

THE POWER OF WORKING TOGETHER

Over 12 years ago some boat dwellers without home moorings in the Reading area pulled themselves together to form the National Barge Travellers Association (NBTA). This was in response to extra enforcement in the Reading area. Their campaign against increased enforcement forced the authorities to back down.

Over the following years, NBTA membership would expand and so would its achievements. The resulting NBTA campaigns ensured that CRT followed the Equalities Act 2010, and helped to get boat dwellers into an Act of Parliament where Local Councils are required to do needs assessments for boat dwellers in their local area.

Throughout its existence, NBTA has helped to stop individuals being evicted and ensure they are able to get access to healthcare and education for their children. When necessary, NBTA sets up campaigns, varying from fighting against mooring spaces being taken away, to campaigning to get more boater facilities, to organising the community against boater evictions.

However, it must be said NBTA wouldn't exist without people being a part of it. When we say NBTA did this or did that, the reality is that these things are being done by boat dwellers just like you; they might even be moored next to you. We believe more can be changed or protected when we work together as an organisation. The more people working together in the organisation, the more that can be done.

So if you're not already, why not consider being one of the people who does something to protect our way of life?

Our meetings take place on the last Sunday of each month at 4pm. Our next meeting is on Sunday 25th July.

Due to Covid, meetings take place on line. You can also join by phone. Here are the joining details:

<https://8x8.vc/nbta/nbta>

Alternatively, you can use the dial in details:
Dial-in: +44 330 808 1706 PIN: 45925961#



We are the London branch of the **National Barge Travellers Association (NBTA)**. The NBTA is an organization open to all but run by boaters without a home mooring. We campaign for the rights of boat dwellers.



WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN "THESE PEOPLE"

In the recent infamous Zoom meeting in which Canal and River Trust (CRT) attempted to manage the discontent of boaters with the River Lee "safety" zones, Ros Daniels, regional director for London and the South East, referred to those of us who were resistant to their attempts to justify their proposals as "these people".

It is perhaps tempting to regard the "these people" comment as a slip of the tongue, but it is nearer to the truth that in fact it is merely reflective of how CRT truly regards boaters without a home mooring who cruise the London waterways (and other locations). To CRT, and its predecessor British Waterways (BW), we have always been "these people". And further more, there has always been too many of us.

In 2011, claiming that boat numbers on the Lee and Stort was too high, BW attempted to impose 6 neighbourhoods covering the whole of the Lee and Stort (4 on the Lee, 2 on the Stort). Boaters would be allowed to stay in a neighbourhood for only 14 days (7 on the Stort and Hertford Union) before moving to the next. Like the CRT's safety zones, BW's proposals were founded on wafer thin evidence, which Sally Ash, BW's head of boating, said was collected "informally" And like

CRT's "safety zones", there was no consultation.

Later, in 2014, Sally Ash, now working for CRT and once described as the most hated person in CRT, blamed boaters without a home mooring for spoiling everybody's enjoyment of the waterways.

The Lee & Stort mooring strategy led to the formation of *London Boaters* as a campaigning group to defend the rights of boaters in London, and resulted in an humiliating retraction at their hands.

But "neighbourhoods" were not dead. Failing to learn from BW's mistake, CRT picked up the idea in 2014 and trialled them on the Kennet and Avon. Despite struggling to form anything approaching a legal proposal. Predictably, the trial crashed and burned...until the next time CRT looked at trying them on parts of the K&A, which along with London, is CRT's main target for new "policies", in 2016.

The executives at CRT pay lip service to supporting liveaboard boaters and the benefits of having them on the water; but the examples of how CRT's continual attempts to justify its existence target boaters without a home mooring could fill a book.

Whether it is mooring plans, boating strategies, number management or "safety" zones, the fact remains that it is we who are affected disproportionately negatively.

That is the price of being "these people".

THE CAMPAIGN IS REALLY GETTING GOING...

After a map was leaked of the places where CRT are planning to introduce draconian restrictions as part of the 'safety zones' proposal, there was a flurry of shocked and angry comments piling in on Facebook.

Amongst this flurry, there were calls for NBTA London to organise a meeting. So we did, and over 50 people turned up to a video call meeting.

People were angry and willing to campaign. A number of working groups were set up to oversee different aspects of our campaign.

Our first event—the Broxbourne flotilla—had only 2 weeks of organising and publicising, but had a very respectable 13 boats and 1 small craft in the flotilla and about 60 people.

