

THE FLOATER

JUST WON'T GO AWAY

Issue 14 November 2016 The only paper for boaters produced by boaters

Customer service fail - P2
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Boaters' price hike was long on the cards

by Peter Underwood



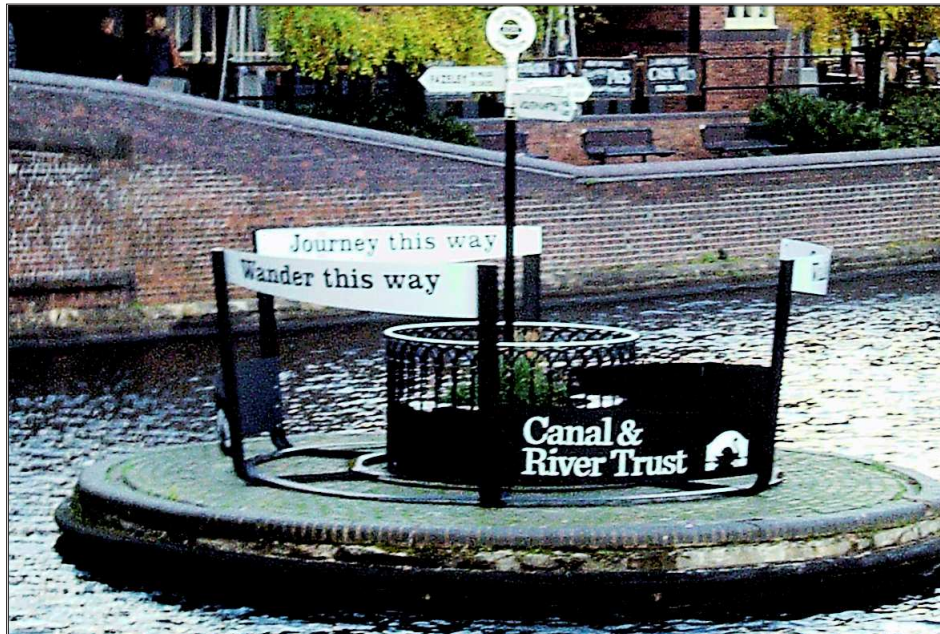
Boaters on Canal & River Trust waters are facing a licence fee increase of two and a half times the current rate of inflation and the implication for the charity is that Brexit is to blame.

It claims the rise in private and business boat licence fees of 2.5 per cent from 1 April 2017, "anticipates next year's prevailing inflation rate which is widely forecast to rise between now and next summer."

In fact, the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show inflation at just one per cent based on the Consumer Prices Index (CPI), although there are some economists who predict the increased cost of imported goods due to the collapse of the pound after Brexit will push the rate up in coming months. In fact the price hike has been planned by C&RT for many years, regardless of Brexit. When C&RT Trustees first took over they, accepted the old British Waterways formula of 2 per cent plus inflation – resulting in a 4.6 per cent increase in 2013 – but the 'introductory offer' of inflation only increases was only ever for a three year period from 2014.

Despite those inflation only increases income from licences and moorings was way above CPI last year – by 2.7 and 3.8 per cent respectively – and, although C&RT claim increased spending on maintenance it has long recognised maintenance costs will rise by three per cent a year.

The Trust is anxious to claim the price hike, based on questionable inflation forecasts is – in any event – good value for boaters. It says the amount spent on maintenance and repair in 2015/16 rising to £128 million, over 15 per cent higher than was expended in 2013/14. Much of



From next March boaters face a 2.5 per cent hike in licence fees, but there is still plenty of cash for fancy signs

the increased spend is, of course going on repairing the northern canals after the disastrous floods last Christmas.

Mike Grimes, head of boating at Canal & River Trust, said: "Although the cost of a licence will be increasing slightly, I'm pleased to say that overall proportion of the Trust's income coming directly from boaters is decreasing as we generate more income from other sources."

He says the proportion of income from boaters has reduced from 19.9 per cent to 18.3 per cent of total income.

Yet the Trust still needs more from boaters and that may be related to two key financial failures, previously reported in the Floater –

planned projections of charitable income have not been borne out and the 'diversification' of the charity's investments away from property is proving to be less than a runaway success.

Mike continues: "The income from boat licences continues to make an important contribution to the work we do: looking after a 200-year old network is a never-ending task. I hope that boaters can see that we are investing in areas that make a difference to them. We've put extra cash into dredging and cutting back off-side trees over the past few years, as well as the massive and growing programme of major works we carry out every year to keep our canals and rivers safe and navigable."

More increases to come? Watch this space

Back in 2011 British Waterways was hoping that charges for visitor moorings and overstaying fines would bolster their income from boaters and enable them to hold back licence fee increases.

That ambition was unrealised, especially when the dubious legal basis for such charges ensured none were ever pursued in the courts.

However, C&RT once more wants to charge for visitor moorings, in London to begin with, and insists on bluffing boaters that it has a right to fine them for overstaying.

And there may be other changes in the pipeline that will result in boaters paying even more into C&RT's coffers.

The Trust has said that, 'following feedback from boating customers and the boating volunteers who sit on its Navigation Advisory Group', it will be carrying out a 'wide-ranging review of the structure of boat licensing fees to help guide potential changes to the structure of licence fees from April 2018'. It promises wide ranging consultation and says it will announce more information 'in due course'.

In part the plans will be an attempt to get some harmonisation between Environment Agency (EA) and C&RT licences in anticipation of the EA navigations passing to the Trust – and that may mean bigger fees for wide-beam boats as the EA charges on the basis of area rather than length.

