



Managing boats on London's busy waterways

Stage one engagement report

Introduction

The stage one engagement ran between 19 October 2020 and 8 January 2021 with an online survey and 15 virtual engagement sessions held online via Zoom.

The aim was to gather feedback from stakeholders on:

- What impact further growth in boat numbers in already busy areas would have on the stakeholder
- How people think the Trust should manage boats in busy areas
- How people could help the Trust manage boats in busy areas

Participants

Over 250 people have participated in virtual online sessions during the stage one engagement. 15 public online sessions were attended by a combined total of 136 people. Engagement sessions were also held upon request for the Inland Waterway Association (IWA) London branches and IWA national membership (85 participants), Association of Waterway Cruising Clubs (AWCC) and Hillingdon Canal Society. Over 630 responses were received to the online engagement survey.

The largest group of stakeholders participating in both the online survey and the virtual engagement sessions were liveaboard boaters without a home mooring, followed by leisure boaters with a home mooring and liveaboard boaters with a home mooring.

Key themes

The online survey asked people to tell us in their own words what the impact of a further increase in boat numbers in already busy areas would be on them/those they represented.

The majority of the feedback identified a negative potential impact if boat numbers increased in busy areas, but there were also some neutral/positive comments.

The two most common issues mentioned by all stakeholders were:

- Increased boat numbers in already busy areas, or growth in boat numbers in other areas, would lead to pressure on/a lack of mooring space

- Increased boat numbers would make ease of access to facilities (water and waste) even more difficult

Other feedback from the survey has included:

- Comments that boats create vibrant communities, and increase the sense of security and safety, on the towpath
- Concern that additional control measures will negatively affect liveaboard boaters
- Concern that the growth in continuous cruiser boaters in London has led to other boaters being excluded from London's waterways (or feeling excluded)
- Comments that more boats would contribute to increased noise and air pollution from stoves and generators
- Queries over whether boat numbers are rising or flattening off/decreasing
- What impact the Covid-19 pandemic will have on boat numbers in busy areas (with suggestions that there will be a reduction in boat numbers in the aftermath of the pandemic)

Key themes from boaters

	Liveaboard, no Home Mooring (Continuous Cruiser)	Liveaboard, Home Mooring in London	Leisure boaters, Home Mooring in London	Leisure boater, no Home Mooring in London (Continuous Cruiser)
Lack of mooring space	X	X	X	X
Access to / pressure on facilities	X	X		X
Numbers of boaters: now flattened out/dropping, will self-regulate	X			
Effects of Covid-19	X	X		
Safety - the more boaters, the safer the areas / less crime	X	X		X
Widebeams (increased number of)	X			
Vibrant, cohesive boater community	X			
Waiting time for tunnels		X		
Invasion of privacy		X		
Noise - parties, music		X		
Pollution / air pollution		X		X
Harder to leave HM for fear of no mooring space		X		
Water pollution and fly tipping			X	X
Make traveling to London with my boat impossible				X

The summary of engagement survey key themes from all stakeholders is included in appendix 1

Suggestions for how the Trust could manage boats in busy areas

In no particular order, the following suggestions were received during the initial engagement stage as to how the Trust could manage boats in busy areas of the London waterways:

- A London Licence for those who want to boat predominantly in London
- A congestion charge for boating in busy areas of London
- A limit to the time you could stay in central London
- Firmer penalty charges for those who overstay at short-stay moorings
- Increase the number of pre-book visitor mooring locations
- Shorten visitor mooring stay times
- Ban triple mooring in busy areas
- Limit the number of wide beam boats on London's waterways
- Pro-actively move boats that moor for longer than 14 days

Suggestion of how individuals could help contribute to managing boat numbers in busy areas

In no particular order the following suggestions were made:

- Stop passing through London
- Moor in less busy areas
- Volunteer (example suggested installing more mooring rings or help maintain facilities)
- Follow Continuous Cruiser rules (see [guidance for boater without a home mooring](#))
- Lead a community initiative (examples given were to help educate new boaters or work to help make towpaths safer)
- Mentor new boat owners
- Help with facilities
- Help with good communication
- Help with boater engagement

Next steps

The initial engagement stage has highlighted concerns amongst liveaboard boaters without home moorings about the possible implications on them from any new measures to manage busy areas. To help better understand these concerns and the underlying issues that inform where continuous cruisers boat and moor in busy areas we are undertaking an additional stage of research before finalising our proposals. This research will be carried out during February by an independent agency and will focus on engaging a sample of boaters without a home mooring who boat predominantly in London.

Once this additional research has been completed the Trust intends to publish proposals for managing boats on London's busy waterways in the spring. This will be followed by a formal consultation before the proposals are finalised and a timetable confirmed.

Appendix 1: Key themes from different stakeholders – ‘Key impact on you or those you represent’

Negative Themes	Liveaboard, no HM	Liveaboard, with HM	Leisure Boater, no HM	Leisure Boater, with HM in London	Residents	People who work on the waterway	Councillors	Represent an organisation	Volunteers	Rowers	Totals
Pressure on facilities/ lack of facilities	50	7		3	2	1		5	8		76
Air pollution		2		1	22		4	1	3		34
Antisocial behaviour							2		1		3
Damage to towpath								2			2
Damage to wildlife		1			3			1			6
Fly tipping							2		2		4
Invasion of privacy		1									1
Lack of mooring space	97	10	54	14	24	9		19	15		242
Light pollution					1						1
Limits access					1				2		3
Litter					13			4	3		21
Noise		4			13	1	3		2		23
Overcrowded towpath					3		1				4
Rats					1						1
Rise in crime	1								1		
Reduction of recreation space							1	5		1	8
Safety as a negative					12	1		5	3	5	28
Tensions between users							1	1			2
Trader mooring difficult						1					1
Visiting impossible		3		5		1					9
Visual impact									2		2
Waiting times for tunnels and locks		1				3		4	2		10
Water pollution		2		1	3		1	4			11
Widebeams	2				2	1					5

Neutral themes											
Effects of Covid-19	7	1							1		9
Positive themes											
Numbers will self-regulate	1	1									2
Diversity	18				1						20
Less crime	21										21
Safety as a positive	12	3		1	7						23
Number of responses	280	43	101	24	76	18	7	28	35	5	620