

# ALERT

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A W C C N E W S L E T T E R

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## Disaster at Dutton Hollow.

### The first big test for C&RT

The major breach of the canal banks just beyond Preston Brook on the Trent and Mersey has put the new Canal and River Trust under the spotlight.

Torrential rain over several days resulted in exceptional inflow into the canal causing the structure, which clings precariously to the side of the Weaver Valley at this point, to breach taking tons of earth and clay down into the fields between the canal and the river. Millions of gallons of water and thousands of fish vanished in a few hours.

The actions of C&RT managers and the efforts of the staff on the ground in these exceptional circumstances have been commended in most quarters though there have been some issues in regard to the subsequent relocation of stranded craft (See Letters to the Editor). This was not the only threat to the T&M as there was a similar threat at Croxton near Middlewich but this was repaired within a short time.

The area is one of the busiest on the canal system with several marina's and boat hire firms within a days travel. The pressure will now be on C&RT to reopen the canal in time for next years "cruising season" one of the main the difficulties being the extremely remote location of the breach. Costs are estimated at over £1.5 million and a appeal fund towards costs has been set up, something that would never have happened in the old B.W. days.



The devastated canal structure at Dutton Hollow on the T&M. Fencing and Fiber Optic cable conduits were left suspended between the remaining sections of tow path.

### EDITOR

Quite a quiet time for boating this time of year and this is reflected in the number of pages this time round. I have included what ever content has been sent to me but would dearly like more. What about a few articles about how your particular boat club operates and what sort of things you get up to while out boating or socialising together.

Some people have mentioned that they are reluctant to download and print the Alert because of the size of the file so I have reduced this as much as possible, it has unfortunately meant that the signature pictures of the AWCC Officers have had to go but I will try and get a nice group shot at the AGM in March.

We are still looking for advertisers for the pages of ALERT so if you know of any firms which might benefit from exposure to the boating community then please get in touch via the address on the last page.

Finally a big thanks to those of you who have taken the time to write items for the Alert, especially the two ladies featured in this issue without you it would be a very short newsletter indeed.

Regards Graeme Bridge

# NATIONAL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I attended the CRT Launch Event in London on July 12<sup>th</sup> and was struck by a common will to make the trust work for all users of the waterway community. We must ensure that navigation remains at the heart of the system and, as a major provider of funding, that the boating voice is heard at all levels of CRT management.

A meeting to discuss the post of National Development Officer was held and we discussed details of this role intended to provide members with specialised merchandise and services. The costs involved with running AWCC continue to rise and we must look for additional income streams to supplement the subscription contribution of member clubs if the quality of service is to be maintained. We hope the membership will support the services to be offered by the Development Officer as this role develops.

John Kittmer, has been appointed to the post of Her Majesties Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic. John played a major role in the transition to CRT and securing an unprecedented funding agreement for the waterways. We wish John every success in his new post.

I was reflecting the other day that C.R.T. has been in existence for just five months and there is recognition at last that the boater is not a bottomless pit of funding there for the tapping. I refer of course to the recent announcement on

license increases for the next four years of 4.6% for 2013 and CPI thereafter. This is clearly good news, probably reflects continued user group lobbying on the topic and the fact that growth of boating business on the Inland Waterway System is static with little sign of improvement on the horizon. EA has taken a similar approach by announcing an increase of CPI + 2% per year running up to the possible transfer to CRT in 2015. Welcome as this is, we must ensure that the boater pays only his fair share as CRT opens new avenues for funding beyond the immediate waterways community.

## Navigation Advisory Group NAG - License and Mooring Section

The group has elected a chairman, Mike Annan, who is fairly new to the boating scene but has a background in community affairs and volunteering which should be helpful as CRT will need to address fully that class of boater not currently included in the legal license and mooring process. NAG is due to meet on Wed 21<sup>st</sup> at the new CRT offices in Milton Keynes. Minutes of the inaugural meeting of NAG are available at on the CRT Website/About us/National Advisory Groups.

## CRT Heritage

The widely acclaimed Heritage sub group that reported to BWAf, formed to encourage the protection of our waterway history, was disbanded when BW transferred to CRT. A committee of experts, under Sir Neil Cossons, now takes overall responsibility for CRT Heritage. Several members of the old group, myself included, felt that it would be

unfortunate if the wealth of waterway experience and knowledge were to be lost and to that end we wrote informally to Sir Neil expressing our concerns. We have received a very warm reply inviting us to a meeting with him and Nigel Crowe, CRT Head of Heritage, to discuss the matter further. I think it important that AWCC remains involved and active in the field of heritage; the voice and opinion of the Association (Marsworth was a prime example) is respected and our intimate knowledge of the system is second to none.

## Aylesbury Canal Society

I was delighted to hear that excavation and piling has begun for Aylesbury Canal Society's new base at Circus Field. The society has welcomed visitors to the basin for so many years and I am sure we look forward to a similar reception when they are fully operational once again.

CRT has moved its head office from Watford to an office block adjacent to the railway station in Milton Keynes. This will increase the profile of the trust and provide a public face so missing in the past.

I wonder if we are to expect roundabouts to become a feature of navigation?

Best wishes,  
Paul

# REGIONAL CHAIRMEN'S REPORTS

## LONDON

### Canal & River Trust Launch

The AWCC were very well represented at the launch event and there were some interesting presentations which were presented with enthusiasm for the future of The Trust.

### Slough Canal Festival [ 8-9 September]

The event was blessed with very good weather but unfortunately the boaters did not come in any significant numbers. I discussed the problem with Sam Thomas C&RT and explained the very poor state of the canal with reed either side and in previous years boaters have had to push the massive clumps of weed to the side in order to create a channel for the boat. However it is proposed that the arm will be dredged next year. I said we will try to get more boaters to support the event in 2013.

### London Waterways Commission Olympic Legacy Waterway Strategy Pilot Plan.

Teddington Lock to Haven Point on North Bank and Warden Point on South Bank

Of the Thames the commission are seeking suggestions for practical improvements

That can be implemented for this section of the Thames, this is one of 25 river catchments across England. The catchments based approach aims to raise awareness of The Water Framework Directive .

### London User Group Meeting

Bow Back Rivers will not open for private boats until the summer of 2014 CRT has plans to restore Carpenters Road Lock a bid has been submitted to The Heritage Lottery Fund £600k is needed.

We have asked if the one-week transit license for boats from the Lee and Stort to avoid using the Tideway can be retained however this can't be guaranteed.

