

# NATIONAL BARGEE TRAVELLERS ASSOCIATION

## NBTA MEMBERS BOATER FACILITIES SURVEY RESULTS

### Methodology

An online survey was carried out using the Questionpro platform, [www.questionpro.com](http://www.questionpro.com). The survey was advertised internally to the NBTA membership by means of the regular NBTA email newsletter. It was also posted on the Canals Online [Faceboat] facebook page by an NBTA member. The survey was not posted publicly otherwise, with the aim of ensuring the participants were Bargee Travellers and other liveaboard boaters. Participants could not be identified by the survey software and it was made clear that the survey was anonymous and confidential. Some 96 participants took part and 79 completed responses were received. The survey was live between 26th January 2022 and 1st March 2022.

The survey contained eleven specific questions. These questions were multiple choice, with a pre-set list of tick boxes. A twelfth question asked participants to make any other comments on the boater facilities that they need. Some 44 comments were received, some of which were very detailed.

The questions were as follows:

1. What facilities do you need? Tick all that you need
2. How far apart in cruising time should facilities be?
3. Should there be more facilities in waterway areas where there are more liveaboards and/or more boats?
4. If yes, how far apart in cruising time (hours) should facilities be in busier waterway areas?
5. How many boats should each facility site cater for?
6. Do you need vehicle parking near the waterway?
7. Should facilities be free of charge?
8. Do you need places to moor that are accessible by people with disabilities?
9. Do you need places to moor that are wheelchair accessible?
10. What other facilities do you need? Tick all that you need
11. Do you have a mooring for your boat?
12. Do you have any comments about the boater facilities that you need?

### Survey results

The survey returned the following results.

#### 1. What facilities do you need? Tick all that you need

Water taps 79 / 19.22%  
Elsan disposal 55 / 13.38%  
Pump out 17 / 4.14%  
Rubbish disposal 76 / 18.49%

Domestic recycling 63 / 15.33%  
Disposal/ recycling old oil 56 / 13.63%  
Disposal/ recycling old batteries 37 / 9%  
Disposal/ recycling bulky waste items 28 / 6.81%

**2. How far apart in cruising time should facilities be?**

Maximum provision 2 hours apart, minimum provision 8 hours apart

**3. Should there be more facilities in waterway areas where there are more liveaboards and/or more boats?**

Yes 76 / 95%  
No 2 / 2.5%  
Don't know 2 / 2.5%

**4. If yes, how far apart in cruising time (hours) should facilities be in busier waterway areas?**

Maximum provision 2 hours apart, minimum provision 5 hours apart

**5. How many boats should each facility site cater for?**

Up to 25 per day 39 / 49.37%  
Up to 50 per day 31 / 39.24%  
Up to 100 per day 8 / 10.13%  
Up to 200 per day 1 / 1.27%  
Up to 300 per day 0 / 0%  
More than 300 per day 0 / 0%

**6. Do you need vehicle parking near the waterway?**

Yes 45 / 56.96%  
No 34 / 43.04%

**7. Should facilities be free of charge?**

Yes 37 / 46.84%  
No 0 / 0%  
Yes but only those provided by the authority we pay our boat licence fee to 34 / 43.04%  
Yes all facilities should be free of charge even those provided by third parties 8 / 10.13%

**8. Do you need places to moor that are accessible by people with disabilities?**

Yes 25 / 31.65%  
No 54 / 68.35%

**9. Do you need places to moor that are wheelchair accessible?**

Yes 16 / 20%  
No 64 / 80%

## 10. What other facilities do you need? Tick all that you need

Boatyard space for DIY repairs and maintenance 59 / 10.44%  
Boatyard services, repairs done for you 53 / 9.38%  
Dry dock for DIY repairs and maintenance 54 / 9.56%  
Dry dock, repairs and maintenance done for you 47 / 8.32%  
Fuel, diesel 74 / 13.1%  
Fuel, petrol 15 / 2.65%  
Fuel, HVO 12 / 2.12%  
Coal 56 / 9.91%  
Wood 39 / 6.9%  
Toilet 32 / 5.66%  
Shower 42 / 7.43%  
Laundry 55 / 9.73%  
Electric hook-up 27 / 4.78%

