

Spring 2025



## FOR THE COMMUNITY AND RIGHTS OF BOAT DWELLERS

### CRT Expresses Clear Desire to Change the Law

Seemingly out of the blue, late last December, the Canal and River Trust (CRT) announced a commission to review licensing. Attached to the press release was a 'Terms of Reference' to the commission that clearly outlines their intentions to remove itinerant boat dwellers from inland waterways. It explicitly states that CRT views the community of boat dwellers without home moorings as a problem, advocating for changes to the law to address this 'problem'. The document claims that the community has "created challenges for the Trust both from an operational, financial, and reputational perspective" and that in dealing with these so-called 'challenges,' CRT is seeking changes to the law, pointing to its issues with the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, and the British Waterways Act 1995 — the very legislations that enshrine our community's legal protection to exist.

In this document, CRT announced it has appointed an 'independently led' commission to review a future legislative framework for how boats on its waterways are licensed. Currently, the rights of itinerant boaters to live on the waterways are underpinned by Section 17(3)(c)(ii) of the 1995 British Waterways Act, which provides that a vessel may be licensed without a permanent mooring as long as it is "used bona fide for navigation throughout the period for which the consent is valid without remaining continuously in any one place for more than 14 days or such longer period as is reasonable in the circumstances."



It is not just what the document does say that's alarming, it's what it doesn't say too. There is no mention of the many positive aspects of itinerant boating: we ensure the network remains 'operational' with itinerant boaters flagging and fixing issues with locks, towpaths, facilities, and the cut itself; we keep each other and non-boaters safe in places that were once seen as no-go areas; and we act as unpaid but willing tour guides/tourist attractions/security guards for the many visitors to the UK's canal network each year. Numerous things can be said about itinerant boaters' positive impact, but the document is truly desolate on that front. The document also does not mention any other class of boater (apart from liveaboard) or waterways user.....it is us they're after!

The itinerant boating community are under threat from potential changes to the law.

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Despite the NBTA sending the commission a response laying out facts which show the invalidity of the Terms of Reference, CRT now state that the first commission meeting has already ratified CRT's document. This is worrying. It may be a sign that a conclusion has already been reached. The commission is expected to run until at least September 2025, when its recommendations will be considered by CRT's board of trustees.

In the meantime, the NBTA will keep a close eye on the commission and engage whenever possible, relaying information when useful and raising questions on your behalf. After the commission, CRT may well go to Parliament to try to get a new damaging law. We are currently lobbying MPs and Peers to generate support in Parliament to remove the threat. All MPs and Peers engaged so far are very supportive.

It may also help to put together a portfolio of positive boater action. If you want to add to the 'Better with Boats' portfolio, please email us at [nbtalondon@gmail.com](mailto:nbtalondon@gmail.com).

If you want to be involved in lobbying MPs or generally in this campaign, please email [nbtalondon@gmail.com](mailto:nbtalondon@gmail.com) or join the whatsapp group here: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/Fpc8Gwf7bBx6EMrBEF7MAa>

You can read the CRT 'Terms of Reference' and NBTA's response to it: <https://tinyurl.com/42fc7vkn>

## Canal and River Trust CEO's Time is Up

**The Canal and River Trust (CRT) have announced that CEO Richard Parry will be leaving the organisation this summer.** In a press release clearly written in a parallel universe, the cash strapped CRT thanked Parry, who has been CEO since 2013, for leading the Trust to being an “established and well-supported national charity.”

Such a loose grasp on reality is par for the course from CRT. Under Parry's watch the Trust lost millions of pounds trying to sign up members of the public as “friends”, failed to come to terms with the planned (from day one) reduction in the government grant, repeatedly attacked the boating community, has sold off marinas, lockhouses & other assets\*, and oversaw the continued deterioration of the system.

But Parry and his executive chums at CRT defiantly refuse to take responsibility for their negligence and financial mismanagement. Instead, they have blamed the government, inflation, climate change, and, of course, itinerant boaters, for their woes. Anything, in fact, but themselves.

While the announcement of Parry's departure sparked a lot of speculation as to whether he jumped or was pushed, it is unlikely, to say the least, that CRT's ongoing hatred of boaters without a home mooring will subside when a replacement is found. Luckily we have each other to push back against them.

\*see here: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8beseb>



[nbtalondon@gmail.com](mailto:nbtalondon@gmail.com)



<https://nbtalondon.co.uk>



[officialnbtalondon](#)

**Want to get more involved with NBTA London? We hold monthly meetings on the first Sunday of each month at 4pm.**

The meeting can be accessed online via: <https://8x8.vc/nbta/nbta>  
Alternatively, you can use the dial in details: Dial-in: +44 330 808 1706  
PIN: 45925961#

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# The Surcharge Campaign has a Strategy!