It is also almost inevitable that the anti continuous cruiser lobby, especially among the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) will want a discriminatory, higher licence for live-aboards and continuous cruisers.

Exec pay/pension keeps C&RT near top of league

The wages freeze that has afflicted the public sector has certainly not hit the Canal & River Trust's top team, with the organisation's position at seventh in the table of highest paid executives in the general charity sector not at risk.

Total employment costs in the 2016 annual report have risen from £58.6m to £64.7m. For the 1,588 employees outside the magic earning figure of £60,000 the average pay and benefits package worked out at just over £41,000 per annum but for those inside the magic circle just 72 people shared out £1.6m, up from £1.4m in 2015.

For them contributions by the Trust to their pension scheme soared from £28,000 in 2015 to £93,000 in 2016.

The recipients are defined as key management personnel. Just 35 of them earn between £60,000 and £70,000 a year, another 22 earning between £70,000 and £80,000 and eight getting more than £80,000 and another eight over £90,000 – the figures don't include pension contributions.

There are then 16 executives earning between £100,000 and £220,000.

The package during the year for Richard Parry, chief executive, comprised a salary of £188,600 (including car allowance of £9,768) and benefits in kind of £1,247, totalling £189,847. The value of employer contributions during the year to the Canal & River Trust defined contribution pension scheme was £10,730.

There was one employee whose remuneration (excluding redundancies) during the year was higher than the chief executive. Stuart Mills, property director, received a salary of £171,824 (including car cash allowance) performance related pay of £32,655 reflecting the strong performance of our property portfolio in the year ended 31 March 2015, and benefits in kind of £2,682, totalling £207,161. The value of the pension input amount during the year to the Waterways Pension Fund defined benefit scheme, after deduction of employee contributions, was £41,668.

The pay packages are not as substantial as some paid under the British Waterways regime

but they are at the top end of the charity sector.

According to the Third Sector website: "General household-name charities pay their highest-paid executives the least, yet have attracted the most criticism – perhaps because they are recognised as charities, with all the connotations of voluntarism the word entails, and have higher public fundraising and campaigning profiles.

"The median pay among general charities, which occupied 47 places in the top 100, fell from £155,000 in 2013 to £145,000 a year in 2015 – a decline of six per cent.

C&RT pay is decided by its remuneration committee which says: "The Committee continues to be satisfied that the levels of executive director pay are appropriate to the responsibilities of the posts concerned."

The Committee also says about the bulk of C&RT staff: "We will remunerate all staff at the Living Wage or higher although apprentices will be remunerated at the national minimum wage for apprentices to reflect the value of the training that they are receiving."

Position (2015 position)	Highest-paid employee	Number of staff paid £50k or more	Income
GENERAL CHARITIES			
1 (1) Consumers' Association	£310k-£320k	47	£87m
2 (2) Marie Stopes International	£260k-£270k	59	£212m
3 (3) Save the Children International	£257k-£267k	184	£599m
4 (4) Cancer Research UK	£220k-£230k	189	£537m
5 (18) Turning Point	£200k-£210k	45	£94m
6 (5) British Red Cross Society		35	£228m
7 (1) Canal & River Trust	£190k-£200k	65	£165m
8 (20) Royal Horticultural Society	£180k-£190k	18	£72m
9 (4) Age UK		38	£159m
10 (12) British Heart Foundation		42	£275m
11 (8) Alternative Futures Group	£170k-£180k	7	£55m
12 (5) Crime Reduction Initiatives		19	£100m
13 (5) Shaw Trust		37	£108m
14 (13) Macmillan Cancer Support		43	£190m
15 (13) Marie Curie Cancer Care	£160k-£170k	30	£155m
16 (20) Charities Aid Foundation		26	£418m
17 (8) National Trust		90	£460m
18 (20) Zoological Society of London	£150k-£160k	11	£52m
19 (1) Royal Voluntary Service		17	£71m
20 (30) RNIB		44	£119m
21 (26) Historic Royal Palaces	£153,903	36	£80m
22 (27) Action for Children	£150,000	44	£180m
23 (1) WWF-UK	£140k-£150k	17	£60m
24 (1) Prince's Trust		18	£61m
25 (37) Voluntary Service Overseas		11	£69m
26 (37) Dogs Trust		12	£77m
27 (20) Sense		9	£82m
28 (20) PDSA		38	£87m
29 (30) St John Ambulance		34	£91m
30 (1) RSPCA		16	£121m
31 (30) Royal British Legion		23	£125m
32 (13) Leonard Cheshire Disability		27	£155m
33 (27) Salvation Army		23	£182m
34 (20) Barnardo's		32	£286m
35 (27) Citizens Advice	£142,100	13	£77m
36 (30) Alzheimer's Society	£130k-£140k	15	£71m
37 (1) Sue Ryder		25	£90m
38 (30) National Autistic Society		24	£98m
39 (30) Scope		18	£103m
40 (1) Comic Relief		15	£114m
41 (13) NSPCC		55	£126m
42 (30) RNLI		32	£191m
43 (18) Mencap		28	£201m
44 (19) Save The Children		33	£343m

Customer service fail is blamed on departed lawyer

By Allan Richards



Canal & River Trust has upheld a complaint that it is not adhering to its own Customer Service Standards. It has also made a 'sincere apology' for not responding to the complaint within the timescales set by its own internal complaints procedure.

It has blamed Jackie Lewis, general counsel and company secretary for the failure but says it is unable to interview her regarding the matter as she has left the Trust.

