

# National Bargee Travellers Association

## Response to Birmingham city centre moorings consultation

### General

This consultation response is from the National Bargee Travellers Association (NBTA). The NBTA is a volunteer organisation formed in 2009 that campaigns and provides advice for itinerant boat dwellers on Britain's inland and coastal waterways. The term Bargee Traveller includes anyone whose home is a boat and who does not have exclusive use of a permanent mooring for their boat with planning permission for residential use. The NBTA is the only national organisation in Britain dedicated to upholding and defending the rights of itinerant boat dwellers. The NBTA has around 1500 members on all the major navigation authorities' waterways and beyond. It deals with around 200 individual cases each year.

The NBTA objects to the proposed changes to mooring time limits in central Birmingham as set out here <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/west-midlands/birmingham-city-centre-moorings-consultation>

### Reasons for objection to the proposals

There is no justification for or evidence to support the removal of all the only remaining year-round 14-day mooring space in the city centre, nor for the complete removal of approximately 10 mooring spaces by designating these for other uses. In winter the city centre 14 day mooring space is never overcrowded and often deserted. In summer it is not often full. CRT has admitted this itself in the consultation document by stating that during the Commonwealth games in summer 2022 the mooring space was "not as heavily used as we thought it might be". If it was not heavily used in the middle of the summer holidays, during the most significant major sporting event to take place in Birmingham for a decade, when you would expect boat numbers to peak, there is no reason to believe that there is a problem with either congestion or overstaying at any other times that cannot be dealt with as part of the normal workload of CRT enforcement staff.

The proposed measures will have a significant adverse impact on itinerant boat dwellers, who need to spend 14 days in the city all year round. Removing the remaining 14-day mooring space will be counterproductive as it will lead to more overstaying by those boaters who need to stay for 14 days in the city centre.

We do not believe that the stated relaxation of the stay times to 14 days in winter will be implemented by CRT. During recent winters we have seen more and more "all year round" signs appearing across the entire system on visitor moorings that from 2015 had been 14 days in winter, with no consultation with boaters and no explanation. If the relaxation to 14 days in winter is implemented, on CRT's past performance it will be reversed after one winter.

Almost every route into Birmingham involves a lock flight. These proposed restrictions will make it much harder for all boaters to visit Birmingham city centre, if they can only stay for two or seven days after working 20 or more locks. Leisure boaters will be discouraged from visiting the city if they cannot stay for long enough to relax and enjoy exploring it in between the effort of navigating long lock flights. Alternative 14 day mooring space is very hard to find without travelling for some hours out of the city centre and on most routes the number of locks makes this journey very time consuming.

We do not believe CRT's assertion that mooring stay times in central Birmingham are confusing for visiting boaters. This is simply an excuse to justify profiteering from the introduction of bookable, chargeable moorings as you imply from the wording of the consultation. Further, CRT has not provided any evidence that the signage and stay times make it harder for boaters to know where and how long they can moor, or evidence that CRT staff cannot properly monitor compliance, or evidence that the signs and mix of stay times has led to boats overstaying.

A recent Freedom of Information request did not provide any evidence that there has been a significant rise in complaints about overstaying boats, and CRT has not provided any evidence regarding how the alleged confusing signage had led to a rise in complaints about overstaying boats. CRT has not provided an analysis of the reasons for those complaints.

The Freedom of Information request, which CRT responded to on 14th March 2023, shows that there was a very small number of complaints about about overstaying boats in the centre of Birmingham in the specific area covered by the consultation. Between 2019 and 2022 there was a total of 11 complainants and the number of complaints was:

2019 – 4 complaints  
2020 – 5 complaints  
2021 – 3 complaints  
2022 – 6 complaints

The locations complained about included:

Cambrian Wharf  
Cambrian Basin  
Gas Street Basin  
By Brindley Place  
New moorings beyond Vincent Street Bridge

This amounts to a total of 18 complaints made by 11 complainants over a period of 4 years. These are very small numbers of both complaints and complainants. The number of complaints does not justify the removal of 14 day mooring space in central Birmingham.

## **Conclusion**

Instead of implementing the proposals, CRT should retain the existing 14-day mooring space all year round and leave the existing 24 and 48 hour stay times as they are. If more accessible mooring space is needed, mooring space for disabled boaters should also be designated as 14 days.

**National Bargee Travellers Association**  
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[secretariat@bargee-traveller.org.uk](mailto:secretariat@bargee-traveller.org.uk)

[www.bargee-traveller.org.uk](http://www.bargee-traveller.org.uk)

0118 321 4128

30 Silver Street, Reading, RG1 2ST