

SAY NO to CRT/ IWA abuse of boaters without home moorings

The Canal & River Trust (CRT) and Inland Waterways Association (IWA) have joined forces to attack the right to live on a boat without a permanent mooring and to demonise the boaters who exercise this right, who own less than 10% of the boats on CRT waterways.

The CRT and the IWA have labelled these boat dwellers "continuous moorers", have published misleading information about their legal rights, and have stated that they are a problem. The CRT has refused to stop using derogatory terms about boat dwellers without home moorings or to correct inaccurate information on its web site. The IWA controls 75% of the private boater representation on the CRT Council.

Abuse like this would be unacceptable if it was used against other groups of people. It would not be permitted in a school or a workplace. Do other boaters and waterway users really want to be party to this unsavoury campaign of bullying? Do you feel comfortable that this is beginning to look like the incitement of hatred against a minority group? Would you take part in abusing another group of people in this way? Are you happy that a charity has publicly singled out one group of its customers for public vilification? Or do you think that CRT should treat all its customers with the same respect?

According to his autobiography, IWA founder Tom Rolt spent 1800 days moored at Tardebigge without needing to pay for the mooring - if he did that today, he would be subjected to disrespect and abuse

If you think that CRT should concentrate on maintaining the waterways rather than bullying a minority of people who are exercising their legal right to licence and live on their boats without a home mooring, please tell CRT.

Email Lynne Berry, Deputy Chair of the CRT:
lynne.berry@canalrivertrust.org.uk or write to her at CRT, First Floor North,
Station House, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 1BB.

The right to use and live on your boat without a home mooring is enshrined in Section 17(3)(c)(ii) of the 1995 British Waterways Act. This entitles boat licence holders to stay for up to 14 continuous days in any one place, or longer if the circumstances warrant it. It does not stipulate any specific cruising pattern, minimum distance or 'no return within' period beyond this. It does not require boats to be on a 'progressive journey'. It merely requires boats to be used 'bona fide for navigation'.

Parliament intended that the test for whether boats are complying with this requirement should be whether the boat has stayed for longer than 14 continuous days in one place without a longer stay being reasonable in the circumstances. Parliament specifically rejected any requirement for a 'no return within' period or a 'progressive journey'.

The rights of boaters without home moorings are being eroded by a succession of increasingly draconian restrictions. They are expected to comply with 'rules' that go beyond what the law requires of them that are at odds with what Parliament intended, or else have their homes seized by the charity, losing not just their home but the only asset that they own.

If boats are overstaying, CRT enforcement has failed and it should change its priorities. At present, enforcement is focused on the distance that boats without home moorings travel. This will not reduce overstaying, indeed boats with moorings are just as likely to overstay according to a recent study by NABO . The boat licence entitles boaters to travel where they choose on CRT waterways. There is no legal mechanism whereby CRT can limit the number of boats that navigate in a particular area, it can only limit the number of permanent moorings.

CRT misrepresents boat dwellers without home moorings as exploiting a loophole in the law and having a 'free ride'. The reality is that they are legitimate users of the waterways, and that boaters who pay extra for moorings receive extra services and benefits in return.

National Bargee Travellers Association 0118 321 4128
secretariat@bargee-traveller.org.uk www.bargee-traveller.org.uk