Unbeknown to most, Canal & River Trust (C&RT), introduced revised Customer Service Standards in June 2015 to replace British Waterways' standards introduced in 2006 as part of its customer service transformation programme.

Its website says 'Of course, nearly 10 years later and in this fast changing world, the 2006 standards were dated. What we had once considered to be excellent, or even aspirational, might now only be considered satisfactory. So we went back to the drawing board.'

So how is C&RT shaping up against its new standards? And how did they react when confronted with clear evidence that they are not conforming to them?

For some months C&RT has been providing electronic auto replies when the public has requested information.

These responses, are sometimes received within seconds of a request being made. They have no salutation and invariably read 'Thank you for your email requesting information from the Canal & River Trust. I will reply to you as soon as I am able to.' They are signed Samantha Ryan, Information Officer. However, C&RT's, Customer Service Standards clearly say it will not use auto replies but rather personalised replies. Specifically, they state that they will 'not use automated responses', 'use correspondence that is personalised with your name' and 'advise you, within two working days, if a full response cannot be given and clarify when we will be able to respond in full.' It is clear C&RT's response to information requests demonstrably fails to meet its own standards. Armed with this information, a complaint was made on 18 August that the Trust was not adhering to its own Customer Service Standards.

On 22 August a personalised email was received from Customer Service Advisor, Ben Camplin. It said 'Thank you very much for



Sarina Young with Allan Richards on a boating experience day - but she didn't respond to his formal complaint

taking the time to contact us. I have passed all of this over to our Customer Services Coordinator [Sarina Young] who will be in touch with you shortly regarding this. If you need anything else please let us know'. For many years, both under BW and C&RT, responsibility for both complaints and information requests has been with Customer Services. This is what one would expect. More recently, however, responsibility for responding to information requests was passed to 'legal' under Jackie Lewis, general counsel and company secretary. No announcement was made at the time and no reason given. The two level complaints procedure (still handled by customer services) remains largely unchanged in concept to that introduced by BW many years ago. At level 1, its procedure says 'Once we have received your complaint we will acknowledge it in writing within five working days. You can normally expect a full written response, from the most senior manager with overall responsibility for the area of your complaint [i.e. a director or head of department], within 15 working days of this acknowledgement. Our aim is to resolve the complaint to your complete satisfaction at the first level'.

Unfortunately, the complaint was not resolved at the first level. The reason for this was that no contact was made by Sarina Young, Jackie Lewis, or anyone else during the 15 man-days that C&RT allows itself



Jackie Lewis - failed to respond but is now departed.

between acknowledgement of the complaint and response. On 16 September, C&RT was asked to consider the complaint at level 2 due to non-response as allowed by the complaints procedure.

At level 2 the complaint should be acknowledged within five days and passed for review to a director or senior manager without responsibility for the area of complaint. However, this escalation received no acknowledgement.

It was not until some four days after Ian Rogers, director of customer services and operations was contacted (on 22 September) that Customer Services responded '... Mike Grimes [Head of Boating] will be dealing with your second level complaint and that he will be contacting you back directly.' However, it still took a further email to Mr Rogers to actually get a response. In short, Mike Grimes upheld the complaint and apologised for the delay in response.

He explained the level 1 complaint had been routed to 'appropriate person' (Jackie Lewis) who had failed to respond but could not be interviewed as she had since left the Trust. Furthermore, the person whose name was on the auto replies could not be interviewed either due to being on maternity leave. What was not explained, was why Customer Services, who stated that they were chasing for a response, took no action when it was clear that none would be given and then seemingly ignored a request that the complaint should be considered at level 2. Since Jackie Lewis's departure, responsibility for responding to information requests has been



Ian Rogers - Director of Customer Services. His department failed to respond.



Mike Grimes - head of boating - upheld the complaint.

transferred from 'legal' to 'governance'. It now lies with Gill Eastwood, Head of Governance, Audit & Risk. It is not known if the complaint played some part in this decision.

For those still seeking information from C&RT, requests should still be made to 'customer.feedback@canalrivertrust.org.uk' or via the whatdotheyknow.com website where they will be picked up by the new team.

C&RT get health and safety notice for historic aqueduct

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has issued C&RT with an Improvement Notice in respect of the railings at Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

This follows the death of 18-year-old Kris Mcdowell who fell from the World Heritage Site aqueduct during the early hours of the morning of 31 May 2016.

Police initially investigated but quickly handed over the investigation to HSE. HSE found that during the incident, a single upright from the parapet was dislodged.

This resulted in an Improvement Notice being served indicating that the Trust had failed to take all reasonably practicable measures to ensure the safety of the railings; something C&RT is appealing.

The Trust maintain that they have carried out a number of tests and inspections and are confident the railings are safe.

The Trust also maintains there has been no breach of safety legislation and has appealed the notice.

The date of the Tribunal at which the appeal will be held is not known but is thought to be imminent.

C&RT has also declared itself as an interested

party for the inquest into Mr Mcdowell's death which is also imminent.

In early September it was reported that a 19-year-old had plummeted to her death from the 120-foot aqueduct just hours after an angry text row with her boyfriend.

Amy Louise Wright fell to her death at the Pontcysyllte canal aqueduct on a Friday afternoon.

The teenager was found dead by emergency services at the beauty spot near Llangollen, North Wales.

Amy, who was from the nearby town of Rhos on the English-Welsh border, had been having a row with her partner over the phone in texts in the hours before she died, according to a report on the Daily Mail.

The newspaper reported that, along with her twin sister Carys, Amy had been a popular member of her local Army Cadet Force until she left two years ago.

The bright student had also just passed a Diploma in Public Services at Yale College, in Wrexham, North Wales.