TIDE TABLES have proved difficult to find on various web sites Money Penny Handle CRT enquires 030 040 40 40

The new moorings are now complete at Willow Wren Wharf Bulls Bridge and will let at £5000.00 per year.

### Trevor Gillam

## SOUTH & WEST

I reported last time that the Regions funds have now been paid from National funds so we now have a bank balance to working with. We had been trying to trace the old "books". David Butcher has finally tracked them down – as we thought, they are still held by the last Regional Treasurer. Unfortunately David has not yet been able to obtain them. I was hoping to have sight of them before the Regional meeting last weekend to have some idea of the sort of financial transactions we may be facing. Hopefully David's powers of persuasion will help us soon. We agreed to set our Regional subs at £20 for the coming year.

I was very pleased that there was only one Club missing at the meeting. We plan to move the meetings around as we are spread all along the 87 miles of the canal in order to encourage that Club to attend meetings.

There was a local Canal User Forum held in Devizes on 24 October. As ever, no formal minutes were forthcoming from the last meeting. The Local Waterways Manager gave a National Overview of where CRT stands.

## REGIONAL CHAIRMEN'S REPORTS

**South & West con't**

The main thrust of his talk was that CRT wishes to change the emphasis of the new charity from BW's purely "management and maintenance of the national waterways structure" to an inclusive organisation. This was repeated several times. There are 15 open days planned across the system as a whole to show the work that is being done over the winter with one of them being on Caen Hill again. We were told that in 2011/2012 39000 volunteer days had been logged nationally; 200 volunteer lock keepers etc. etc. Usage figures from the new website indicate that the most popular canals to be looked at are the Grand Union, Kennet and Avon followed by the Regents Canal. Previously the meetings have been of a local nature but the theme was definitely national this time. Concern was raised at the meeting that the current emphasis of CRT appeals is more environmental than structural.

You may remember that at the last NEC I expressed concern regarding the Local Waterways Partnership. I was also concerned about the friction between the LWP and the previous Chairman who is the Chairman of the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust. The K&ACT will have a new Chairman from January 2013 and he was approached with regard to joining the LWP. He agreed, completed the paperwork and waited for something to happen. He was rather surprised therefore at the CUF to see his name appear on the screen as a new member of the LWP. Hopefully, in future the LWP will meet, produce minutes and things will move forward. We may even hear what they are doing.

The Local Waterways Manager announced the setting up of a sub committee of the LWP to look at the problems regarding continuous cruisers/moorers. One of the members of that committee was asked to talk to us about what their plans were. They were due to have their first meeting on 26 October and he listed just about everything that the previous group had discussed, in other words they are going through the same process again. I asked for the names of the rest of the sub committee, I was told they would be emailed to me but despite reminders I have heard nothing. I then discovered that the S & W Region's Treasurer had been asked to join the group so I do know how the group is made up. She was able to tell me that the person chairing that group is totally independent of CRT and is also chairing the discussions on the Lee and Stort. Hopefully, I will be able to keep up to date with how they are getting on. Panda raised the question that BW had said they would hold a public consultation regarding the findings of the Local Mooring Strategy shortly after we were told we would not meet again; she was told it is now planned to hold a consultation once the process etc. has been agreed!!!

**Pauline King**

**NORTH WEST****Regional Meeting**

Latest Regional meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> November was well attended.

**Trent & Mersey Canal Breach**

This issue obviously has had a major impact on the Region.

Information obtained from the CRT User Forum on 6<sup>th</sup> November is as follows.

There is currently 12 miles of canal and around 500 boats affected by the breach and associated stoppages. Displaced boats unable to return to their moorings and hire boat businesses have suffered. Alternative routes around the network, including the use of Manchester Ship Canal have been used to help boats to return to their bases.

The stoppage at Croxton, just north of Middlewich could be resolved by the first week in December if all goes well. At the major breach near Dutton the site clearance should be achieved by the end of the year with full restoration by Easter 2013.

CRT are now co-ordinating other planned stoppages at Anderton Boat Lift and locks on the T&M near Middlewich to facilitate boat movements when Croxton is reopened.

**CRT Customer Forums**

The Wales & Border Counties and North West meetings were held in October and followed the usual format. I attended the Manchester & Pennine meeting in November. Walter Menzies (Partnership Chairman) addressed the meeting and outlined their current work to develop a Strategic Waterway Plan for the area. Some of the data they have been using looks at 'top 10 waterways', 'Economic environment context', 'Principle heritage designations', 'Number, level and location of D & E defects'. etc. Delegates were each given a sheet to capture top 5 priorities and 5 Issues and effects in the M/Cr & Pennine area. It was suggested that all this data and people's views will be used to develop 'The Plan'.

**Northwich Development.**

There is no sign of the building work at the Northwich Marina site cleared in time for the Rally held in the summer. Consultations are taking place regarding redevelopment of the Baron's Quay site, just below Town Bridge. The plan is for mixed commercial/leisure use. The River Weaver Navigation Society is proposing a more sympathetic (with the surrounding buildings) development. A serious concern is that the only reference for visiting boaters is the provision of a single anchor point on the land for pontoons which the Council will leave to C&RT to provide.

**Sutton Bridge (A56 bottom end of the Weaver).**

At the Meeting called in July, C&RT announced that the restoration work costing about £4m was to start in June 2013 and last about 10 months. There would be a 2.2m air draft and gap of 4m guaranteed. The option for a replacement temporary Bailey Bridge was dismissed as too expensive. However following a local public meeting this option was reinstated on the basis that the main bridge could be closed to road traffic for the entire duration which would shorten the time scale and the cost savings would pay for the Bailey Bridge. However the guarantee for sufficient air draft seems to have diminished.

**Dee Branch/Chester Weir.**

The Chester Canal Heritage Trust have been campaigning for the provision of a lock alongside the weir in Chester to enable boats to come off the SUC via the Dee Branch and then proceed upstream of Chester Weir. Currently boats can only pass by going over the weir on very high tides. I understand that there is also a proposal for a lock (and weir?) below the Dee Branch lock so that the river is non-tidal from the canal upwards. This would give another cruising stretch for the NW (as far as Farndon?). We have been in contact with the Chester Branch of IWA to offer our support but it may be more appropriate to speak direct to the Heritage Trust. This has been raised with BW and C&RT that on Waterscape they still show the Dee Branch as usable even though the first pound and lock is silted up, the exit gates onto the river which were delivered in 2006 are just leaning unfitted against the lock walls and there are stop planks at the bottom! They promise to consider the matter but perhaps they think that no one will notice that the Branch is impassable!