## 11. Do you have a mooring for your boat?

Yes 10 / 12.5%  
No 57 / 71.25%  
Winter 6 / 7.5%  
Sometimes 7 / 8.75%

## 12. Do you have any comments about the boater facilities that you need?

Some 44 comments were received:

1. Provision of facilities should take into account the very high number of hire boats in spring and summer on some canals, and that hire boats seem to use much more in the way of throwing away rubbish and filling their water tank
2. As a constant cruiser, basic waste disposal sites (water, elsan, pump-out and RUBBISH) should be within easy reach of any short move. As to these being free, isn't this part of the licence fee to pay for. General waste and recycling need to be closer together. I have been accused of a number of things when trying to put my waste in a 'private' bin. Maintenance of the CRT sites should also be part of the mix - as an example, I got water from Little Venice, couldn't then get water from Scrubs Lane and once in Alperton the tap was broken. As I have a pump-out, the CRT PO's are usually broken with a card issue. There has to be another way of ensuring the smooth running of these machines – get rid of the cards pls.
3. It would be nice if new facilities were introduced that actually used the energy we're creating to fuel them. Human waste for example produces both methane and electricity and methods on how to use these for power are now rather common in university research. Waterless toilets, water harvesting, micro hydro generation, duckweed collection and harvesting along with basic renewables like solar and wind would and could be providing more than enough energy for our own electric charge points, green fuels and new facilities. As I'm sure you're aware existing facilities are visibly decrepit and currently wasting both energy and water because of poor or no maintenance. Toilets which should be boater access only are left open to cafe customers and then often locked to boaters with additional, non CRT keys. There seems to be copious amounts of iron bacteria (leaves red sludge like presence) in

many of the waterlines, which is a sign of poor maintenance and also that the water they are providing is not up to Water Regulations Act 1999 which clearly specifies water should not be wasted or contaminated, both of which are being done by CRTs lack of maintenance. Stonebridge where the shower just drips and Old Ford Lock are key examples of these violation but there are many others as well. Towpaths are not safe past sunset and are hazardous to even just walk on during the daytime hours because they have no drainage, uneven, overgrown weeds and are often too narrow for the heavy traffic of high speed cyclist using them for commuting. Waste management by Biffa is a joke. We've had encounters with their bin collection people who were bigoted and confrontational to people dropping off their waste. We've had to go to extraordinary measures carrying huge bin bags, and looking for councils and private companies who will take our normal boating waste to try to avoid y-tipping - but that has not always been possible. We've had repairs needed on our boat for over two years we have not been able to complete simply because we have no where to go to do them. Facilities are simply insufficient, and even if there were half the number of boaters there still would not be enough facilities.

4. There should be more residential moorings, we both work full time so can't CC, but at the moment are tied to a less than perfect private mooring because we have nowhere else to go.
5. A maximum of four hours cruising between facilities. A minimum of water and rubbish at all CRT facilities.
6. I would be happy just to have more water an elsan its so far and few between an some are vandalised etc or don't work
7. Some facilities are really good others seem to be left to deteriorate and become musty and unpleasant And at others the temporary mooring to use those faculties is not good
8. CRT should not be able to push working facilities into private facilities (i.e. marinas) where the service is found to be in use by boaters. This is underhand privitisation of the waterways.
9. Facilities should be available for all boats. CRT need to address the issues faced by live aboards in particular. Some are facing severe problems with hygiene, clean water and refuse removal. It is way beyond time CRT ensured boaters have a right to a decent way of life on the canals.
10. There are only 2 rubbish points, 2 water points and 1 Elsan point in the whole of the Weedon pound, a stretch heavily populated by liveboards
11. Currently on the Upper River Lea it's 13 miles and 13 locks between the known working pump-outs (Roydon Marina to Spring eld Marina, because you can't count on CRT pump-outs). It is absolutely ESSENTIAL that Hazelmere Marina service (Waltham Abbey) are up-and-running all the time (prioritised), as it not the case most of the time, because it is the only service point for miles and miles in both directions.

