

## NAVIGATION NOTES

from Sue Cawson



The NAG members are being kept busy. As well as the main meeting we now have several sub-groups, dredging, vegetation, winter stoppages, paddles and pawls and soon to be formed, moorings. With the sub-groups we are able to bring other people in to assist NAG. There is now only one NAG group, licensing and moorings group has gone. As NAG has become more established over the years, we have become more involved with CRT and are now being consulted and involved more and more. CRT are far from perfect, but they are willing to listen to their customers, so please keep reporting issues in via email with copies to me.

The Winter Stoppage programme is now final and stoppages began on the 5th November, the process is now run and managed by a small team who liaise with the local areas to create the final programme. This team have been running a consultation process and have had several meetings to discuss and make changes to the programme mainly to fit in with the fuel boats, boaters and local businesses. Although not all the requested changes have been possible I feel that the whole process is improving, more businesses and boaters are getting involved and taking part in the process.

The Shropshire Union stoppages should have been after Christmas this year, but there is a third party stoppage at the railway bridge 89a before Christmas so the works at Audlem, Adderley and Tyrley will be done at the same time. There is a long stoppage at Broad Street this Winter, this is to strengthen the road for a new tramway. The good news for members is that Hurlleston and Napton are having major works on them to improve the widths, quote on my stoppage list 'The Hurlleston locks were originally designed to the width of 7'5" and the aim of the repairs at lock 4 (bottom lock) to the inward leaning

towpath wall is to restore this to its original alignment. This being the narrowest lock on the flight, our repair works are intended such that this width restriction can be increased. We would anticipate 7' boats being able to pass through on the completion of our works"

With all the canal closures in the North West due to water shortages several winter stoppages have taken place early, the Wigan flight and Bosley are examples. The Winter Stoppage programme is on the CRT website.

We had a vegetation meeting at Napton, with the Framework Contract Manager for the National Vegetation and Environmental Services Contract and the National Environment Policy Advisor, it was extremely interesting and informative. The mowing and vegetation specifications are at present being revised and simplified, the specifications are selected by the regions, with clearer and simpler specifications this should work better with better decisions. We had a long discussion about the Southern Oxford, it was helpful that Mary Gibby was with us and had just done that length. When boating it is still useful to send in photographs of vegetation that is a hazard to navigation, please do be specific don't just say the whole of a canal! The last cut of the year should be a hedge to edge including the wash walls and removing saplings from wash walls. CRT have now got several volunteer teams working with them to work on mainly offside vegetation, they still need more!

We have just had a dredging meeting in Leeds with a site visit to the Aire and Calder. Land and Water are dredging below Lemonroyd Lock and using the CRT tip at Woodlesford, they are the carrying on down to Leeds doing spot dredging. The dredgings coming out at Lemonroyd Lock were very clean and dry obviously when they get closer to Leeds it will be more hazardous. We then

had a discussion about dredging and the plan, which goes through to 2028/9. This plan isn't set in stone and we have been able to make changes and suggestions. We raised issues that have been identified with the recent dredging on the Macclesfield, and the need for dredging Gosty Hill Tunnel. It was agreed that CRT and Land and Water would do some investigation work on how this could be done, we also raised the issues with Minworth and I shared several reports I had received. It was agreed that something must be done, I will keep you updated.

The next NAG meeting is in December.

I was invited to a CRT Drought Management meeting, this was to discuss what had happened over this summer and if the process could have been managed in a different way and what had been learnt from the process. Nigel Stevens and I were invited to represent NAG. Both Nigel and I stressed that we needed better and more accurate communication and more involvement earlier. What was apparent was the speed at which the water resources declined especially in the North West, unfortunately the North West had also been plagued by stoppages. There was also discussion about restrictions and how effective they are, there are some areas where night locking of locks does work. We discussed volunteers and their knowledge and training,

the volunteers are here to stay and are vital to the process in some areas.

What is impressive is the amount of data held by CRT about water resources going back to the 1920s the different patterns and recoveries. The good news in the North West is that Daniel Greenhalgh has been appointed Regional Director.

I went for a trip on the Trent with Euan Corrie with Richard and Trevor from CRT. We went from Hazelford to Nether lock, the purpose of the trip was to discuss the new equipment for self operation. It was an excellent discussion and they took on board most of our worries. These were mainly about how the paddles operate and being able to remove your key before closing the gates under some circumstances. We also discussed the traffic lights and generally how random they are around the whole system.

A worry for several mainly GU boats is Filance Lock on the Staffs and Worcs. Just recently **Darley** got stuck and had to be flushed through, **Darley** had never been stuck there before. Data is being collected, it is important any issues are reported in. Please also report any lock that has become tighter, these are old structures and they do move, I know of at least six boats that stick at Booths Lane Middle on the Trent and Mersey, so we need to keep an eye on that one!

## Thames Report

From Bernard Hales

Non-tidal River Thames: briefly, from the River User Group 8 (Bell Weir to Teddington) Autumn meeting.

The chairman updated those present (about 60) on strategic issues.

- the proposed transfer of Thames Navigation to the Canal and River Trust will not happen in the foreseeable future owing to lack of funding.
- the decision that weirs should be maintained from the Navigation (rather than flood control) budget will have a major impact on the management of the river.
- the removal of sunken and derelict boats on the Thames remains an ongoing issue.
- un-consented moorings and the recent actions of the Field Operations Team with tugs, cranes, etc., useful work with the Enforcement team.

All present congratulated the EA team on the real progress with removal of wrecks and enforcement action, with particular reference to removal of unauthorised piles encroaching on the channel at Hampton Riviera, above Molesey Lock.

The River Thames (flood alleviation) Scheme (RTS) is now unlikely to go ahead owing to funding problems – Surrey County Council cannot contribute the substantial sum required. (So we won't get another 2 'Jubilee Rivers' after all, just wet feet - again.)