**Marple Wharf Re-development, Macclesfield Canal.**

We are concerned with the proposed development of the site and the effects on the existing boaters services. There could be an impact on the local heritage and the viability of the local trip boat for the disabled.

**Wigan Pier.**

C&RT announced plans at the Customer Forum to re-furbish Wigan Pier

**Bridgewater Clubs.**

The Bridgewater Canal Co have refused permission to allow Clubs to extend their linear mooring sites (to compensate for fewer but longer boats) until all the Marinas are full and when they are, the intention is to open more!

**Bryan Pollard**  
**Regional Chairman**

## REGIONAL CHAIRMEN'S REPORTS

**MIDLANDS**

I start by passing on the sad news of the death of Tom Griffin at the beginning of September. Tom was the longest serving chairman of Hinckley Boat Club and AWCC rep for years. He was well known in the midlands region and will be very much missed. His son Mick is following well in his father's footsteps. Erica kindly sent a card on behalf of AWCC.

Midlands meeting on 6 October at Soar Boating Club was well attended, as usual. Reps were asked to check the AWCC website and inform Brian of any changes needed. Erica has emailed Reps with latest online database entries for checking, and the response has been very good; the database will be updated shortly. Erica explained the difficulties experienced in her efforts to set up a yahoo group for Midlands. Most of the Reps present were unhappy with the amount of personal data requested, and unanimously voted to keep the existing system, which has worked satisfactorily since set up when Erica took over. As a result of this, I understand that Erica will no longer handle membership nationally, as originally envisaged.

Roger and Pam McLellan recently stood down after years representing Lichfield CC. They also represented Boaters Christian Fellowship, but will stand down from BCF at their November AGM. Roger and Pam have been regular supporters of Midlands, and will be missed.

The Midlands regional subscription remains at £8 per club. A donation has been sent to Maureen's Lock Fund.

There is concern in some areas that CRT are not yet engaging fully with the local community. Some User Group lists were inaccurate and/or incomplete. The use of 'chuggers' was in some instances not considered very effective. Vice Chairman Graham Myatt reminded Reps that CRT is still very new, and we should give them time to settle in. Concern was raised about the recent Memorandum of Understanding between IWA and CRT, in that Midlands would not wish AWCC to be sidelined.

Ann Banks raised a point about volunteer lock helpers on the system. Whilst out cruising with her daughter they met a volunteer whilst operating a lock, his help would have been welcome as the paddle were stiff. On seeing that they knew what to do he put his windlass away and waked on. There was another instance at a flight of locks with queuing boats where two volunteers walked on down without helping. Another member on his own had help but the paddles were opened too quickly in a double lock! His impression was that some just like to wear the logo. C&RT outsourced workers. Workmen strimming long grass along side lock landings leaving all of the wet cut grass lying on the lock side. Surely a Health and Safety issue.

**Ian Wood**  
**Region Chairman**

**NORTH EAST**

We held the N.E. Region meeting at Tinsley Boat Club, with 10 of our 16 member clubs represented, apologies from 4, and a resounding silence from the remaining 2.

Regional president Alan Hodgkinson advised his intention to step down from this position, after 32 years' continuous service, at our AGM which is to be held in March 2013.

The 2 absentee clubs referred to above, are Hull Bridge and Bethells Bridge, both of which are rather out on a limb on the River Hull. Jean & I shall attempt to establish contact again and arrange to visit them if we feel such a course of action will enthruse them!

We now have details of boats and membership of 11 of the region's clubs, and can claim in any approach to C&RT, to represent a minimum of 620 boats, and 1450 boaters. The hope is that this fact will carry some additional weight in any discussions.

All clubs have been asked to let us have full and up-to-date contact details for the Handbook, before Christmas. Also to include details of any charging policy in place for visiting boaters.

Some time was spent in discussions of the proposed amendments to rules designed to tackle the NCCC issue, and there was a healthy dose of cynicism about the assumption that natural wastage over the next 10 - 15 years will significantly reduce the problem of the present 600 or so major offenders identified in July 2012 for the proposed more lenient treatment. The hope is that the promised tightening up of signage and much more consistent enforcement will lead to improvements in the hotspots to be targeted, and that a more stringent examination of applications for Continuous Cruising licences will reduce the numbers of spurious applications.

There has been no reply whatsoever from the Leeds office to our e-mail sent 6 weeks ago, asking C&RT to approach York City Council about the installation of pontoon moorings for visitors. This will be pursued over the next few days, along with strong representations about the failure to provide a safe and sensible lock landing at Fairies Hill Marina. BW had apparently undertaken to carry out this work by March of last year, in an attempt to prevent a recurrence of a potentially dangerous accident when a member's wife fell into the River Calder from the tiny existing ledge, which had no safety ladder. BW did fit a ladder a couple of years ago - very intelligently on the UPSTREAM end of the landing! There is still no sign of a sensibly-sized landing.

Discussions on User Group Meetings centred around the bland or non-committal replies usually received from C&RT in response to issues raised. Unfortunately a long-standing

family commitment in Hampshire prevented our attending the N.E. Waterways meeting in October, but we have the notes of the meeting, with particular reference to the lack of visitor moorings in Leeds - the bridge which obstructs access to half of the Armouries basin is owned and operated by the development company, and C&RT are not able to give access for visitors. We are to moor where possible on the river, levels permitting!

A member had written to the manager of N.W. Waterways to express disappointment at the little time allocated to boating matters at their recent U.G.M - this despite the fact that most of the attendees were boaters. A presentation was given on fund-raising and towpath improvements, including the several miles of major towpath revisions on the Leigh Branch, which offer no mooring provision whatsoever. The feeling he obtained was that boaters are placed well down the list of priorities in the N.W. Partnership.

The member's letter detailed 8 serious faults found in a short section of the L & L Canal between Bingley and Greenfield - the reply failed to mention them at all, but ominously amongst a list of funding / volunteering platitudes, acknowledged that boaters do contribute (about 15%) of Trust income. Even worse, any local authority funding or assistance would "streamline funds towards the needs of an area. In this respect, keeping water in the canals is not their priority or concern"

Is keeping water in the canals a priority of N.W. Waterways Partnership?

AWCC N.E. Region is actually covered by 3 of the new Waterways Partnerships - and North East and North West manage to hold their meetings on the same evening! We shall try to have this stupid arrangement reversed, but the wheels grind slowly----

In the meantime, representatives of member clubs do attend and we are now in the loop for notification, and for access to minutes of meetings.

