

Lee Navigation Forum

Notes of the meeting

The third meeting of the Lee Navigation Forum (LNF) was held on Tuesday 25 January, 4:30-6:30pm on Zoom. It was attended by representatives from:

Broxbourne Cruising Club
Broxbourne Rowing Club
Canal & River Trust
Hertford Angling Club
Lea Rowing Club
Lee Valley Boat Centre
MJP Water Transport
National Association of Boat Owners (NABO)
National Bargee Travellers Association London (NBTAL)
South Island Marina
Spring Lee Cruising Club
Hertford Anglers

Apologies:

Moo Canoes
Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
The Leaside Trust
River Lea Anglers Club

Hopkins Van Mil (HVM) was present to facilitate the meeting and act as meeting secretariat. The meeting began with introductions from each member of the. Discussion followed the agenda, circulated in advance of the meeting.

1. Notes from last meeting

The Forum confirmed their agreement with the notes of the previous meeting.

2. Update since last meeting

a) Vegetation, dredging and debris removal

HVM updated the Forum on the status of the detailed submissions from Forum members on the vegetation, dredging and debris removal issues. HVM confirmed that there has been 1 response which has been shared with Peter Birch who will come back to the next full meeting of the Forum to update. HVM requests that the if the Forum would like to send through more detail they should do so before the next meeting so that Peter can respond.

ACTION 1: Forum to send detail on any vegetation, dredging and debris removal issues (not relating to the standard reporting process) to HVM and Peter Birch using the excel spreadsheet circulated by HVM ahead of the next Forum meeting.

Clarification was given by the Canal & River Trust that reporting of routine maintenance issues should continue as usual through the normal channels.

Update from Matthew Symonds (Canal & River Trust) on the sunken boat. Matthew explained the long process of removing the boat and provided reassurance that the process is in hand and that the boat should be removed within the next month.

b. Report on no mooring zones

NBTAL shared their position paper on no mooring zones, highlighting the main points and intent with the paper, including:

- An acknowledgement that there are some areas where it is inappropriate to moor such as: tight outside bends, under some bridges
- That NBTAL do not agree with the premise all mooring under all bridges is unsafe, the paper presents the view that there are high and wide bridges along the Lee Navigation where mooring should be allowed
- Lists A-D in the paper are areas where NBTAL will not challenge the no mooring zones
- Lists F-H in the papers are areas where NBTAL do not accept that mooring in any of the other areas in the list of red zones will cause a significant impediment to navigation.

NBTAL representatives stated that they believe the areas identified in lists F-H represent an inappropriate application of existing regulations. They therefore intend to challenge these no-mooring signs and support boaters that moor in these areas. They expressed the view that the no mooring rules are not being consistently applied across the network.

Broxbourne Cruising Club presented its paper responding to the NBTAL paper and Canal & River Trust application of the improper mooring process. This highlights the Club's view that:

- Lock landings has not been considered properly as yet
- Adequate space needs to be left for boaters to be able to moor up whilst working the locks or waiting for others to complete lock operation
- The paper encourages river users to look at history and precedent, not changing things for the sake of it

ACTION 2: The Canal & River Trust will review these submissions with colleagues and respond with a paper which will be emailed to Forum members. It was explained that others Forum members have shared their views at previous meetings and that their position hasn't changed.

It was confirmed that the [improper mooring process](#) is now being implemented and this has been the case since 10th January 2022. LBTAL confirmed that boaters on principle and in protest will be mooring in those areas which LBTAL has a position on as explained in the paper.

A short discussion was held in which members raised points on the no mooring signage being vandalised. The Canal & River Trust confirmed that this has cost and time implications to repair and renew signage, and that it is likely to slow the improper mooring process, but not stop it.

The Hertford Angling Club explained that actual mooring positions doesn't affect angling, but that mooring boats nose to tail with no space in between is an issue. They called for a 5m gap between boats to allow fishing to take place which at the moment is severely restricted e.g. at Stansted Abbots.

Some proposed that the improper mooring process be put on hold until the Canal & River Trust have had time to review the position paper and because there are restricted moorings with the

work on the Hertford Union Canal. HVM confirmed that the Forum is a place to air views but not a decision making body. The Canal & River Trust as the navigation authority has responsibility for enforcement and will continue with the process reinstated on 10th January.

ACTION 3: HVM will circulate the Canal & River Trust's updated maps with Forum members before the next meeting so that these can be taken in to account.

c. Navigational risk assessment

The Canal & River Trust gave an update on navigational risk assessment. It is currently considering the Nash Maritime proposal for providing independent assessment and the Trust is continuing to pursue its commitment to take this further.

ACTION 4: The Canal & River Trust will provide an update at the next LNF meeting.

ACTION 5: The Leaside Trust was unable to attend this meeting. Their paper on an application made to the Canal & River Trust for a community based offside mooring will be circulated with the notes of the meeting.

3. Meeting focus: River usage – information, education and awareness campaigns

In an open discussion Forum members made a range of suggestions for raising awareness, providing information and education to users of the Lee Navigation. The discussion included the following points:

- Sharing information to see what it's like to navigate a powered or unpowered craft – getting first-hand experience of the perspective you don't currently have being beneficial in understanding the risks to other users.
- Gaining understanding of the impact of wash on a fast rowing boat, the challenge to narrow boats in unpowered craft cutting in and out.
- Gaining understanding that narrow boats can't move quickly and that there can be issues with weeds and debris which also prevent faster avoidance action
- Use of horns/ visible markers on bows was discussed and agreed as valuable
- Mooring with space between boats to allow for safety access to the towpath
- Using the Canal & River Trust's wide beam boat as a resource for educating people on navigation e.g. such as an HVG licence or cycling proficiency course
- LNF members attending Canal & River Trust meetings to present aspects of river use from their perspective (with a recognition that this is resource intensive)
- Creating an online educational resource with, for example, vlogs, safety videos e.g. such as used on the Norfolk Broads

The discussion resulted in agreement that it would be helpful to convene a sub-group of Forum members to create a document which sets out in simple terms:

- Guidance on visibility on the water
- What different users are like on the water
- Questions around the impact of wash
- Setting out that there is cross-over in what people use the river for e.g. some boaters are also rowers
- That how all Lee Navigation users should conduct themselves with the message that this is about everyone, not just how boaters behave
- Links to existing resources such as the Waterway code

ACTION 6: HVM will convene a sub-group of the LNF in February to take forward the proposals made above and to establish ways in which all river users can collaborate positively. This will focus

on common ground and applied common sense to make things safer for everyone. The group will look at capacity and resource to deliver this.

The Canal & River Trust confirmed that they have committed to the online incident reporting system being made more user friendly and collecting real world data on incidents.

ACTION 7: The Canal & River Trust will publish a report drawn from the online incident reporting system at least once a year.

4. Focus topics for future meetings

It was agreed that the subgroup will meet in mid-February. Peter Birch will attend the next meeting to update the group on dredging and vegetation.

5. AOB

Forum members noted the following:

- A build-up of rubbish along the tow path and an increase in fly tipping

ACTION 8: The Canal & River Trust will continue to try and deal with incidents of fly tipping. Important that Forum members continue to report these.

- Build-ups of penny wort have been removed from Broxbourne by the Canal & River Trust and volunteers from the rowing club. It has all been dealt with for now.

8th March 2022 is the proposed date for the next meeting.

Hopkins Van Mil