A friend of the teenager - who did not wish to be named - said he had heard she had been arguing with her boyfriend before the tragedy.



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The Floater

Written designed and published by News Afloat - a unique boat-based publisher travelling on the British inland waterways. Check out The Floater website at: www.TheFloater.org

The Editor is Peter Underwood and all contributions, suggestions and questions should be directed to him at: Editor@theFloater.org or TheFloaterUK@gmail.com The Floater is published at least once a month in .pdf format as well as on the Issuu platform and a web version on the website at www.TheFloater.org

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Failed lock gate not inspected in 20 years

By Allan Richards



With the deteriorating state of C&RT's waterways, boaters often accuse the Trust of having a 'fix on fail' policy.

The recent revelation concerning the number of infrastructure defects recorded on C&RT's waterways in September's Floater makes stark reading.

With over recorded 59,000 defects on its system on April 1 2015, the Trust admitted: "We scheduled to close 5,807 high priority customer service / safety related infrastructure defects. We completed 2,910 which is 50 per cent".

Perhaps unsurprisingly, by 1 April 2016, the number of recorded defects had grown to 62,379.

The reason for this massive failure is that that money and manpower is being diverted into fixing 'arising defects' - defects that arise during the year and take precedence over planned defect remediation.

C&RT claims that its inspection routine informs it as to when something should be fixed so that emergency closures are kept to a minimum.

However, some boaters take a different view and accuse the Trust of adopting a 'fix on fail' policy.

To test the opposing views an emergency closure was picked at random and the Trust asked to provide details of inspection reports. The emergency closure chosen was that of Lock 3 (Factory Locks) on the Birmingham Main Line.

The closure occurred on health and safety grounds, due to excessive leakage of the lock's bowed single tail gate.

Whilst most boaters are aware of the danger of cilling a boat when descending less are aware of the danger of attempting to exit a lock with a badly leaking lower gate when going uphill.

The front of the boat can catch on the cill with the lock and pound level rapidly falling. The effect is the same as a conventional cilling without the opportunity to remedy the situation by dropping paddles.

C&RT's asset inspection procedures, a mandatory standard, was last updated on 12 March 2014.

The 73 page document provides for assets (e.g. locks, bridges, culverts, reservoirs etc) to be inspected on a risk based cycle producing notifications with an accurate description of condition, and identification of specific defects.

Types of inspection for locks include, monthly Length Inspections (LI), Annual Inspections (AI), Principal Inspections (PI) and Lock Gate Inspections (LGI). LGI's include inspection and assessment of:

Level of vegetation growth.

All bumpers, fenders and wear components. Ergonomic and safe operation of the gates, paddle gear and associated structures. Planking, posts, joints and leakage Walkways, handrails, small access bridges etc The inspection cycle is 'back end loaded' with more frequent inspections towards the expected end of a lock gate's life:

- 1 st LGI - No later than 10 years
- 2 nd LGI - No later than 15 years
- 3 rd LGI - No later than 20 years
- 4 th LGI - No later than 22 years
- 5 th LGI - No later than 24 years
- 6 th and subsequent LGIs - annually thereafter until the gate is replaced.

The standard states that more frequent inspections may be required if LI's or PI's



The failed lock at Tipton, pictured in February before it finally became too dangerous to ignore.

identify a problem.

However, despite the bottom gate being 20 years old, C&RT say they have no record of LGI's being carried out at this lock.

Asked to check, C&RT delayed for 20 days before an Information Officer provide the following: 'Thank you for your request for clarification. Further to our acknowledgement email of 29th September I can confirm that there are no Lock Gate Inspection Reports held for this Lock as stated in our initial response'. The problem with the bottom gate was apparently found when a 15 year cycle principal asset inspection (PI) was carried out for the lock some 19 months ago.

The report states "The solid timber sections of the gate the timber sections are leaking slightly at the joints and appear to be bowing to the downstream side of the gate with the horizontal strapping bars becoming detached indicating the tie bars have spread or the rebate has broken away along the bottom rail. "There is heavy leakage from the gate during lockages indicating the gate continues to bow below water level."

However, as the grade II listed lock was not drained for the PI, the inspector could not say what the problem was below water level.

The inspector also failed to document that LGI's were not being carried out at this lock and did not recommend that one took place immediately with the lock being drained for the inspection.



The Gate recess of lock 3 months before the gate failed



The gate that failed this September causing access issues for local boating festivals as well as boats passing through

No mention was made in the 'discussion section' of the report regarding the problem with the lower gate.

The bottom gate was just one of 14 defects highlighted in the PI report and it was given a 1-2 year timescale to remedy behind four other defects given shorter timeframes. It is not known if the emergency stoppage was as the result of a monthly Length Inspection (LI) or due to reports from boaters. What is known is that C&RT still had no clue as to what was happening below water level when they attempted to repair it.

The designed solution, consisting of a steel plate sandwich repair was not feasible due, in part, to the loss of a substantial section of the gate near the heel post and the general condition of the bottom rail.

As a result, the bottom end cill was raised to reduce the effect of the missing timber and the gate lined where possible.

Is C&RT's failure to follow its own procedures and carry out timely LGI's a result of a 'fix on fail' policy?

Perhaps, if Lock 3 turns out to be a one off failure to carry out LGI's then it can be put down to an error.

However, if there is a failure to carry out LGI's elsewhere then it might indicate that 'fix on fail' has been adopted.



The by-wash on Factory Locks in February 2016

EA unwilling to provide information on merger

The Environment Agency is unwilling to provide information regarding the proposed transfer of river navigations from its control to the Canal & River Trust.