Discussion also took place on the suggested new EEC Directive and its implications for boaters. We are forwarding a copy of the suggested pro forma letter to be sent to MEP's, to each of the club secretaries with the request that as many as possible of their members be encouraged to lobby the EU politicians.

Next meeting is our AGM to be held at South Yorkshire Boat Club in mid-March.

**Garth Robinson,**  
**Region Chairman**

## REGIONAL CHAIRMEN'S REPORTS

**SOUTH & EAST**

**Land Sale.** It has been identified that the land for sale, on the Northampton Arm, is located just after passing through Lock 17, bottom lock, River Nene side of the gates right hand side. I have not heard yet if anybody has purchased it. A map of the location was passed round the committee.

**Navigation.** March. Pump-out boats visiting the facility require tokens to operate the system from the Town Hall, believed to be £12. Water and Elsan emptying are free. The facilities are in the same place.

Wellingborough. The Sanitary Station which should have been operating since April is still fenced off and worksite notices are applied.

Strong Steam Advice. Due to how wet the ground is now it is feared that with any form of rain fall "Strong Stream Advice" will be instituted very quickly. Strong Stream Advice is ON at the moment 10/11/12.

**User Groups.** Members of the South-East Region attended both User Group meetings in our area. A précis of what C.R.T. have done so far and plans for the future were given. Graphs were shown of the water situation at the start of the year and now since the Drought was announced with the water in the reservoirs almost full. New volunteer groups have been formed. 5 fund raising projects have been launched. More money will be available for dredging during 2014/15. 2 types of dredging, Spot and Main line will be carried out. Evasion of Boat Licences is very low in South-East area. They are now progressing to clamp down on

boats that overstay at mooring sites. The group is working well to rid the South-East system of both of these.

**Internet Details.** No objections were raised, except one point, by clubs attending the meeting. If any boats visiting the published event had an accident at the event they would not be covered by the clubs insurance. Some clubs insurance only covers their Club member boats.

**Ralph Sullivan**

**Vice Chair and NEC Rep.**

## NATIONAL SECRETARY

I feel it is sometimes necessary to reiterate just what the AWCC is and does as an organisation so I have written the following for the benefit of those, perhaps newer club members

**ASSOCIATION OF WATERWAYS CRUISING CLUBS (AWCC)**

AWCC, an association formed in 1964, original conception being an AA of the waterways, where club members could receive hospitality and help at AWCC clubs when cruising the waterways, still a good reason to be a member of the AWCC, with around 100 member clubs Nationally

However, AWCC soon became much more, a respected organisation campaigning on behalf of boaters to improve and maintain our waterways

The AWCC has an elected executive council, (NEC), with a normal format of Officers, all on an unpaid volunteer basis, receiving only travel expenses to attend meetings 4 times a year, plus AGM.

Included in the NEC are specialist officers, such as :-

Parliamentary Officer David Pearce, who with his Knowledge and Experience of parliamentary procedures, quietly keeps his Eye on discussions which affect boaters, and quietly keeping the AWCC in the Eye of the governing bodies.

Technical Officer Andrew Phasey, MABSE, who, in language which boaters can understand, advises AWCC boaters of boat safety, and changes to the boat safety scheme requirements.

Alert Editor Graeme Bridge produces a newsletter for members 4 times per year.

AWCC is divided into 6 Regions, Regions being SE, SW, London, Midland, NE and NW. Each region has its own elected officers. Constitution of the AWCC was updated in 2011, and each region adheres to this constitution.

Roland Dotchin

National Secretary

**BOAT RALLY**

24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> May 2013

To celebrate 45 years of the Association & The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the re-opening of The Great Northern Basin

Boat / Caravan Entry: £ 15 for 2 adults  
(Additional Crew members £5 per person)

A plaque will be awarded to all craft entering and attending the Rally

Further enquires to Mrs Christine Baylis  
Tel: 01623 201208 Mob: 07889 444190

Application forms for the event can be obtained from the website  
<http://crewashcanalpreservationanddevelopmentassoc.org.uk/>  
or by emailing: [subscribe.erewash@btinternet.com](mailto:subscribe.erewash@btinternet.com)

**Federation Of Bridgewater Cruising Clubs****Annual Boat Rally**

**Hosted By Worsley Cruising Club**

**to be held at the**

**RED ROSE STEAM MUSEUM**

**Astley Green Nr Leigh.**

**(on the Leigh Branch of the Bridgewater Canal)**

**24th/27th May 2013.**

**(Late Spring Bank Holiday)**

**Entry £20**

# CLUB NEWS REPORTS

## STAFFORD BOAT CLUB BLOOMS

The Summer/Autumn 2012 issue of "Alert" featured the Clubs' involvement with Stafford Riverway Link and reported on the June "Gathering of Boats" that raised in excess of £3000 for this restoration project, the Clubs' 2012 chosen charity.

A "Grand Draw" featuring over fifty prizes, many donated by local businesses and members alike, has now raised an additional £1750 and as the year races towards its' end other enterprises by individual club members look likely to add additional funds towards the final grand total.

During the months of the much criticised summer of 2012 the Club welcomed many more visitors than usual, some staying overnight, some who left their boats in a safe haven whilst "weekending" and others to avail themselves of the D-I-Y Slipway and Wet Dock facilities. Perhaps the "state of the nation" has encouraged more boaters to cruise more extensively and to self maintain their boats?

(The Club is always pleased to welcome all boaters and in particular members of AWCC but does request that telephone or email contact is first made to "reserve" a mooring as during August capacity was reached and refusals looked a possibility; fortunately none occurred.)

Not content with managing the aforementioned facilities and a huge site that many readers will have passed whilst cruising the Staffs and Worcestershire Canal, the Club entered the "Heart of England in Bloom" (a part of "Britain in Bloom") –and in the "Hotel and Pub Garden" category was awarded the Silver Gilt Certificate. Next year the aim is the "Gold Award." As Stafford Boat Club cruises towards its' Golden Anniversary in 2014 it wishes to record thanks to members and visitors alike for contributing to what has certainly turned into a "blooming good 2012."

John Laidlar

## Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association

had a visit from the East Midlands C&RT group to Langley Mill. They wished to view some of the work which had been done by volunteers and of course how they did it. The group were very enthusiastic by what they saw but we felt from what they said there was some guidance needed as to what was expected of them.

**Stoke on Trent BC** raised over £200 on a Macmillan Coffee Morning at the Club, organised by Membership Secretary Joyce Sharman.