12. Laundry and showers do not exist near me would be very useful. Not enough taps especially on Leicester line. Elson sluice into sewage works at Stowe hill, taps showers etc at Bugbrooke or nether heyford.
13. They are few and far between. Usually disgustingly dirty and open to the public who dump all their waste in our bins. A prime example of this is the facility in skipton bus station.
14. I found some questions hard to answer. In terms of parking, it's tricky if you have a car or visitors as you can't get Local authority permits - it'd be great if that could change somehow - at least so boaters could have occasional passes when need certain jobs/help (i.e. more than car ownership) but to be fair. I would say that parking should be charged if it's a decent facility, not the road side. And there is a need to discourage car use for Zero Emissions. Could CRT support innovations to de-carbonise boats, by accessing funding/research links, using its power? We are going to have challenges as more local authorities/society in general move to zero emissions and i'm not confident how my boat can respond to this; it will take time and resources - how can we do it most efficiently? This is relevant to facilities as I said I don't need electric charging now, and I use solar, but am unsure how I can heat/drive my boat as things shift this decade. I am flabbergasted that as an environmental charity CRT does not offer recycling, or it is very ad hoc, e.g. Little Venice has it but no longer by Victoria Park? It's rare I find I can't access facilities in central London and they feel decent spaced out, but would be great to review where points are distributed and there can be issues if one is out-of-action for a while (i.e. need upgrading). In the areas outside Central London they can be a bit sporadic but I can't remember off-hand which areas are challenging. I feel having facilities in less attractive locations might encourage people to move there, and help encourage surveillance and more attractive waterways in these locations, or alongside new developments. It'd be great to have schemes to connect boaters and these communities where new hubs are created. I would like to see CRT ensuring that when canal-side developments come forward, they use their influence to ensure moorings for continuous cruisers are not lost, facilities are enhanced, and more residential/trader moorings are introduced (not at a significant loss of existing cruiser spaces). This should especially be the case as a condition of selling CRT's own land in areas where facilities do not already exist, or existing ones could be improved.
15. Facilities are often out of order and water taps fill very slowly. More and faster flowing taps are needed.
16. Bins are the real problem, it is often a very long way between bins and they are usually over owing when you get to them. Power hookups really would be great to see, in 2 years of boating ive only once plugged in and that was whilst in dry dock. Over winter especially power is hard, running the engine or generator isn't ideal and also loud/pollution.
17. There are not enough! and those that are there are usually dilapidated or broken/out of use - we can't use a compostor toilet now as the contractor for waste management can't cope with the solids, this is after the CRT told boaters that composting was a better way to go than Elsan then changed their mind when Biffa told them no. Marinas want to stop all boat maintenance unless they're doing it for you. CRT could raise a few quid by setting up maintenance points along the system

where you could go and hire a bay for a week or two and work on your boat, they'd need a load of tarmac, a slip way and a tractor and trailer to lift out the boats, they could charge per week + lift out. they'd be completely booked out IMO

18. Parts of the network could have more mooring spaces if there were mooring rings.
19. I would be happy even if the improvement was just serviceability of the one already provided
20. We really need domestic recycling bins along the towpath as these keep being reduced or taken away. Food waste recycling would be so helpful too, it's such a waste how much compostable waste just goes to land fill. Services are quite far between in some areas, which is very hard if you don't drive, especially if you cycle to one Elsan point and it blocked, then have a long way to the next one, for example. We also need parking spaces near some points on the towpath. Of the limited number that exist, some are being threatened with no regard for how important they are.
21. I've just heard that they are removing the rubbish skip at Sutton Cheney on the Ashby canal. This facility has been there for many years and a lot of boaters rely on it. Their reason for this removal is stated that tipperies are using it, so making it more secure is not as good as removing it, great for us boaters...
22. At the moment, and at least for the past year, the issue with bins in and around London has been acute. The company CRT outsource to do not collect them frequently enough so that they are nearly always overflowing. They have also taken away all recycling bins that they used to have at boater's facilities points. Finally, they should provide a way for boaters to get rid of their compost, since they changed their position on using bins for this and so lots of people are stuck with composting toilets and no way of offloading compost.
23. The facilities aren't complicated - Elsan/pump-out/rubbish/water. More needed in silly areas such as London where everyone is cheek by jowl. That said, more rural services multiple days of cruising apart are insufficient, and we've already seen that in "hire boat season" these are abused and overloaded. In my experience C&RT is trying to close down all service areas by a policy of deliberate neglect and non-repair.
24. In my experience C&RT don't so much as empty a septic tank until a boater discovers that it is full (the hard way) - and then C&RT announce a stoppage for "blocked drains" or some such. C&RT need to realise that even their Sacred Cow - the holiday hire boat - needs facilities, so providing them for private and live-aboard boaters is not really such a stretch. I wish that Mr Elon Musk would send C&RT Corporate to Mars - without air supply or return fuel. JMHO.
25. On line facilities should be better controlled to restrict the use for boaters only
26. Mostly more rubbish disposal sites, especially with recycling options & water points. We have to fill up water at least every three weeks, which means that most of our movements must include a water point. So no longer stays in places without access to water. Rubbish disposal needs to be available too. Rotting rubbish on a boat left