An EA press release from August suggests a joint working group with C&RT was set up in February and an initial information gathering exercise is now complete. Furthermore the press release states that EA and C&RT Boards have agreed to continue with further work to explore the basis for a transfer.

However, it is important to note that the press release is not a joint one and C&RT remains very quiet on the issue.

Within hours of the press release, EA were asked to provide information regarding the transfer and joint working group. This request was passed to EA's Mark Ormrod, Environment & Business Manager - Navigation, whose



The EA Thames waters at Teddington Lock

name appears on the press release as the contact point for any questions.

Mr Ormrod appears to be unwilling to provide the following information -

1. A copy of any communication between the Waterways Minister and EA related to the project.
 2. Minutes and/or notes of the last three joint working group meetings together with any documents referred to in those minutes/notes (in reverse chronological order).
 3. Any recorded information that justifies the statement - 'Both Boards believe the move, subject to agreement, has the potential to create a more integrated national inland waterway network, and a sustainable future for the river navigations, to the benefit of the people who use and enjoy them'.
- His excuse is that EA is consulting with C&RT before replying ...

Pirate offers a Yo ho ho . . . and a nice cup of coffee

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 at most times of the year. Our latest trader is a boater who aims to introduce a touch of piracy to the canal

By Peter Underwood

Look for the biggest crowd – especially of children – where boats are trading and the chances are that you will find at its core a woman in a tricorne hat and a tendency to roll her Rrrrs.

The boat is the Pirate Boat and its captain is Heidi Manning and before she took to piracy she had a previous existence as a university lecturer.

These days Heidi, who admits to a less than specific 'early 40s' lives and trades aboard The Rum Wench, the replacement for her first pirate vessel, Stiff Ripples, offering pirate paraphernalia to the many who love an eyepatch and a plastic sword.

Heidi says she is courting 'a lovely wench called Jakki' and sometimes both of them can be spotted immersed in piracy on the canal bank.

So how did it all start? Heidi told the Floater: "After University I went and worked in Africa for a few months. "When I returned I became a college lecturer for 13 years and went travelling every summer, half term etc - back to Africa and I've been lucky to have visited India, Cambodia, Thailand and most of Europe.

"It made me realise how happy people were with not many possessions and living much simpler lives while I was working 70 hour weeks, marking, lesson planning and stressing over mortgage payments, car finance and household bills.

"I needed a complete lifestyle change so I gave in my notice, sold my house and bought a boat!" I loved living aboard my boat 'Stiff Ripples' and I was still doing a bit of part-time teaching and also DJing in a Manchester club on a Saturday night.



"Because of my work commitments I was limited to CCing around the Cheshire ring and although it's a beautiful part of the cut I was getting itchy feet and yearned to cruise the whole system however, I still needed to be able to fund my dream.

"It was around that time that I attended Middlewich boat and folk festival and spoke to various traders and that was it, my mind was made up!" But why piracy? "I've always played pirates when my friends come aboard for a cruise, I'd make them all wear pirate hats and wave plastic swords.

"My young nieces and nephew love playing pirates when they visit too so it seemed perfect." "My passion for travel and adventures was a massive influence. I try to make every day full of fun and giggles and doing this makes every day a holiday for me. Heidi says she buys most

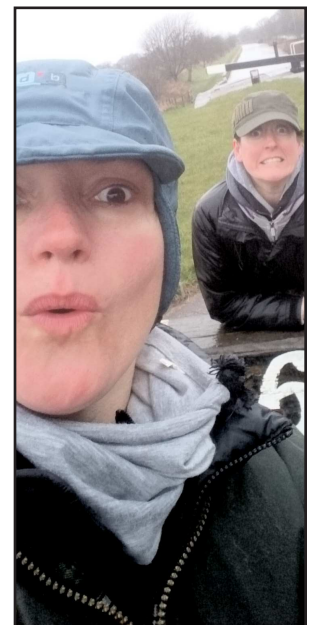
things in, although she spend hours searching and locating appropriate items that she feels are quirky enough.

"My stock tends to be added to and changed every few months although I do keep the biggest selling items in stock."

She will complete her first year's trading in November and still plans to trade and cruise throughout winter. It is still early days and Heidi admits: "I'm not making enough to live on just yet and I'm still eating into my ever-so-dwindling savings. But my range of items has changed over the time and I'm adapting to my audience.

"I've just bought a bigger boat and I'm currently doing my food hygiene certificate so I can trade in coffees, hot chocolates and similar items through the winter.

"If I can build this up to fund my diesel, license and basic food throughout a full year



Heidi and Jakki on their travels, above and, left, Heidi with her new boat, The Rum Wench and her second mate, her pet dog,



while cruising up and down our beautiful country then I will be truly living my dream! What more could a pirate possible want? (Except for Rum)"

She trades at many floating markets and festivals and since March has traded every single weekend - sometimes just mooring at a popular location on route to the next festival.

"I generally cruise in the week and trade at the weekend. Sometimes if the weather is terrible or there aren't many people then I only take £10-15 but that's still £10-15 I wouldn't have had."

This year I've cruised from Bugsworth Basin to Norbury, Great Haywood, Middlewich, Anderton, Chester, Llangollen,

Ellesmere, Birmingham, Stourport, Tipton, Nottingham, Stoke and I'm currently making my way towards Anderton for Bonfire night then hopefully onto the Macclesfield in December.

"Next year I plan on travelling further a field, who knows where I'll end up?"