**BRIDGEWATER MOTOR BOAT CLUB** had a busy day on the 13th of October. During the day they were hosts to the launch of the newly formed Halton Disability Partnership which saw the commissioning of their disabled persons trip boat WIZARD. The event went off with a swing as Mayor and Mayoress of Halton (Pictured with members of the partnership) were the first aboard the specially adapted craft.

Later that same day the club held a Grand Charity Evening in aid of the local branch of MENCAP. The theme was a Lancashire Night and a band of musicians drawn from members of the boat club performed Lancashire folk songs under the name of TUPPENCE CHANGE. (See them on Youtube at <http://youtu.be/Bb1KIA1acFE>) They were supported by another local folk group OLD BONES.

With funds raised at a previous joint event with Lymm CC and a "sponsored slim" by Commodore Steve Hughes, raffle, tom-bola, auction, "roll to the bottle" etc the evening raised well over £1000 for the charity and a great evening was had by all.



## 60th ANNIVERSARY

A month later on the 10th of November B.M.B.C. celebrated its 60th Anniversary with a Gala Dinner held in the clubhouse.



B.M.B.C. Life President Ken Parkes along with Vice President Ruth Owen cut the 60th Anniversary cake at the recent celebration Gala Dinner. Ken was one of the first Officers elected when the club was formed in November 1951. Ruth and her late husband George were members from the 1950's, Both are still active members.

# TECHNICAL OFFICER'S REPORT

## Changes to the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS)

1.Changes to the Scheme were signed-off by the BSS Management Committee on Tue 02 Oct and will become effective on Tue 01 Jan 13.

2.As reported previously, around 60% of the changes are either editorial or neutral in nature and involve the tidying up of terms and descriptions. The aim of these changes is to help with the consistent application of the checks by Examiners.

3.The balance of the changes, 40% , can be summarised as:

- a. a new check for portable fuel tanks in engine spaces;
- b. five new **advice** checks concerning 230V a.c. systems;
- c. a new **advice** check for cracks and unintended gaps on solid fuel appliances;
- d. 15 existing checks amended to introduce a slightly enhanced technical requirement;
- e. two checks are being removed, one about marine fuel filters and the other about 230V a.c. shore connections.

4.If owners feel they are being disadvantaged by the timing of the changes, they may contact the BSS Office with details. Some owners may consider it worth waiting until after the beginning of January to have an examination.

5.Examiners are in the process of completing an online E-Learning course and assessment prior to attending a local seminar which will support the introduction of the amended checking procedures.

6.BSS hire and working boat requirements (currently examined against the 2002 Code) are being reviewed separately. It is hoped the results will be known by Mar 13. It is not yet known whether any changes will be proposed.

### Carbon Monoxide on boats

7.In the last edition of Alert, I promoted the new "Carbon Monoxide on Boats" leaflet. I'm informed that 100s have been issued to examiners and 1000s to Fire and Rescue Services, for onward distribution. (I'll bring some with me.)

8.If there is any doubt about the need for such a leaflet; read on. In the last 16 years, 25 CO deaths have been reported on boats in the UK. Of these, 18 fatalities have occurred on inland waters.

9.Of the 25 deaths, 11 appear to have been caused by emissions from portable engines (including one diesel generator), 6 from LPG appliances, 5 from solid fuel stoves, 1 blown diesel heater and 2 are "cause not-known".

10.Should we do more?

Andrew Phasey  
Technical  
Officer  
14 November 2012

# COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

## European Parliament Briefing

At the beginning of November this year, the IWA highlighted an issue that they identified under a draft directive of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning recreational boats. It has also been reported in the Waterways Press.

The information on

### **2011/0197(COD), Harmonisation of recreational crafts and personal watercrafts**

is available on the EU website here:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ocil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2011/0197\(COD\)](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ocil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2011/0197(COD))

As I understand it from what I've read, this directive is intended to cover issues about recreational craft engine emissions, navigational safety and so on. It's a bit general and they can't really make their minds up about whether it covers both sea and inland waterways or not.

The basic problem is that Toine Manders, a Dutch MEP, has added a draft amendment to the directive as below:

#### **Recital 26a (new)**

*"There is no harmonisation or level playing field with regard to watercraft licences or technical checks, and tax evasion can still take place through the use of agricultural diesel. Therefore the Commission should consider submitting proposals to harmonise watercraft licences at Union level, to encourage regular technical checks and to prevent tax evasion by discouraging the use of agricultural diesel."*

The concern is that, if such an amendment was agreed for inclusion in the directive, it lays open the real possibility that leisure boaters would be required to obtain licences to pilot their boats, that technical checks on

boats would become onerous and expensive to conform to, and that taxation requirements on agricultural diesel become enforced rather than agreed.

The amendment has been added very late in the administrative cycle, and could become legislation if MEPs are inclined to vote for it. We would suggest that individual AWCC members should write to their MEP quoting the directive and asking their MEP to vote against it.

You can find out who your MEP is at the website <http://writetothem.com>, and also write to them if you wish to do it electronically rather than on paper. I recommend that we inform Clubs of this issue and suggest that they lobby their MEP. A draft template letter is attached for them to send by post or by email.

I also think that, as AWCC, we should lobby directly the rapporteur, Malcolm Harbour. Information and contact details here:

[http://www.conservatives.com/People/Members\\_of\\_the\\_European\\_Parliament/Harbour\\_Malcolm.aspx](http://www.conservatives.com/People/Members_of_the_European_Parliament/Harbour_Malcolm.aspx)

Toine Manders Mep is here: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/4560/TOINE\\_MANDERS.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/4560/TOINE_MANDERS.html)

When the original issue was broken by IWA, CIBC (Cutweb) were well to the front of the lobbyist brigade. Several members wrote to their MEPS and have published their response. In general, all the MEPS who have responded have indicated that they will not be voting for the amendment to be included. However we should not take this as a reason for inaction as the more who ask their MEP to vote against it, the more likely the MEP is to get on their two feet and say something.

Brian Rich  
AWCC Communications Officer

## FEATURE ARTICLE

## MEMORIES OF A BUTTY BOY

Though perhaps hazy memories, as, firstly it was along time ago, 1949, and secondly it was the worst job the boy ever had, which he did his best to forget. So anyway,

## THE SCENE.

The boy lived at no 1 Lindon Rd, Brownhills, near its junction with the A5, with his Uncle, the village policeman. Brownhills was still just a few properties strung along the A5.