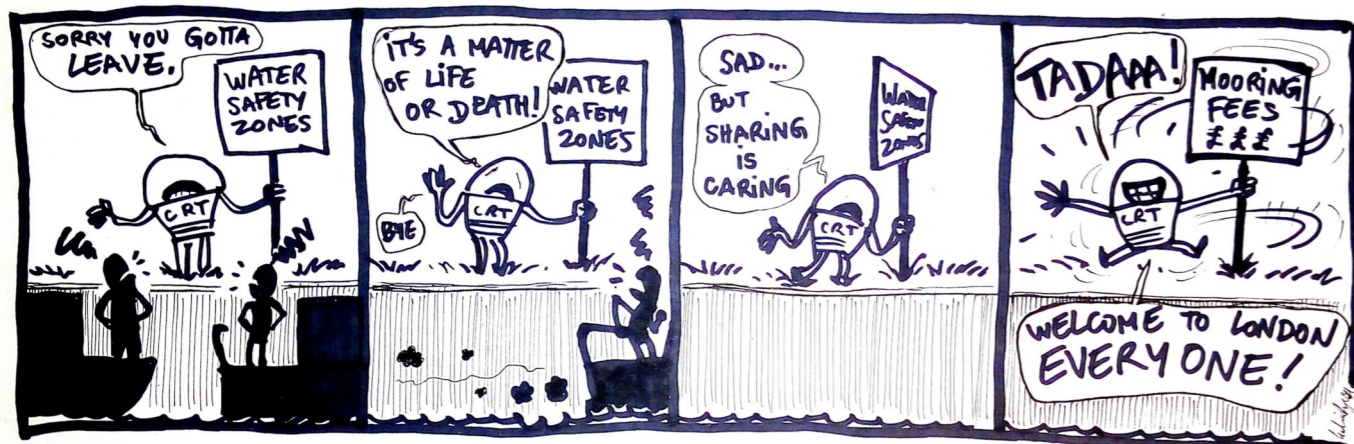
However, this event was somewhat eclipsed by the flotilla we organised in Hackney, with about 45 boats, between

13-16 small craft and over 1000 people turning up to be a part of the day of protest and festivities.

The campaign so far has therefore been characterised by successful events.

Before the Hackney Flotilla we organised a way of handing out posters and leaflets for people to put up and hand out themselves: the Hackney Picnic. Hundreds of people came to it and the next day CRT put the 'safety zones' on hold for a consultation.

The campaign has been greatly successful due to many people getting involved. However, we haven't yet had CRT scrap the 'safety zones' proposals or seriously sit down to discuss a way forward with us. There is much more to be done and we would like you to be involved (if you're not already that is).



Details of our actions can be found on our campaign page: nbtalondon.wordpress.com/water-safety-zones-campaign

ON BAD TERMS (AND CONDITIONS)

Recent proposed changes to CRT Terms & Conditions (T&C's) have provoked the ire of both leisure and live-aboard boaters.

Boaters opposing changes to T&Cs are in agreement in challenging the lack of consultation and legal basis for changes, which seem to clearly infringe on boaters' rights outlined in the 1995 Waterways Act. These latest T&Cs define 2 separate types of licence; one for leisure users, and another for 'Continuous Cruising' (CC-ers). The accompanying granularly detailed restrictions seem like overkill at best, and at worst appear to be targeting and further marginalising those CC-ers who are less affluent (ie. towing restrictions). In yet another instance of duplicity, CRT T&Cs say it "may provide

your relevant personal details to anyone who we believe has a legitimate interest to have the details", whilst also claiming it can't engage with boaters directly via email (to consult on issues) because of GDPR.

NBTA's solicitors have sent a second legal pre-action protocol letter to CRT over our belief that at least parts of CRT's T&Cs are unlawful. CRT then made minor changes. These changes included removal of:

'10.10: The Boat must not display an association with, or advertise, any company, business or service without Our (CRT's) express consent in writing.'

However there are still a lot more clauses like this in their new T&C's.

OUR RIGHT TO PROTEST MUST BE DEFENDED

As many of us already know with the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the government is planning to erode the right to protest and criminalise the nomadic ways of life on land. But what has this got to do with boaters, some might ask?

If the bill is passed the police would be able to ban protests which they consider 'serious annoyance' or 'serious inconvenience'. What is a 'serious annoyance or inconvenience' is clearly a matter of opinion. The police could decide after a complaint from CRT that a flotilla or blockade or even a protest at a CRT meeting is deemed a 'serious annoyance or inconvenience'. We could find ourselves with a criminal conviction for peacefully protesting.