Heidi remains optimistic about her future as a pirate – albeit an hospitable one: "As I've just bought the new boat I'm hoping to expand to coffees, teas and cakes and a selection of pirate gifts to keep me going through the winter, as I can't put too much stock outside and stand there dressed as a pirate all day as it's too cold and I'll end up taking someone's eye out." Heidi has a reputation for

gauging the temperature by the rigidity of her personal protuberances.

As a relatively new trader she is appreciative of the Canal & River Trust's dealings with businesses on boats. "I live aboard and CC and found them very helpful when I applied for my trading license and my additions and changes to my business plan since."

She says the changes she needs are things most boaters want to see: "I would put in more visitors moorings in addition to lots more dredging - my boat is very deep drafted and I often struggle to get in to the banks which can affect trading spots for me."



Heidi with her first boat, Stiff Ripples trading at The Black Country Boating Festival where there was always a crowd of children.

Conflict results in compromise trial at Kings Cross site

Conflict between liveaboard boaters and local house owners in increasingly gentrified parts of London have resulted in the Canal & River Trust introducing a trial stretch of visitor moorings on the Regent's Canal in King's Cross created by converting a former casual 14-day stretch to seven days.

This follows a consultation last year which involved more local householders than boaters.

Seven-day visitor moorings will be introduced between York Way and the Tiber Gardens pocket park while the remaining moorings up to Treaty Street will continue to be 14-day casual moorings. Moorings in the area will be restricted to double mooring only, with a maximum of two narrowboats or one wide-beam on a visitor mooring, and two rows of boats on the remaining moorings.

C&RT describes the trial as "an interim measure while the Trust develops plans for installing electric bollards along the stretch, and considers future mooring space allocation across the Capital through the London Mooring Strategy.

It will run for up to six months from November 2016 to April 2017.

Sorwar Ahmed, London boater liaison manager at Canal & River Trust, said: "We consulted widely with the boating and waterside communities and these plans reflect the range of responses we received."

There is a vague promise that other sections of towpath where there are currently mooring rings may be brought into use as part of the London



Kings Cross - scene of some conflict between local residents and boaters and now the site of a trial of seven day moorings rather than 14 day spots.

Mooring Strategy.

C&RT says: "The plan will be trialled while we consider wider plans for general towpath mooring and visitor moorings through the development of the London Mooring Strategy. This will also allow time for the development of plans for the installation of electric bollards in this stretch of towpath, funded in partnership by Defra, Islington Council and the Trust.

Behind those statements is a history of discontent from local residents and boaters which has involved local councillors, and the original proposal document was sent

to the 'Central Regent's Action Plan stakeholder group' (comprising local residents and live-aboard boaters), the Better Relationships on the Waterways in London group, and the London Boaters Facebook group.

The discontent is currently focused in the Kings Cross area and the consultation attracted just 39 respondents - 20 from land-based residents, and 19 from boaters or boating organisations.

The responses show how feelings have been running high. They include those who want shorter stay moorings throughout central London

and don't want to see 14-day casual mooring in the area as they think Kings Cross should be developed as a 'prime visitor mooring destination'. Then there are those who think time restricted moorings help tourists but push out vibrant community of continuous cruisers.

Others want a 'no mooring section' extended to 'areas with residents in close proximity'. Still other residents claim mooring in the area is 'incompatible with a healthy environment'.

Another local resident says: "Where residential property so close to moorings, should be ban on use of fires and

engine/generator idling."

Others want a ban on using wood or diesel and say they have no confidence in C&RT's management of the issues. A public meeting in October 2015 spoke of an 'eco-zone', which could help to encourage more consideration and use of solar/electric power only, to limit nuisance.

Many residents felt that 2 day moorings may lead to greater boat movements and lead to increased noise and pollution in front of their properties and boaters questioned the number of berths being made available in comparison to the demand for 14 day casual mooring.

C&RT reports that at the public meeting, boaters suggested that there was a lack of awareness that their activities could be a nuisance in this location, and expressed a desire to work with residents to reduce nuisance.

One suggestion made at the meeting was to designate this area as an 'eco-zone', where boaters would be encouraged to only moor here if using smokeless fuels or solar energy for heating and lighting. Islington Council is also investigating the potential for installation of electricity bollards for use by mooring boats, subject to a Defra funding bid.

At present, there are no specific restrictions on mooring more than two boats deep at Kings Cross, so the proposals aim to introduce a level of control that currently does not exist.

C&RT admits that the triple mooring (and sometimes mooring of more than three boats abreast) that occurs at Kings Cross has not resulted in any reported navigation incidents.

It does claim that 'feedback from the Trust's operational boat crews and from commercial operators about the difficulties of navigating when boats are moored more than two deep' is a factor. C&RT says the proposals are intended as a trial, so the effectiveness of any measures and any continuing nuisance issues are intended to be reviewed.

However, despite losing a stretch of 14-day moorings and seeing another growth in the number of time-restricted visitor moorings when there is no evidence that they have any impact on the chances of visiting boats finding a mooring, it is clear the Trust has not capitulated to the more extreme voices amongst local residents.

Government claims 'public interest' in keeping C&RT report secret

DEFRA, the government department with oversight of the Canal & River Trust, has refused to disclose the contents of a report on Trust finances saying that it will be published at a later date.

It claims that public interest for withholding the report, which covers C&RT's last financial year up to 31 March 2016, is greater than that of disclosure. The report is written by the 'Protector', R. M. Nash who was appointed to monitor C&RT's compliance to its agreement with government, particularly regarding use of its investment assets. Income from these assets is used for the Trust's charitable purposes, including maintaining its waterways. The protector is required to produce an annual report to Defra on C&RT's management of its investment assets.