On the opposite side of Lindon rd., runs the Wyley and Essington canal, some distance up Lindon road there was at that time a coal mine, from which canal boats used to carry coal to various destinations.

England was a vastly different country at that time, only four years since the end of WW2, most of the men the boy met had served in the armed forces in the war, most men silent from their experience in the war. His Uncle had been in a Japanese prisoner of war camp through out the war, and returned in 1946. Cars were few, mainly pre war, TV was black and white BBC one only, some food was still rationed.

Whilst waiting to join the Merchant Navy sea training school at Sharpness, the boy took a job on a pair of working canal boats, and became a butty boy, steering and handling the butty boat.

## THE CANALS

In that time were vastly different than today's canals, still a few working pairs traveling the cut, but many laid up waiting cargo, and quite a few lying sunk. Not many pleasure boats, no Marinas, and the only people living on boats, (in the Midlands anyway), were working boat-folk.

Even the midland canalside still had green areas, and some canalside areas open rubble strewn where bombs had flattened buildings during the war.

The Boy remembered the sounds and smells of the Blitz.

## THE BOATS.

Two 70 ft steel narrow boats, motor boat and butty, both boats with top plank and canvass covered cargo holds. No gas or electricity on either boat, though I think a dynamo on the engine supplied power, whilst the engine was running, to power a huge headlamp on Motor boat. Motor boat with a small forward cabin, (dog kennel), engine room, and back cabin. Lurking in the engine room was a Bollinder Engine, started each morning with a blow lamp and much swearing, but still much loved by the Skipper. Back cabin, was a murky hole with solid fuel oven stove. Butty

boat with just an a even murkier back cabin, again with stove.

THE CREW. In order of importance.

The skipper .

Roy, huge chap, with of course, huge beard. Always wore either old army great coat, or leather Army jerkin with no sleeves, old trilby hat. Boy was not sure if he even took them off to go to bed. Roy was the only person allowed in his beloved engine room, and supervised the loading of cargo, and hours the boat ran. Roy had been born on a canal boat, and lived on the cut all his life.

Skipper's wife

.

Doreen, again a large person, again lived on the cut all her life.

Doreen would disappear every morning on her pride and joy, an old grocers delivery bike with a large basket on the front, spending her day lock wheeling and scavenging. Locks were always set for the boats arrival, whilst often boat crews would argue, sometimes fight over who was first through the lock, nobody argued with Doreen, especially with Roy approaching.

Doreen would appear towards the end of the day, usually with her bike basket loaded with food, potatoes, turnips, cabbage etc, ready to put in her pot on the motor boat stove.

Doreen and Roy treated the boy with kindness, perhaps affected by the loss of their own 15 year son, lost in the Atlantic three weeks after leaving sea school, his ship torpedoed by a U Boat.

The Dog

Huge scruffy lurcher type dog, who lived in forward cabin of motor boat, definitely a no go area for the boy. The dog seemed to look at the boy as if wondering if he should eat him whole, or just chew a leg off, though he did occasionally wag his tail at the boy. Like Doreen, the dog disappeared each morning, usually reappearing with a dead creature in his mouth, a useful rabbit or chicken, (the pot), or an inedible rat, Etc. (canal)

The Boy

Spent his days running around the butty boat or hanging off the huge rudder. His favourite time was when the canal was suitable for the boats to breast up, so he could unship his bloody rudder and concentrate on brewing up. He got in serious trouble only once for mistakenly washing Roy's brew can. (spoilt the taste.)

Hours were long, whether carrying, or moving to pickup cargo, early starts and late mooring ups.

Rest or Home times were always when boats were standing waiting for cargo, though Sunday was always an easy, late start day. Doreen would trim skipper's hair and beard, though the boy always refused her kind offer regarding his hair. The boy could usually be persuaded to have a wash on a Sunday, and sweep out his back cabin, should the coal dust be at a suitable depth.

No boater had heard of a 4 mph limit, (moored boats were securely tied up, with back springs). Boats exited locks generally leaving gate open and paddles up, next boat in sorted it out. The boy never saw any gaily painted boats, paint was still in short supply, and the only colours obtainable were Brown, Green, or Black. So today's replicate working boats, with painted canal wear, mop and buckets, water cans, and immaculate cabins would have amazed him.

Canal side Pubs appeared to be just the front room of a house, beer served in a jug, favourite stopping spot for most working boaters, though Roy and Doreen didn't drink.

So toughened up and fit, the boy left Doreen and Roy, and joined his Sea School, T.S.Vindictarix, Moored on the Canal at Sharpness, with the River Severn On the other side of the Towpath.

Then into Merchant Navy, sailing the Oceans and Seas of the world, six times through the Panama Canal, more through the Suez Canal, once carrying coal from America. Visiting ports crowded with ships bringing cargoes from over the world.

Leaving the sea, becoming a coal miner, a collier getting coal with a pick, size 3 shovel, then experiencing the mechanisation of the mines, then becoming a shot-firer, (deputy), then the start of the closure of the mines.

So in his short lifetime the man has seen the loss of the working days of the Canals, the loss of the way of life that was the Merchant Navy, with once busy ports now empty of ships and converted to leisure areas, the loss of a way of life that was the Coal Industry and now lives in a modern world of no sweated labour, more leisure, and amazing modern technology.

Roland Dotchin. National Secretary (& Butty Boy)





## IN AT THE DEEP END

**Ann Farrell reflects on her first year on the Canal and River Trust Council**

Earlier this year I was elected as one of four boaters' representatives on to the new Canal and River Trust Council. No one was more surprised than me! However I was delighted to have been given the opportunity to be involved with the Trust at a national level from the beginning and am relishing my new role.

A little about me. I have been boating since my early teens when I learnt to sail on the River Blackwater. Much later my family hired a narrowboat at Acton Bridge and cruised the newly re-opened Cheshire Ring. My love of the inland waterways started then. Twenty years ago we bought our narrowboat 'Ena May' and have explored 95% of the network in her. I am Vice Commodore of the Nantwich and Border Counties Yacht Club (A 'yacht' is defined as a vessel propelled by sail or power, but none of us in Nantwich has sails). The Club is a member of AWCC. I live in Chester alongside the Shropshire Union Canal.

I did think that 24 years as a Chester City Councillor might equip me well for my new role. But I soon found that this C&RT Council is a very different beast. The only real decisions it can make are to hire and fire the Trustees who are the people who make the policy and strategic decisions for the Trust. The

Council is there to use the expertise of its members to help shape the policies and to advise the Trustees and C&RT managers. Only 7 of the 35 members of the Council have been elected, the rest represent various interests eg walking, cycling, angling etc. Some of these are boat owners themselves so boaters have a bit

more representation than you might think. I personally think they should have more.