In preserving the right to live in our nomadic way of life on the water, we must be able to utilise everything available to us. If passed, the Bill could drastically reduce our ability to campaign and take direct action.

Of course this bit of legislation wouldn't just affect our community, it could affect any civil society group's campaigns. Our strength against the Bill is the fact it affects so many, which gives the possibility of unity. There is strength in numbers, therefore we should unify with all other affected groups.

This brings us on to why we should oppose the criminalisation of nomadic ways of life on land. In one word, unity. If one community is attacked, we must all stand in defence. Solidarity is contagious; when we support other groups, most of the time they will also support us when we need them.

So let's oppose the Bill together.

SAFETY: CRT'S TWILIGHT ZONE

Boaters have been organising actions to fight the Canal & River Trust's "water safety zones" in Broxbourne and Hackney.

The zones are designed to create new single-mooring areas, new no-mooring areas and will prohibit widebeams and narrowboats from mooring together.

NBTA London has calculated that 550 possible moorings will be lost in these areas. The zones were due to be implemented in June 2021, but have been delayed because of boater protests.

CRT claims that the policy is motivated by the concern for the safety of rowers, but the data CRT has provided to justify this claim is very superficial. Despite low numbers, CRT has not investigated any of the incidents to understand the possible contributory factors, many of which would have nothing to do with moored boats on the river.

In fact the "safety" zones are an attempt to make life on the water difficult for boaters, and especially those without a home mooring, so that they move out of London or off their boats.

NBTA London campaigners have taken action on many fronts including door knocking, letter-writing and leaflet distribution. A petition was launched on 1 May and gathered more than 1800 signatures within 8 days; and of course there have been the Flotillas and Protest Picnic.

Our campaign has been featured on BBC London radio and the Guardian, plus

numerous other local press outlets.

As a result of these efforts, CRT opened a consultation on the issue and boater representatives met with mediators in May. Another round of discussions will follow in July. While we are open to this process, consulting with affected groups after the launch of a policy is at best irregular policy making and the seriousness of the consultation remains to be seen.

Although the "safety" zones are a trial, CRT has refused to provide a metric for how to judge the effectiveness of the zones, and has also refused to commit to reversing the policy if the zones prove ineffective. CRT wants a blank cheque to implement policies based on trivial, superficial evidence. They claim to be the body 'responsible' for the waterways but refuse to be accountable to the users of the waterways.

Our efforts to fight this policy continue: there will be another boater picnic in Hackney Wick on 1 August and we have launched a protest pledge where boaters can anonymously commit to mooring according to the old rules as an act of protest.

The campaign has been an impressive demonstration of people power and has brought our community together in an inspiring way. We will not release pressure on CRT until it recognises its responsibility to all waterways users rather than those users whose needs happen to align with their concealed agenda.



JOIN US FOR AN OPEN AIR MEETING AND PICNIC TO ORGANISE AGAINST THE "SAFETY ZONES".

12 NOON, 1ST AUGUST AT HERE EAST, E15 2GW

TAKING THE PLEDGE

ONLY COLLECTIVE ACTION WILL DEFEAT CRT'S "SAFETY" ZONES

No authority, including CRT, wants to be in a situation where its restrictions are not followed.

Authorities need to be able to enforce its authority. If that is undermined then it is not much of an authority. However, CRT doesn't have the legal power to enforce the "safety" zone mooring restrictions and most certainly can't enforce against a mass defiance of their attempt to introduce them. Therefore, if our community refuses to follow in large numbers these new restrictions, then CRT will have no choice but to back down on the restrictions.

The more people willing to ignore the restrictions, the quicker CRT will back down. Please encourage others to disobey the restrictions and sign the pledge.

Sign the pledge here:

<https://nbtalondon.wordpress.com/mooring-protest-pledge/>

BOAT CULL DELAYED...BUT FOR HOW LONG?

The next stage of CRT's to 'managing boats on London's busy waterways' plans has been delayed until at least Autumn.

The 'managing boats London's busy waterways' was announced October last year; we called it a plan to cull boats. The current part of CRT timeline was meant to have happened in May. However, due to the campaigning against the so called 'safety zones', a leftover of the 2018 London Mooring Strategy, for now CRT has reeled in the overall London waterways boat cull.

There is a good possibility that the more effective the campaign against the 'safety zones' is, the more likely the overall London waterways boat cull will be pushed into the long grass.



