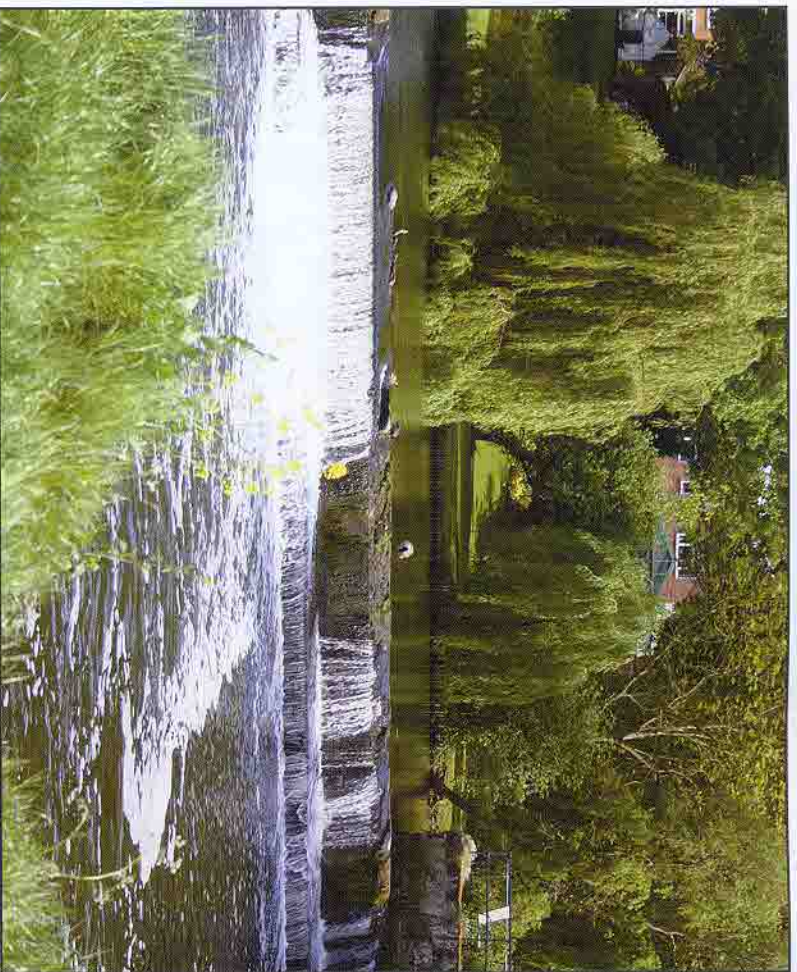


ANT PRIVATE POWERED LICENCE REVIEW BOATERS' CONSULTATION



Your chance to have your say

You can see, and experience, all of the great work ANTI does and we are sure that you will agree that the organisation has to be sustainably funded.

The current licence structure isn't fair and we need to ensure that we future-proof our work for the Avon and our Boaters.

However, this proposal is a big sea change and we want to make sure that our Boaters have the opportunity to have their say and add their input.

We will take on board all of your comments before making a final decision.

The Boaters' Consultation period ends at midnight on September 2, 2016. We look forward to hearing your thoughts.

@ Email us at: boatersconsultation@avonnavigationtrust.org



Write to us at: Boaters' Consultation, Avon Navigation Trust, Mill Wharf, Mill Lane, Wyre Piddle, Nr Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 2JF.



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A steady stream of Boaters chooses to enjoy the sparkling stretches of the Avon and we know from all of your thank you comments that you appreciate the Avon Navigation Trust's hard work behind the scenes. We always welcome, and look to act upon, your feedback. That's why why we are launching this unprecedented consultation document on proposals for the Avon's first annual licence fee structure review in 50 years.

What lies beneath

We always knew that we wanted to involve our Boating community in the first annual licence fee structure review in half a century.

Certainly ANT is under no obligation to invite input from all of our river users. We could have simply introduced the proposed new structure and fees last year in one big splash or spread them over two years. But that's not how we work.

Our Boaters bring the beautiful Avon to life and add

vibrant colour to the idyllic setting.

You are why we toil tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure your river experience is the best it can possibly be. Together, we make the Avon what it is - one of the most pleasant, expertly managed and well maintained rivers in the country.

We are also one of the lowest cost waterways to enjoy, by far. That is pretty impressive given the facilities on offer: from River Watch to new moorings and emergency rescue of craft and boaters in trouble.

So why make waves with changes now?

There are two main reasons for the proposed restructure of the fee policy: fair play and future-proofing.

Fair play? ANT inherited the fee structures of LANT (Lower Avon Navigation Trust) and UANT (Upper Avon Navigation Trust) when it was formed six years ago with their amalgamation.

We initially made some minor changes to ensure we received the same income as they did before the merger, but essentially it is the same structure that was put in place by LANT all those decades ago, when river life was very different.

Back then most of the boats on the river were cruisers and there were very few narrowboats.

Originally, LANT reasonably decided on a fee ladder for boats it expected to see, with the largest at 50ft. Anything over that paid the same fee.