I stress that I am well aware that I have been elected by boaters and that I am on the Council primarily to promote their interests. So I will be supporting, first and foremost, fair and affordable charges to boaters and improved maintenance and facilities on our waterways. Communicating with the 35,000 boaters I represent is a real challenge. My email address is [afarrell@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:afarrell@canalrivertrust.org.uk) and I welcome comments and constructive suggestions – but please keep these to the wider issues. I am far less able than your local Waterways Manager to deal with that broken paddle!

The Council has met three times this year. We have been briefed on some key issues eg water shortages (a problem when it went on the agenda but not by the time we got to discuss it!) and health and safety. The comments and ideas from council members get forwarded to the Trustees to help them with any decisions they need to make. Members of Council decided that notes of our proceedings should go on the C&RT website as soon as possible after the meeting. Look on the C&RT website at About us/Governance/The Council to find out what we have been up to. I am hoping that C&RT will become a much more open organisation than BW ever was – the initial indications are encouraging.

The most contentious issue on which the Trustees have so far sought advice from the Council is what approach should be taken with non-compliant continuous cruisers. These are those who take out a continuous cruising licence but do not genuinely use their boat for navigation as the licence requires. There are thought to be about 2000 boats which fall into this category. Their numbers are increasing – partly due to a lack of enforcement. The real problem here is that many are congregated in 'hot spots' and so prevent visiting boats from mooring in these places. The Council had an interesting discussion on this subject and some of the suggestions raised have been taken up by the Trustees and are being implemented. These include better enforcement of time limits on visitor moorings and ensuring that first time applicants for CC licences are committed to 'bona fide' navigation. This is not an issue which will be solved either easily or quickly and will demand determined and sustained implementation of any measures agreed. Further information on this on a recent press release (press-office on the website).

So how do I think it is all going? There are a lot of reasons to be optimistic. The Trust has a reasonable financial settlement from the government. Importantly it is a contract for 15 years funding and safe from 'cuts'. The Trust has inherited the property investment portfolio which is now also free from Government interference. There is the ability to raise money for particular projects. Boat licence fee rises will be limited to inflation for three years from 2014. Many more users of the waterways are now involved with the setting up of the Council, Advisory groups and Waterways Partnerships. There are more volunteers at work. Boaters should not be concerned that the Trust has set out to involve a wider range of users of the canals and rivers. The Trust remains committed to the maintenance and enhancement of the waterways for boating – after all, nobody wants to see navigations without boats

## FEATURE ARTICLE

## ANGEL CANAL FESTIVAL

The 'Angel Canal Festival' has taken place in Islington, North London, annually on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in September for the last 26 years, being a one-day event based round the City Rd Lock & Basin on the Regent's Canal, local streets and a park. 'Angel Day', a fund-raising event started by Crystal Hale to raise money for 'Angel' a community narrowboat she'd bought, began a few years earlier. That was after Crystal had spearheaded a campaign, with the help of relatives, politicians, aristocratic friends and the IWA, to save the City Road Basin from infilling and building on, and then setting up the Islington Boat Club! Crystal had moved to Islington with her second husband, Lionel Hale, where their back garden had a gate onto the Regent's Canal beside the City Road Lock.

As if one charismatic person wasn't enough, Jim Lagden joined Crystal in 1986 while working for the local council on its 'Brighter Islington' campaign. Jim had been a partner in an actuarial practice when he had a life-changing experience on holiday in Malta. He was saved from drowning by a passing ship having been in the sea for more than an hour after being swooshed from a sea-filled pool by a freak wave. Not being a strong swimmer, Jim promised himself and his maker that if he survived he would stop being an actuary and do something he really liked. He was as good as his word and took a sabbatical, went back to university gaining a degree in Arts Administration, and never went back to his conventional job, working in Edinburgh at the Fringe and the midlands before moving to North London.



Regent's Canal towpath opposite the City Road Basin

Between them they worked together on the re-named 'Angel Canal Festival' for 13 years until Crystal died in 1999, aged 83. By then a pattern had been set and the event consisted of a boat rally, boat trips, stalls, food, musical entertainment, a children's fun fair and a regatta. St Pancras Cruising Club's boats were invited, or I should say, summoned to attend by Crystal, which, of course, we did. After Crystal's death, Jim approached Dr Roger Squires, then Commodore of SPCC, to see if the club could help keep the event going. Jim was invited to address members after a General Meeting and it was then that Sasha Keir, living in London as a theatrical costumier running her own business in Clerkenwell and me, commuting from Northamptonshire and working as Sec/PA at a company in Kings Cross, both with boats at the club, offered to help.

It is true to say that we didn't have a clue! We were also to find out that, as far as Crystal's duties were concerned, neither did Jim. How we got through that first Festival I shall never know, though I think looking back, we deserved Oscars for acting as though we knew the Mayor of Islington was coming to open the event, escorting her round the site and plucking refreshments out of thin air. Jim, meanwhile, was nowhere to be seen being fully occupied with the entertainment and the stalls, although this

mainly seemed to consist at shouting at the stallholders. We were to discover later that this was due to frustration over his failing eyesight.

Over the next 10 yrs we grew from a threesome to a team of six with representatives joining our Management Group from local clubs, the council and BW. Under Jim's tutelage, we learned a lot about fund-raising, local politics, health & safety, hygiene, traders, suppliers, performers and visitors. We also expanded our outreach to include as many local organizations as possible, including a nursing home, school and community centre and introduced street theatre, guided boat trips and sign-language. All this while Sasha became a wife and mother and I retired from paid work. As Jim's eyesight deteriorated we gradually took on more of his responsibilities but were nevertheless at a loss when he died suddenly in 2009. Although we'd lost our helmsman, he'd left a clear route for us to follow. So, for the last 3yrs we've been doing just that. We've had quite a few dramas over the years; ice cream wars, rogue traders, high winds, pouring rain, BB guns, blue-green algae, massive tow-path works, the possible demolition of 'our' hut and a threatened march!



Pearly Queen of Islington, Phyllis Broadbent, with her son Bobby, the Pearly Prince, 2012.

