

PETITION TO INCLUDE OFF-GRID HOUSEHOLDS IN GOVERNMENT ENERGY SUPPORT SCHEME

Amid the soaring price of gas and electricity, the government announced in May that households would receive a payment of £400 pounds through the Energy Bills Support Scheme. The Scheme, however, only covers those who live in accommodation connected to the mains, leaving those with off-grid power supplies short-changed, including boaters.

Off-grid households are still impacted by the rising cost of fuel, particularly Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG), which has increased significantly in price over the past year. While boaters can rely on solar power during the summer months, other fuels are a necessity to see through the bite of winter.

And it's not just boaters that will be affected in off-grid dwellings. Estimates vary as to the number of people living off-grid in the UK, from 75,000 (readysteadysell.co.uk) to 150,000 (Institute of Engineering and Technology) to as

many as 3.3 million households (Future of Rural Energy in Europe). This is because many people in rural areas rely on independent, non-mains sources of energy to power and heat their homes.

Boaters and other off-grid households should not be excluded from government assistance during these pressing times, as we are still affected by the cost of living crisis.

In response to this, the NBTA has drafted a petition for the Secretary of State for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy to have off-grid households, and itinerant boat dwellers, included in the payout of the scheme. The NBTA plans to hand the petition to Jacob Rees-Mogg in person after parliament returns from recess.

We hope that the government will recognise and support those of us who live off-grid during this crisis. You can still sign the petition:

<https://bit.ly/3CSHsj>

ECO MOORINGS CONTINUED...

The Westminster council member played the politician and gave no real answers to our questions stating that the plan is dependent on the results of the consultation and available funding. It was clear the council didn't want to commit to anything. However, we did propose some ideas on how they could make the eco moorings suitable for more boaters which were received positively:

Provide electrical heaters that can be borrowed by boaters.

This would mean boats with off-shore power hook-up wouldn't need to adapt their boats and they could plug the heaters into their existing plugs.

Integrate a battery charger into the electrical point.

This would mean boats wouldn't need to run their engines or diesel generators and they wouldn't need to buy any extra appliances to fulfil their electrical needs. Especially as not all boats will be suitable for conversion.

All London boroughs have clean air plans to meet clean air targets because illegal levels of air pollution are still being recorded in London, including in the city of Westminster (levels of nitrogen dioxide have been recorded up to 50% higher than legal levels in various areas across London). Despite the pollution from boats being negligible in comparison to the pollution caused by road transport and domestic/commercial heating systems, where we can, it's good to reduce our emissions. However, in order to transition, boaters need time and support. Stoves and diesel engines are crucial to heat boats and to supply enough power during the Winter months, and are necessary for the majority of the waterways that are without electrical charging points. Then there is the issue of space and money to make boats suitable to use the electric points.



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.



TOGETHER WE CAN STOP THE BOAT CULL!

As many of you know, when CRT first proposed the full details of the Water 'Safety' Zones we calculated that 550 mooring spaces would be lost in Broxbourne, Tottenham and Hackney. As part of this CRT proposed introducing a number of 'no mooring' sites in areas which had been moored on and off for years, plus a ban on double mooring and wider boats in many areas.

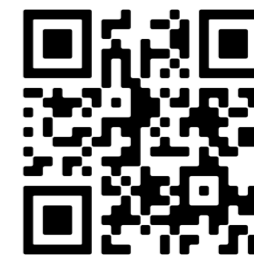
Following the magnificent efforts of the boating community to push back against these 'Safety' Zones, CRT initially appeared to desist from their implementation, in favour of a navigation forum of stakeholders. Unfortunately CRT are still attempting to impose the most extreme part of the original 'Safety' Zones outline – the new no mooring sections. CRT has been claiming the 'no mooring' sites are based on pre-existing rules and regulations, while making up new rules to say the sections have always been 'no mooring'. This flies in the face of the fact that many of these 'no mooring' sections have been moored on for over a hundred years.

We in the NBTA have been attending the navigation forum of stakeholders over safety, the Lea Navigation Forum. In this CRT had tried to not talk about the 'no mooring' sites; however, we have again and again been putting forward our disagreements over the many 'no mooring' sections. This has been done alongside with the collective boaters' action to keep mooring in places which we are challenging. CRT in return has announced a reduction of 'no mooring' restriction by a total of 157 metres. These include near or under pedestrian bridges and a few other places, often just an extra metre here or there. CRT has now admitted that there are no safety concerns for boats to moor near or under many of the footbridges. Therefore, along with mooring spaces CRT isn't openly planning to implement such as ban on double mooring etc, so far we have saved 263 mooring spaces out of 550 CRT first wanted to get rid of. While it is good news that CRT seems to

be seeing sense on some restrictions, there are many enforced 'no mooring' sections which still make no sense in terms of general safety. To see which restrictions we are challenging and CRT's and our own claimed reasoning, we have put together a clear and concise document which can be found at:

<https://bit.ly/3CPR1ej>

Most importantly, we must continue as a community to keep mooring on the 'no mooring' sites. NBTA will continue to attend the forum meetings and offer legal assistance to boaters; however, what will win this will be the hundreds of boaters who continue to resist and temporarily moor on the safe 'no mooring' sites. If you're in the above areas and see a safe 'no mooring' site, please moor there for up to two weeks. If CRT sends you a notice saying you are breaching Condition 12.2 of the T&Cs or that you are entering the improper mooring process, ignore these. You have the full support of the NBTA to do so.



