



Boaters' Update 11 August 2017

Welcome to the latest edition. For most of us it seems that the summer weather has taken a holiday just when we want to as well! That said, it's not as though you need the sun to be shining to enjoy time out on the cut.

Of course, we want everyone to be able to enjoy our canals and rivers and the unique experiences they offer so below you'll find an inspirational video, and further information, on how people using wheelchairs, or those who find moving around difficult, can still get out on the water.

There's also the usual mix of news, an update on the licensing consultation, and this weekend's stoppages as well as ways in which you can get involved. If there is something else you'd like to see in a future edition, then do [get in touch](#).

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Happy boating,

Damian

News round-up and the fortnight ahead

Over the last couple of weeks you may have heard, or seen, that:

- 28 Jul – We reported that a whopping [44,000 hours of volunteer help was donated](#) to help keep canals in Greater Manchester, Peak District, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire clean, tidy and attractive for visitors last year.
- 1 Aug – Future development around the World Heritage Site at Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Solutia UK Ltd's former industrial site at Trevor, in North Wales, comes under the spotlight with the launch of [a new public consultation](#).
- 2 Aug – Thanks to funds generated by National Lottery players, we announced that initial funding has been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to develop [plans to restore and reopen the Grade II listed Stainton Aqueduct](#) on the Lancaster Canal.
- 3 Aug – Foxton Locks in Leicestershire is set to host a new waterway event with a [Foxton Vintage Festival](#) on 16 and 17 September.

Below I've picked out some highlights of stuff to see and do over the next fortnight. Of course, there are plenty of other activities and volunteering opportunities around the network: visit the [events section of the website](#) to find the perfect one for you.



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- All Aug – Top of many of our to-do lists at this time of year is ‘Stop the kids (and me) going stir crazy’. If this looks familiar then you might want to head along to either [Standedge Tunnel visitor centre](#) or the [Anderton Boat Lift](#) for some child-friendly activities.
- 11 to 13 Aug – If you’ve got festival fever then there’s plenty of choice this weekend with [Wednesfield](#), [Northwich](#), [Ellesmere](#) and [Blisworth](#) all hosting one.
- 12 Aug – Perhaps, you’d prefer to try your hand at fishing at a [free ‘Let’s Fish’ event](#) at Droitwich?
- 26 to 28 Aug – Go along to the free-to-attend [IWA Festival of Water](#) where over 100 boats will be moored along the Erewash Canal as well as plenty of craft activities and stalls.

Accessible boating

As mentioned in the introduction, our summer may be falling short of expectations in terms of weather but, as most readers will appreciate, it doesn’t need to be gloriously sunny to have an enjoyable cruise.

However, what does give some pause for thought is whether boating is accessible for you if you use a wheelchair or have problems with mobility. Take a look at the inspirational video below and read on to find out more about the growing number of options for mobility impaired boaters.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pk7UBjr-hTY>

Boat trips

We run a trip boat which is accessible for manual wheelchairs from the [National Waterways Museum in Gloucester](#) and we also have an accessible trip boat at the [Anderton Boat Lift](#).

Other organisations have told us that they offer accessible boat trips, but please contact them for confirmation and up-to-date information. Please also be aware that this list is not exhaustive:

- Robert Munday operates *Litania*, (Tel: 07450 423 975) and offers trips for families and groups with additional needs. Robert also offers boat handling and canal skills training if you’re thinking about self-drive hire (see below).
- [CanalAbility](#)
- [Canal & River Tours](#)
- [Lee & Stort Boat Company](#)
- [The Lyneal Trust](#)
- [Peter Le Marchant Trust](#)
- [Accessible Boating](#)

Accessible boat hire

You don’t need to be restricted to just day trips either. The following have boats available for self-skipped hire for holidays from a weekend break to as many weeks as desired. Again, please contact them directly for up-to-date details and confirmation.



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- www.vasd.org.uk has one wide-beam boat based near Berkhamsted on the Grand Union Canal with access to London and as far north as Warwick.
- [Waterway Experiences](#) operate three large canal boats from a boatyard on the Grand Union Canal just to the south of Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire.
- www.brucewaketrust.co.uk has one wide-beam and one narrowboat based at Upton on Severn on the River Severn.
- www.bruce.katrust.org.uk is the contact for The Bruce Trust's (no connection with the Bruce Wake Trust above) four wide-beam boats at Great Bedwyn, near Marlborough on the Kennet & Avon Canal.
- www.canalability.org.uk has wide-beam boats at Harlow on the Lee & Stort navigations with access to the Regents Canal, Paddington Arm and Grand Union Canal.
- www.peterlemarchanttrust.co.uk has one narrowboat for hire on the River Soar at Loughborough.
- www.lyneal-trust.org.uk has one narrowboat based at Lyneal, near Ellesmere, on the Llangollen Canal with access to the Montgomery and Shropshire Union canals.
- www.canalbreaks.com at the Willow Wren yard at Hillmorton, near Rugby has one adapted narrowboat for hire.
- www.accessibleboating.org.uk has an accessible narrowboat for hire on the Basingstoke Canal.

Further information

There's quite a bit of information about accessible boat hire operators on other websites such as www.waterwaysholidays.com and www.narrow-boating.com so it's worth taking a look if you're after more details.

Of course, if you're a hire boat operator with (or without) accessible boats and haven't yet registered your details in our directory then you can easily do this by creating a 'My Trust' account and [creating your own listing](#).

Please note that we offer this information in good faith but cannot take responsibility for content on third party sites.

