the East End of London which has become the Hipsters' Bloomsbury of the 21st century. (writes Peter Underwood)

And the colourful, quirky nature of the boaters, along with their links in the wider community is key to the National Barge Travellers Association's (NBTA) campaign against what it describes as the Trust's 'continuing policy of threatening to evict and evicting travelling boat dwellers'. This was epitomised by the NBTA's Towpath Gathering to celebrate the community of travelling boaters, staged on the edge of Victoria Park in early June. One of the larger boats became a floating stage for the day and there was a wide



Pat Turnbull the chair of a local residents association, the Victoria Community Association told those attending: 'You are also victims, like us and our families, of the housing crisis. "The housing crisis has been brought about by years of reliance on the market and cuts in government funding for housing provisions.'

"The Canal & River Trust was turned into a charity starved of government funding, making it need more money from mainly private business.'

NBTA spokesperson, Marcus Trower said: "The push to get more money from private business, means the Canal & River Trust is more interested in commercial needs rather than the needs of people that live on the waterways. This is where their policy comes from. 'Many travelling boat dwellers are feeling the negative impact of Canal and River Trust policy, a policy which only makes sense if you believe they wish to get rid of our way of life and our community.'

He said the Towpath Gathering was a celebration of the strength of the boating community and 'an opportunity to bring boaters together to fight to protect it.'



range of music acts, speeches from the boater community, street performers and trade boats, as the boaters demonstrated that their community is worth celebrating and protecting. Also playing a key role were and other housing activists from the local community, there to support the campaign to stop the evictions of boat dwellers.



When the canal is dry - the only answer is to put wheels on the boat

An update on one man's uphill fight to win official support for the restoration of the only canal that linked the national system with the Lake District

You can't read a waterways publication at the moment without realising that our way of life is under direct attack from multiple directions. It's easy to see CaRT's recent actions against CC'ers, and the multiple Public Space Protection Orders being considered around the country, and believe that this is a crackdown on those not following the rules.

A local boater on the Lancashire Canal has been agitating fiercely for the reopening of the Northern Reaches of the waterway – the navigable section currently ends at Tewitfield but it ran into Kendal in the Lakes District before the M6 motorway sliced it into sections.

Despite a lukewarm response from C&RT and some disapproval from parts of long-standing restoration groups, Colin Ogden has taken his vintage boat on those sections still in water and even through an abandoned tunnel.

His most recent exploit, at the end of June, involved the dry sections of the canal route as well as the wet ones when he recruited a Captain Jack Sparrow look-alike to help tow his boat, on a trailer into Kendal itself – the first boat to arrive there by that route in about 70 years.

His exploits, aimed at persuading C&RT and the wider public to take an interest in the restoration, are co-ordinated through a 500-strong Facebook Group called the 'Owd Lanky Boaters Group'

Although Colin has support from landowners along the route as well as local councils he says he has been 'very disappointed by the lack of support from the North West C&RT management team. He wrote to C&RT's CEO Richard Parry to complain that, despite inviting Waterways Manager Chantelle Seabourne to the event, nobody was available.

Richard Parry responded, saying: "I've spoken to Chantelle. I understand that your event isn't on our land or our water. Hence there is little direct involvement for us, though we are happy to respond to your enquiries.

"Of course with the Leeds & Liverpool bicentenary there is a lot happening in the North West this year."

Despite that Colin pulled off his spectacular event, towing his historic Windermere boat Whimbrel into Kendal over the filled in canal and attracting attention from television and newspapers in the area.

Near Kendal, Captain Jack Sparrow recreated a scene from Pirates of the Caribbean, where a boat was hauled overland by the Captain. The Captain is convincingly played by Lauraine Smith, a Morecambe photographer.

On to Kendal and through Castle Bridge, where the Captains flagging strength was quickly restored by several slugs of brandy, which quickly turned into a mock drunken sword and pistol waving revelry, much to the enjoyment of Sunday after-



Captain Jack Sparrow hauls Whimbrell along the dry bed of the Lancashire Canal's Northern Reaches



noon walkers and cyclists. Colin has further events planned and says he will not give up despite the lack of enthusiasm from the Canal & River Trust.

The final stretch into Kendal where canal bridges still carry traffic across the dry bed of the canal.

Historic boats plea for Trent festival

Canal Festivals, like trading boats, bring the public to the waterways and the Canal & River Trust has latched onto their potential, particularly on waterways otherwise often avoided by boats.

The Trent is one such waterway, probably because the powerful river puts some boaters off but last year a festival at Nottingham brought 3,000 people to Castle Wharf in the city centre.

Hosted by C&RT the festival is due to make a return this autumn and the Trust has already begun trying to tempt more boats to the venue.

Last year e thousands of visitors were invited to take in a boat trip, try canoeing, have a go at angling or just enjoy live music by the water. Historic boats from across the country moored up by the towpath giving people a flavour of what the wharf would have looked like in its industrial heyday.

The Trust is using the feedback gathered from last year's event to build up interest in this year's festival, taking place on Saturday October 1st.

Danny Brennan, chair of the Canal & River Trust's East Midlands Waterway Partnership, said: "This year will have all those really popular attractions again but we also want to build on last year's success and encourage more people to come down and experience what life is like by the waterside.

"At this stage we'd particularly love to hear from anyone that wants to bring a historic boat along; they're always really popular with visitors and are a great way of bringing the colourful history of our waterways to life."

For more information on the festival or to arrange bringing a historic boat along contact Demi Edmunds on 0115 9258777 or at demi@perfectmotion.org.