He can also issue warnings in the event of

threatened or actual diminution (loss) or diversion of those assets.

In last month's Floater, it was revealed that part of C&RT's investment policy was failing in respect of over £120m recently invested in non-property assets.

Whilst the Trust had predicted a 6.64 per cent return on this investment in 2015/16, the actual return was some 10 percent lower at -3.06 per cent. In other words, C&RT's investment is losing money.

Needless to say, this loss hardly gained any mention in the Trust's annual report. It will, no doubt, be highlighted by the Protector's report because of the loss (diminution).

However, it appears that it is not in the public interest that it should be disclosed at this time with DEFRA saying 'there is a strong public interest in withholding the information at this time because the Department has not yet fully considered the report'.

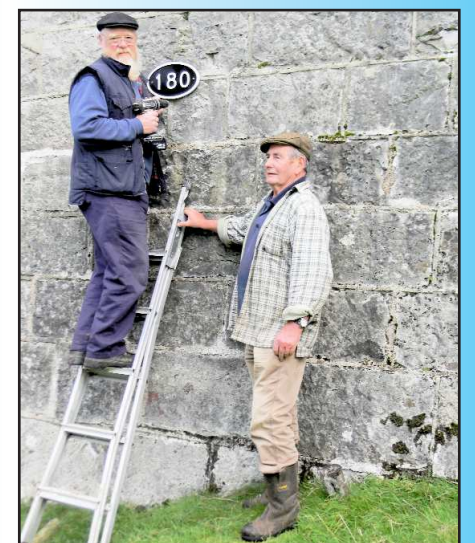
Friends rally round after Colin has plaque pinched

Colin Ogden's efforts to restore the Northern Reaches of the Lancaster Canal have earned him a lot of friends and thieves who stole a new metal bridge number he had attached to a bridge on a dry canal section angered many of them

Frank Sanderson, of the Friends of the Lancaster Canal reports: "Colin Ogden's disappointment at having the Larkrigg Hall bridge plaque removed from the dry section of the Lancaster Canal in an act of spite, has prompted at least four public spirited people to respond.

A piece of Mahogany was obtained and carved by Peter Livesley, of Morecambe, painted by Ex BW man Keith Tassart, and fitted to the bridge.

Colin was away dealing with a family bereavement and his wife Linda said. "What a nice thing to do, that people can be so kind and help us promote the Lancaster canal"



NABO members challenge C&RT PR man's claims

The unfortunate editor of the Canal & River Trust's weekly Boaters Update has been arousing the ire of the National Association of Boat Owners (NABO)

Members took to the NABO Facebook group when he repeated earlier claims by the Trust that boaters with a home mooring had to cruise under the same rules as continuous cruisers.

Mark Tizard wrote: "Unfortunately the law enacted by Parliament makes no such requirement. Boaters with a home mooring are NOT required to bonafide navigate over the course of their license in accordance with C&RTs guidance for boaters without a home mooring."

"It's surprising that CRTs in house legal team have not made Damien Kemp the editor aware of this - or maybe they have."

He quoted a Boaters Update from October 21 in which a boater asked: "If I have a home mooring where I mainly stay, do the same rules apply as for continuous cruisers as to how long I can stay in one place when I am out cruising (no more than 14 days in one spot without moving, and always making continuous navigational progress?) If so, can I expect to receive a warning message if I move only a short distance and do not return promptly to my home mooring?"

Damien Kemp replied: "In brief, yes. If you have a home mooring and are out on a cruise away from it you'll need to follow the same guidance for boaters without a home mooring until you return to your mooring."

"However the range will be considered against how long you're away from your home mooring. The longer you're away the further we'd expect you to travel. If you return to your mooring fairly often the range would be shorter."

"If you don't move after 14 days we'll give you a gentle nudge via an automated message."

Brian Holt noted: "They posted something similar on the K&A when they started the CC moving/mooring trial saying they expected all boater to follow the code."



After Damien claimed C&RT did its best with preventative maintenance of vegetation Nigel Nicholson took issue, saying: "The state of vegetation is deplorable"

David J Conway said: "If those with a mooring have to abide by the same rules then why do CRT issue 'guidance for boaters without a home mooring'? Why not just 'guidance for boaters'?"

Simon Robbins concluded: "Seems to me it's one of those beautiful situations where BW/CRT have got completely tangled up in their own rhetoric!"

The same bland approach wound up Nigel Nicholson who took exception to another Boaters' Update statement: "While we do our best with planned preventative maintenance we can't, for example, foresee every single instance of a tree falling and blocking the navigation."

He said: "My annoyance with C&RT is that they are treating us like children and expecting us to swallow their party line, whilst ignoring the evidence of our own eyes."

"This summer, I have boated on the South Oxford

and the Grand Union between Stoke Bruene and Foxton Locks. The state of the vegetation is deplorable. Trees at odd angles awaiting their chance to fall into the canal, bushes, young trees and other overgrowth restricting navigation and causing problems for boaters.

"There is total neglect in evidence everywhere, it is inevitable that trees will eventually fall and C&RT is doing nothing to prevent it happening and claiming acts of god."

"If you neglect anything for long enough, it will break. The canal system around here is close to that point. This is not a single year phenomenon, this has been happening for several years now, Dare I say it, but wasn't the system better maintained under BW, than it is now?"

Andrew Instone-Cowie's advice was: "This is planet C&RT. Everything is peachy. Please toe the line."