The campaign against the surcharge (the charge for not having a home mooring) began with a massive influx of people joining, and the campaign set up many working groups to facilitate the large range of strategies and tactics people put forward. After a while, it became obvious to most that there were too many strategies and tactics compared to the number of people actively participating. Therefore, the campaign decided to agree on a set of strategies and tactics.

After much discussion, we, inside the campaign, have decided on a strategy to stop the surcharge. The strategy is twofold: while we are trying to find allies within Parliament (lobbying MPs, Lords etc) who will stand against the surcharge, we will also be using our leverage to take on CRT's public image by protest leafleting at the very events and places where CRT is trying to improve its image.



Join NBTA volunteers in attending events across the country and leafletting beside CRT stalls to raise public awareness about the licence fee surcharge.

Leafleting at CRT stalls works so well because it undermines CRT's public image. The whole premise of CRT's existence is based on its "charity doing charitable work" public image, and of course, its donations are linked to how people view it. This is why it spends millions of pounds on PR events and social media, etc. CRT has written to NBTA twice now asking, then demanding, we stop leafleting at their stalls. It has obviously been having a serious effect on CRT, but there is no way CRT can stop us. Leafleting at CRT stalls will stop when CRT stops the surcharge. It is our leverage; it's the reason CRT will stop the surcharge because CRT needs their public image more than it needs to charge the surcharge. Get involved to be part of the actions that will stop the surcharge. Email [stopboatlicencediscrimination@gmail.com](mailto:stopboatlicencediscrimination@gmail.com) to be involved. Or join the WhatsApp group: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/J0EJwvdYlddLnIrkPm60ho>

If the strategy of lobbying MPs is successful, rather than fighting CRT time and time again over never-ending iterations of their attrition of our community, we might just possibly see the government seeking to regulate CRT excesses on our behalf. Long shot, but if it works, it will save us many, many more battles. Our first 'Drop in Session' back in November was just a start. Our second session was planned for February 11th but has morphed into a meeting with Andrew Cooper MP, who we met at the first session. We hope to explain our case in more detail to him, and he can then advise on our next parliamentary steps.

If you want to join the organising group on this, we encourage you join our "Lobbying Parliament" WhatsApp group: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/ERb60kKAeXX2tOGNSGthpK>



The **National Barge Travellers Association** (NBTA) is a member-led organisation of travelling boat dwellers and their supporters. We believe in mutual solidarity within our community through our casework and campaigning. We encourage our community to take action for the interests of the community as a whole.

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# Initial Wins Against the Chargeable Moorings

**It's been over a year since Canal and River Trust (CRT) introduced chargeable moorings in London as part of a plan to reduce boat numbers. Although only a portion of the 1.1km of planned chargeable moorings has been implemented, it's already had a significant impact on boaters.**

Chargeable moorings were first introduced in Little Venice in 2019, with nightly fees between £10 and £12. Despite low demand, CRT raised the prices, leading to even more empty spaces in central London.

An FOI request in June 2024 revealed that only 1,203 bookings were made between October 2023 and May 2024, out of a possible 7,224 bookings, meaning the moorings were used at just 17% capacity. The total income of £36,532 barely covered the cost of administering pre-bookable moorings, highlighting that demand is not meeting expectations.

Rather than improving access, the charges have priced many boaters out of prime locations, leaving them empty. As a result, many boaters now cruise for a full day to find a mooring or risk fines, and those unable to afford the fees are

forced to moor in already overcrowded areas, creating even more precarious conditions for boaters.

The lack of activity in these once-bustling areas has also raised safety concerns, leaving towpaths more vulnerable to crime.

An October 2024 FOI revealed that the three Mooring Rangers managing these spaces cost CRT £104k annually, far exceeding the assumed £73k annual income from the moorings, suggesting the policy may be operating at a loss. This indicates an illogical policy that is costing both CRT and boaters, with no clear benefit.

Due NBTA London campaigning, CRT has also agreed to stop chargeable moorings in Camden and says they no longer plan to roll out more across London including Uxbridge, Kensal, Broadway Market and Victoria Park. However, CRT has remained committed to charging boaters to be able to moor in Little Venice, Paddington Basin, Kings Cross and Angel.

NBTA believe these mooring spots should be open for anyone boating through London, as is the norm across the entire canal network, and that the privatisation of public spaces should continue to be resisted.

## ***BOATERS' BIG BASH!***

**Our community is under a flurry of attacks; from the chargeable moorings, charging boaters without home moorings differently to boaters with home moorings for the same licence, to the CRT's latest plans to try to change the laws that protect us. More than ever, our community needs to come together to show a united front in the face of these attacks.**

Come to the Boaters' Big Bash; we will have food, stalls, children's activities, a march on CRT London offices, speeches, live music, and acts from the boaters. Oh, and bunting...

**When?** Saturday 14th June starting 12 noon

**Where?** W2 5TF near Westbourne Park (a little west of Paddington)

**[what3words///intelligible.dome.until](https://intelligible.dome.until)**