As entry to the event is free taking place on towpath, streets and a park, we have to raise about £20,000 to stage it. Last year we had about 100 stalls plus 11 food outlets and an estimated 6000 visitors over 7 hours. Any profit we make goes to the 2 clubs Crystal set up, Islington Boat Club & the Angel Community Canal Boat Trust plus basic funds for the next year. However, the whole thing would not be possible without the Volunteers from St Pancras Cruising Club who form 97% of the labour force and put in about 300 hours between them on the day. There were 80 this year doing anything from clearing up dog-poo to meeting and greeting performers. We also get tremendous support from the C&RT and Islington Council, who paid us a huge compliment this year by sharing some of their Olympic funding with us and provided masses of extra entertainment.

Through SPCC, Sasha and I have been involved for 13 yrs now, half the festival's life, and are proud to be associated with such a well-loved and successful event started by two amazing people in Crystal & Jim and continuing with the help of a great team of volunteers. We are already planning next year's event and expect to keep on learning how to do it. An illustrated talk about the Festival is in development so, if you'd like to know more please log onto the web-site [www.angelcanalfestival.org](http://www.angelcanalfestival.org)

Beryl Windsor  
Chair, Angel Canal Festival

21 Nov 2012

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

'Cruising along the Trent & Mersey towards Acton Bridge on the day following the breach at Dutton, I arrived at bridge 209 where I saw that all the Black Prince hire boats at that location had been moved beyond the bridge and a temporary dam had been constructed by CaRT workmen who were strengthening it having moved the hire boats before the major breach had occurred. This was an excellent achievement in the time they had, and they should be praised.

Realising I was now stuck I reversed back to the nearest winding hole and headed back to Anderton, where on arrival I went to the Anderton lift where very helpful staff contacted C&RT on my behalf, being informed that they were still assessing the situation and asked me for my details, I enquired if they would crane boats out but they replied no.

I live in the South of England, and explained to them that I was due to return home for three weeks in the next couple of days and was unhappy at leaving my boat unattended and vulnerable at Anderton. They seemed unconcerned but replied, "Thank you for letting us know your requirements, we will keep you informed." I then had to arrange transport to Runcorn, and overnight accommodation before my train South the next day.

On arrival home I contacted C&RT and suggested that the most economical solution for me was to transit to my mooring on the Bridgewater canal via Anderton lift to the Weaver, then via Weston Marsh Lock onto the Manchester Ship Canal then to Manchester Pomona Lock and back onto the Bridgewater canal. I was astounded at being told that if this was my choice I would have to arrange it myself as they considered this passage as too 'daunting'

This amazed me as I had been on a previous trip on the ship canal, where 30 boats travelled without incident, and without the backup of a major waterways organisation. C&RT officials at Red Bull insisted that the only transit on the ship canal would be to Ellesmere Port boat museum which would eventually make my trip home to Runcorn a major cruise via a route on the Shropshire Union, Trent & Mersey, Macclesfield, Peak Forest, Ashton and Rochdale canals which could take a couple of weeks travel.

The communication from C&RT was sparse, and I found the people extremely unsympathetic and unhelpful, I did however receive an email stating that they were arranging Sea Worthiness Certificate inspections which are a requirement of the Manchester Ship Canal. I again asked about the Pomona lock alternative but was again informed to make my own arrangements.

Having been abandoned by C&RT, I was forced to arrange a way out for myself and also for a fellow boater who was trying to get to his new moorings on the Bridgewater Canal. So with the help and assistance of Huw Jones and Mike Webb of the Manchester Ship Canal Company to whom we are grateful, we completed the journey very swiftly in an uneventful and 'undaunted' fashion back to Runcorn.

The route C&RT suggested from Weston Marsh Lock to Pomona Lock on the Bridgewater Canal is 98 miles and 108 locks a journey of over eight days at more than seven hours a day

Our route from Weston Marsh Lock to Pomona Lock up the ship canal was 25 miles four locks took us just seven hours, and we encountered no other vessels on the ship canal. The only daunting thing was the paperwork!

The trip discounting my travel expenses and accommodation expenses cost me £138, and my travel partner £162. When C&RT officials were asked about reimbursement I was told to submit a bill in writing and it would be 'considered'.

So apart from a Sea Worthiness Certificate C&RT did absolutely nothing for me and I consider it to have failed in its duty of care to a

licence holder, Red Bull Office was particularly unhelpful and unsympathetic. Why should it (C&RT) rescue some boaters and stand the cost but abandon other boaters who were within three hours of their moorings but unable to proceed because of the breach? C&RT's customer care I found somewhat lacking.

Now some 3 weeks after submitting my letter to C&RT (Red Bull) and attempting to make contact with the manager reportedly dealing with the breach via email and two phone calls I still await a reply.

Douglas Wildman.



***I asked C&RT to respond to the item above and received this from David Baldacchino Manchester and Pennine Waterways manager.(Editor)***

*I very much regret that they feel that we did not do enough for them, we tried very hard to make sure that everyone affected by the breach was able to finish their journeys and not get stuck for the winter. We have been able to help over 50 affected boats on their way, but I take very seriously any suggestions for how we can do better in the future.*

*When we began contacting people about the possibility of convoys, the comments that we received were overwhelmingly that the route via the Ship Canal to Pomona Docks was going to be too much of a challenge for a lot of people. Many had never been on the Ship Canal, or even on a river, and did not want to take that route. Faced with that, our focus was to make arrangements for convoys via Ellesmere Port. This had to be done in something of a rush to avoid people becoming stuck in the stoppages that were planned to start in November. Once that decision was taken the demand to us for a convoy to Pomona Docks disappeared – those who wanted to go to Pomona were making their own arrangements and focussed on the Ellesmere Port route. We were advising people to make their own arrangements for travel to Pomona because we were not actively working on a convoy.*

*I do not feel that we abandoned people on the Pomona Docks route, we were in contact with people who wanted to pair up and helped that, as well as helping the arrangements for people to get their seaworthiness certificates. We kept following up with all of the people that we were aware of, no matter which route they had expressed interest in.*

*I know that the route to Pomona Docks can be safely done by narrow boats. I think that we would all agree that it is a more complex route than the one to Ellesmere Port, more time demanding and, to use the words of others, daunting – especially for the inexperienced.*

*There is comment on the website linked in your email about the financial impact on people who were affected which is a matter of personal correspondence between ourselves and your members. I will reply to them shortly regarding their letters to us. Throughout we have striven to be fair with the financial support that we have offered to everyone affected – both those who have chosen to follow the convoy route and those who have elected to follow an alternative.*

*I hope this addresses the points that you have raised.*

*Regards  
David Baldacchino  
Waterway Manager, Manchester and Pennine Waterway*

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