Scan this QR code to read the NBTA London position paper on the 'safety zones'.

HISTORY OF THE RIVER LEE

The River Lee has long been a multi-use space, shared by all kinds of craft. In recent years, however, the Canal and River Trust has emphasised the rights of some river users over others. This is especially true as the Trust attempts to force through bans on mooring on the site of its "Water Safety Zones", which will prevent itinerant boat dwellers from mooring in these locations for the 14 days which applies elsewhere on the waterways.

The Trust claims that more "no mooring" sites are necessary for the safety of other canal users, such as rowers and kayakers. This is despite scant evidence that moored boats cause collisions and the fact that the Lee Navigation is among the widest waterways of the country.

Moreover, boats and large barges have been using and mooring on the Lee for many years, including in places where the Trust is calling to ban moored boats. The inset photos show boats and industrial barges moored at some of these very locations.

Figure 1, from between 1950 to 1969, shows barges unloading at Hackney Power Station, near Millfields Park in Clapton, now



Figure 1: Hackney Power Station, Millfields 1950-69

the site of a recycling centre. Two stretches of canal here are threatened with restriction under the Trust's "Safety Zones", where previously wide-beam barges have moored for access.

Judging from other photos from this period (Fig.4, 5, 6), this section of the navigation near the former power station has been used by



Figure 2: London Hackney Marshes 1973

considerably larger boats than tend to operate on the river today. Not only this, but Lee Rowing Club, some of the most vocal proponents of the "Safety Zones", operated on the navigation during these years, when timber and coal barges were evidently on the water too. The waterways have



Figure 3: The Lea Valley, River Lee



Figure 4: Hackney Power Station, Millfields 1950-69



Figure 5: Hackney Power Station, 1950-69



Figure 6: Hackney Power Station, 1950-69

been shared for some time, and it's unreasonable that this should change now.

In a later photograph from 1973, a barge is visible moored on the inside of the shallow bend leading round to Millfields Park. Across from the Princess of Wales pub, where the CRT is proposing no mooring sections, figure 3 shows barges double-moored on the offside. Before the Lea Bridge was constructed, the river was crossed at this site

STOP THE BOAT CULL! FUNDRAISING

Please donate as much as possible and help ensure that we are a community that cannot be flushed away.

Donations anything upwards from £5

- £10 would cover the cost of the online meetings and caseworker's phone number for one month.
- £20 will pay for 200 posters
- £25 pays for month rent on the shared office space
- £40 will pay for 200 newsletters
- £70 pays for a printed campaign banner for a boat

Scan the QR code or alternatively you can search, <https://gofund.me/20394ebd> to donate.



SCAN ME

by Jeremy's and Smith's ferries as early as 1747, according to *A History of the County of Essex: Vol. 6. Passenger boats were therefore mooring at this site as long as over 200 years ago.* there have been large craft sharing the river with others for some decades now.

The scene in figure 7 will be familiar as the view from the eastern bank of the river in Hackney Wick, opposite Omega Works and looking north toward Barge East. This photo



Figure 7: Hackney Wick, 1950-69

also dates from between 1950 and 1969, and shows wide-beam timber barges moored at a site which the Trust considers unfit for mooring of boats which are homes, but perfectly suitable for more lucrative restaurant boats and water sports landings.

The Canal and River Trust continues to claim that canal boats and liveboard boaters have not been able to moor in its "Water Safety Zones", for the benefit of other users. Clearly,



Figure 8: Old Ford Timber Loading, 1950-69

NEW ECO MOORING PLANS

Westminster council have just held a consultation period for a new eco mooring zone in Paddington. If plans go ahead this will be the third eco zone in London. The other eco zones are either side of the Islington Tunnel and in Kings Cross in the borough of Camden.

In the Paddington eco mooring plans they contextualise the need for eco moorings and how it can benefit boaters and residents. They also mention pollution has caused the hospital ward near the canal to close on occasions. The council said they could not share any details about the cause of the pollution due to GDPR reasons. NBTA London is in the process of finding out more about the hospital ward closures and the reasons for them by means of a Freedom of Information request.

One particular aspect of the plan is appealing. They have presented the idea of giving grants to boaters to cover the costs of converting boats so they are able to use the electric points (total of £1445 per boat for wiring, fixtures, consumer unit, electrical appliance). However, this mock costing does not consider labour costs and is vague so we can't be sure whether it's suitable for all boats. How they would decide which boaters receive the funding is also not clear. As stated in the pamphlet, these conversion grants are not guaranteed. The council will have to apply for funding but there is a worry that the conversion grants idea is tokenistic.

NBTA London met with Westminster council to ask for more details about the eco zone plans. Present at the meeting were 2 members of K&A consultants, a member of Westminster council and a member of CRT. The Westminster council member played the politician and gave no real answers to our questions stating that the plan is dependent on the results of the consultation and available funding. **Continues on page 4...**