for even a day or two attracts rats, etc. & can be a health hazard. Ideally there are options in walking distance for regular rubbish disposal.

27. More visitor moorings on the River Severn, and longer stays.
28. Pump outs that work reliably, I'm on the Lee and its hit and miss.
29. I've been told in reply to my request, that new facilities are not planned ( on the Stort ) or are the considered. !
30. Sadly I am unable to answer some of the questions due to being a continuous cruiser, I have been on the Ashby canal, sadly it has only one waste disposal place on it, which is about half way along. This place is just a large skip which is constantly overflowing, to my knowledge there is no place for oil, batteries, or recycling. The canal is a dead end canal, about twenty one miles long. To have only one waste disposal place provide by CRT is just not good enough.
31. CRT need to provide composting facilities for those who moved to separating toilets before they changed their guidance and prohibited the use of refuse points for bagged solids.
32. it would be good if the Barbridge water-point was restored
33. I would like to move to a separating toilet but can't do so until there is a place to empty the solid waste safely. Is this something that CRT are considering?
34. Boater facilities in the north west and west midlands are filthy, they have no seats no at surfaces, no physical barrier between wet and dry areas, no grab rails, no shower seats and generally no clothes hooks or even a mirror. I have seen people washing dogs, bikes, walking boots and even CRT staff and contractors rinsing water proofs in them. They are not monitored, not properly cleaned or maintained and in general are a disgrace and dangerous.
35. Composting facility would be useful - or at least support for community based composting for toilets. How many boats each service site needs to service is going to be hugely different depending on boaters location. London is going to need to service a lot more boats and have more frequent facilities than certain rural areas. On the K&A the most frustrating thing we've found is that not everywhere has all the basic services together such as water, Elsan and bins. Ability to recycle at the bin facilities would be great but I know this has been an ongoing thing.
36. Largely using the Llangollen canal/Shropshire union the recycling facilities are non existent. The water taps are too far apart. Rubbish bins are very often over owing. Non canal users often drive in vans to tip their rubbish because of rules regarding vans at domestic disposal centres in Shropshire and elsewhere. Boaters facilities should be locked and generic keys issued. Boaters also need to step up and stop dumping rubbish canalside that probably can only come from us.
37. We need more pump outs or pump outs that actually work. Especially on river Lee and at little Venice they're almost having more down that uptime

38. Frankly if they were less mouldy and if I didn't have to travel halfway across London to reach them I'd be happy
39. There should be laundry services along side more showers , toilets and elsen points there needs to be more bins along the calder and hebble/calder and air navigation
40. The lag between services being broken and the notification going out and then the repairs and notification of functioning are all far too long if they are indeed addressed
41. Improve standards for marinas/boat yards who provide poor customer service, quality and delay or inhibit diy activities to keep boaters longer at their facilities, also boat inspectors who charge extortionate fees for hull surveys.
42. Secure waste disposal facilities accessed in same way as lift bridges – windlass
43. Place to leave composted humanure. I can compost on the boat.
44. I am being pushed off a mooring I have a disability

**National Bargee Travellers Association**  
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