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Boat licensing consultation update

Regular readers will remember that a month ago I reported on the [boat licensing consultation](#). Following the completion of the opening stages we and Involve, the independent charity commissioned to carry out the consultation, are reflecting on the rich discussions we've had so far with boaters. Once complete, the third and final stage of the process will get underway in which all boaters are encouraged to take part.

Ian Rogers, customer service and operations director, explains why the last stage is starting a little later than planned: "The first two stages of consultation have been really informative. We spoke initially with boating organisations and followed this with a series of workshops across the country attended by nearly 100 boaters, randomly selected, covering the range of boaters using our waterways. The groups discussed outcomes of the first stage and contributed further to shaping the final stage of consultation."



“Our initial timetable was to report back on the topics and views that came up in the workshops in late July before widening out the consultation to all boaters and boating groups. However due to the fantastic feedback we’ve had, it will take a little more time before publishing the report and subsequently opening the third stage of the consultation.

“I’d like to thank everyone who has taken part to date. Boating groups have been very engaged with the process and we’re confident that the boater workshop sessions reflected the geography and different types of boaters on our network. We’re aiming to start stage three of the consultation in late August and we’ll be getting in touch with all licence holders to encourage them, as well as members of the general public, to take part. It is important that we have a full view of boaters’ thoughts and feelings to help shape the future of licensing.”

Just so you’re aware, the final stage of the consultation will be communicated to all of our current licence holders and boating organisations. Ideally by email, if we have yours, and by post if not. If you haven’t registered an email address, which can be done via the [online licensing system](#), please log on and let us have it. This way, you won’t have to hang around for snail mail and you’ll save yourself (and us) the price of a stamp!

Also, [let us know](#) if you’re part of a boating organisation, and who you represent, if you didn’t speak to the independent agency, Involve, in the first stage of the consultation.

More information about the boat licensing consultation can be found [on our website](#).

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What went wrong in July

In this regular feature we look back at the things that we had to unexpectedly fix to keep the canals and rivers open for you to enjoy. I really hope I’m not tempting fate here but in July it was more a case of pressing on with our planned proactive maintenance regime as not a lot suddenly needed emergency repairs.

In fact, across the entire 2,000 miles of rivers and canals that we look after, there was only one ongoing unplanned repair job that kept a navigation closed for more than 48 hours – the replacement of gates at Standard’s Lock on the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal.

If you’ve [signed up to receive stoppages](#) you’ll notice that we categorise them in to general reasons, such as repair, inspection or vegetation.

Of course, when we’re dealing with such old structures, it’s not always as straightforward as ‘repair’ so we offer more detail in the body of the stoppage notice. But, in case you were wondering, here’s [a handy guide](#) to what we classify as a repair, maintenance, inspection and so on.

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More ways for you to get involved



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Many boaters go the extra mile in helping to keep canals and rivers in good condition by [volunteering](#) or [donating](#). As you're such an integral part of what makes waterways so wonderful, there're always other ways you can get involved:

- Winter stoppages – Thanks to everyone who took the time to give us their views on our planned programme of repairs and restoration over the coming winter. The consultation phase is now closed and we're considering all of your comments. By the end of next week, around 18 Aug, we'll publish the final plan [on our website](#).
- For the last few months we've been running our Boats in Bloom campaign and celebrating the wonderful contribution green-fingered boaters and canalside spaces make. Well, it's voting time! There are six categories and the shortlist can be found [on our website](#). You'll see that there are two ways to vote, one by Facebook (the [links for each category are here](#) and the other is [via an online ballot](#). Voting closes on the 29th of August.
- If you live aboard and boat along the Kennet & Avon Canal among the rolling hills of Wiltshire (roughly between Dundas and Kintbury) then the local authority wants to hear from you – Wiltshire Council has been asked by Government to assess the housing needs of those who use a boat as their primary residence and is inviting boat dwellers in Wiltshire to [complete an online survey](#).

Maintenance, repair and restoration work affecting cruising this weekend

Keeping your canals and rivers ready for you to enjoy is a year-round job. From time-to-time this includes some major engineering that we need to temporarily close the navigation for. Below you'll find a list, by region, of anything that's happen that may affect your cruising.

Just click on the one where you'll be and a webpage will open listing any stoppages for that region (if your region isn't listed then, yay, there aren't any navigation closures there!). If you're not quite sure which region your planned cruise falls in to please take a [look at this map](#).

- [East Midlands](#)
- [Kennet & Avon](#)
- [London](#)
- [North Wales & Borders](#)
- [North East](#)
- [North West](#)
- [West Midlands](#)

When any restrictions to navigation happen, we get them up on to our website as soon as we can – always best to [have a scan](#) before you set off for a cruise. If you have any questions about a specific closure then you'll find the email addresses for our regional offices [on our contacts page](#).

Bits and Bobs



Canal & River Trust

- We'll be undertaking essential website maintenance between 5pm Friday 11 August and 3pm Sunday 13 August. Some sections and features of the website will be unavailable or intermittent during this period but we'll do our best to keep downtime to an absolute minimum. Please note that this includes the boat licensing portal. We're sorry for any inconvenience caused!
- The Environment Agency has been in touch to ask us to share the following for any customers on (or thinking of) the Thames - Water levels in the upper River Thames, particularly upstream of Abingdon lock, will be shallower than you are used to in some places, due to below average rainfall this year. With this in mind we are asking boaters to take extra care, especially immediately downstream of locks where the natural gradient of the river means levels are always slightly lower than elsewhere in the reach.

Happy boating!

Damian