New web form will make it easier for boaters to get the right response claims C&RT

Having just upheld a complaint that it is not adhering to its own Customer Service Standards (see page two) the Canal & River Trust now says it is making it easier for boaters to get their enquiries answered quickly by introducing a new web contact form on its website. The form is now live at: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us/ways-to-contact-us>. The Trust claims the form will improve customer service by

putting people in touch with the most appropriate team or information source at the first point of contact. It says: "This will speed up the time it takes for boaters to get information and provide a more efficient service." Carron Smith, head of 'customer experience' at the Canal & River Trust, says: "At the moment, our service team receive thousands of emails each month. In some cases it's not immediately clear what information customers need and the team may go back and

forth several times before they're able to give the customer precisely what they're after. On many occasions the information the customer is looking for is already available on our website. "The new form should help us to reduce our response times on email correspondence by getting each enquiry sent straight to the most relevant and knowledgeable people at the Trust or directing the customer straight to the answer online if the information is already available on our web-

site. "We hope boaters will appreciate the time saved and the straightforward service achieved by going straight to the source. "Over the next few months we'll be monitoring the use of the form together with customer feedback to ensure the service improvements are achieved." The form will replace the current customer.service@canalrivertrust.org.uk email address, which will continue to run side-by-side with the new

Sue Cawson, a lifetime boater, liveboard and owner of an historic boat, as well as a member of C&RT's Navigation Committee and a stalwart of the Historic Narrowboat Owners Club reckons she knows a thing or two about boating and argues that traditional techniques can be adapted for modern boating. So we have challenged her to produce some bite sized bits of advice. This month it is working together on locks

Team work - but you need a captain

Boating is all about teamwork this is especially true around locks, whether the crew is two or six you must work together and understand what is happening. It is far more fun if everyone is involved and everyone is playing a part.

When you start on your trip it is advisable to have someone in charge, particularly if you are in a big group, and it's often best if it is the steerer. The steerer needs to be responsible for the boat and what is happening to it, so that means he or she needs to be aware of where everyone is. This is a must when working around locks and lock flights.

It is worth developing some simple hand signals with your crew that you all understand, you don't want to or need to be shouting at each other. Some simple ones we use are:

When you are about to draw a paddle I try and catch the eye of the steerer and do a thumbs up to make sure he is ready for me to draw the paddle. He/she should thumbs up back.

If I am the steerer I will sign to draw half a paddle at first, then when ready I will sign to raise the paddle the rest of the way.

If I am lock-wheeling and there is a boat coming the other way at the next lock, I will put my hand up that indicates to everyone that they can leave the gates open when the lock is ready. I would expect the steerer to acknowledge my signal.

It is essential that everyone knows what to do in an emergency, if the boat gets caught on the cill or the boat gets caught on the brickwork. Have a signal, in this situation it can be the horn or shout an instruction.

Canals and locks can be dangerous, you are working round water, treat it with respect. Accidents on the canal are infrequent and they usually happen when

the crew are distracted.

It is worth watching some of the YouTube footage of Working Boats going through locks, normally a small crew which works so efficiently and as a real team, they don't even talk to each other, like a well oiled machine they all know what to do.



Cruise the BCN network in style

Explorer Cruises organised by Birmingham Canal Navigations Society are very popular with boaters from all over the country and they have just announced the dates of next year's events - 12th-19th May & 9th-17th June 2017

The Society organise the cruises to encourage boaters to explore the Birmingham Canal Navigations which are relatively underused by boaters - many because they have a completely false image of the former industrial towns linked by the extensive Birmingham navigations.

The May Cruise will end at the BCN Society's Summer Rally at Titford Pump House, and the June cruise will also end in the same location.

The society says: "We have found that many boaters like the additional security of cruising in company with other boaters and particularly enjoy the social side of informal gatherings and organised activities at the designated mooring locations." Priority is given to boaters who have not been on a BCNS Explorer Cruise before.

The two Explorer Cruises will take a similar route to encourage the use of the less travelled parts and to discover the pleasures of the little used canals of the northern BCN. Boaters will meet with the organisers on the Friday evening at Wolverhampton at an informal gathering to receive the itinerary and discuss the cruise.

The Bradley workshops will be visited on both cruises along with other guided walks, talks and social evenings.

The planned routes are:

May Cruise
Stops for the night:-
Saturday 13th May Pelsall Junction (0 locks), Sunday 14th May Longwood Boat Club (0 locks), Monday 15th May Moorcroft Junction (9 locks), Tuesday 16th May Walsall town basin (0 locks), Wednesday 17th May Wednesfield (8 locks), Thursday 18th May Tipton (0 locks), Friday 19th May Titford (6 locks)

June Cruise
Stops for the night:-
Saturday 10th June Pelsall (0 locks), Sunday 11th June Anglesey Basin (0 locks), Monday 12th June Longwood Boat Club (0 locks), Tuesday 13th June Moorcroft Junction (9 locks), Wednesday 14th June Walsall town basin (0 locks), Thursday 15th June Wednesfield (8 locks), Friday 16th June Tipton (0 locks), Saturday 17th June Titford (6 locks)

Applications forms from: Stuart & Marie Sherratt
Email: bcns.explorercruise@gmail.com

Phone: Marie 07709165073
Stuart 07510167288
The BCN Society formed in 1968, exists to conserve, improve and encourage a wide range of interests in the 100 mile network.

The full objectives of the BCN Explorer Cruises are: To increase the profile of the northern Birmingham Canal Navigations (BCN) amongst local people and politicians To continue the 'Use it or Lose it' campaign by increasing the number of boats cruising the northern BCN To campaign for adequate and sustained funding for the Canal & River Trust.