Since then we have welcomed lots of longer boats onto the river, which has had the effect of upsetting the balance of fairness because the longer boats pay proportionately less than their smaller fellows.

It therefore makes sense to adopt the linear approach used by most of the other waterway organisations. In other words: to charge based on length.

And then there's the swan effect. We are paddling furiously to make sure that the organisation stays afloat.



INSTALLING the much-welcomed overnight moorings at Twynning.



ANT at work: upgrading Tewkesbury's overnight moorings.

Paddling like mad to stay afloat

Now a recognised brand and an acclaimed river authority, ANT has become a victim of its own success.

The stark truth is that there is a big funding shortfall - an estimated £80k - between money raised by licences every year and the cost of keeping our river at its safest and beautiful best.

It would have been a serious challenge to keep the organisation afloat, but for the ANT teams' expertise.

Led by General Manager Clive Matthews, they have generated some valuable sources of income over the past years, which have helped us to cover that cash-flow gap, including providing support services for Evesham's new Abbey Bridge and the repair of Bidford-on-Avon's ancient bridge. Those, and a host of other headline hitters, have produced income to allow ANT to fund substantial maintenance projects and sudden nature-sprung emergencies.

But those sort of big money opportunities are out of the ordinary and definitely not a reliable funding stream for a charitable organisation that is required to work from a firm financial base.



CAREFUL as you go: removing Barton's Lock Gate.

The ANT teams continue to bring in a steady amount of income through regular contracting work and of course, the annual and short term licences fees are much-needed additions.

But being the cheapest waterway for what we offer Boaters is not doing the future-proofing of our ongoing work any favours. We have to make changes.

However, our proposals still mean that our Boaters will enjoy one of the best value annual licences available.

A flood of work

A great deal happens behind the scenes to keep the Avon as user-friendly and as picture perfect as that photograph on our front cover.

And we can only estimate what will be needed to meet that £80k shortfall because nature is pretty unpredictable as we all know from experience.

Flooding has become an increasing problem and often means emergency rescue and repair work over and above the year's long list of planned maintenance projects. In fact the floods were so bad in 2013, we had to move all scheduled maintenance projects to 2014. Sudden floods also have a long term impact. Take last year's Pershore drama...

Our sharp-eyed volunteer Reachmasters Michael Hodges and Bruce Bosworth saved the day when they spotted a sink hole whilst mowing and raised the alarm. That meant we could act fast to rescue the 300 year-old lock island and avert a potential disaster.

It was our biggest engineering project since the restoration of the Avon navigation and cost £1100k to complete. But we could have lost the Reach and this £1100k bill could easily have doubled.



SAVED: hard at work on rebuilding Pershore's Bullnose.

At your service

In between emergency work, the ANT teams are always working hard maintaining our fleet, carrying out infrastructure repairs and executing engaging enhancement projects.

Last year alone, boons for Boaters included:

- Floating huts for equipment to help our Volunteers to keep locks spick and span.
- A big clear-up at the back of the Avon at Tewkesbury, in partnership with the Town Council.
- Launching ANT's own safety cover for contracted projects, supported by River Rescue 1 and River Rescue 2.
- Providing the ANT HQ wharf crane for the benefit of Boaters too.
- Forming a dedicated team to grease and adjust locks to make them as easy as possible to use, in response to Boaters' feedback.



CLEAR winner: dredging at Wyre Lock

- Adding new moorings at the Fleet Inn in Twyning and Evesham lock island, which we also repaired.
- We also rushed to the rescue when a crop sprayer collided with Bidford-on-Avon's historic bridge, leaving a seven tonne stone parapet hanging over the river.

We temporarily closed navigation and brought in safety boats, floating barriers and signage to protect river users. Then we supported the massive rebuilding project (pictured right).

And as always, our on-going service includes:

- Our unique River Watch service.
- Our 24/7 emergency phone service.
- Extra information centres at Stratford-upon-Avon and Tewkesbury Lock.
- We attend all stranded boats and provide physical and moral support.
- We look after all unattended moored boats, visiting



HISTORIC project: rebuilding Bidford bridge.

them in extreme situations to ensure they stay afloat and safe.

- Whatever the conditions, we can help with a fleet that includes All-Terrain ARGO CAT amphibious vehicles, on-call Land Rovers, Outboard Ribs and River Rescue Raiders with Water Safety Technicians.
- We team up with South Worcestershire Life Guards and Evesham Marina to provide on-call support.

Making every penny count

We also work hard to make sure we get the best possible value out of everything that we do.

We are able to keep the ANT crew numbers tight thanks to our extremely valuable teams of Volunteers, who are also our extra eyes and ears out on the waterway.

In addition to that large contract work, our ANT teams make themselves available for income-generating commercial projects.

We design and build mooring landing stages and are also in demand for piling, dredging, bank landscaping and tree shearing.

As engineers, we are handy at making every asset work for us, like our wonderful 1960s-built workhorse Canopus (pictured right), which was acquired for just £10. She is our main piling and mooring installation boat now that we have added a crane, a new hull, a 100hp six cylinder engine and, in the last six months, a six ton excavator.



Big jobs ahead

AS well as dealing with what nature has to throw at us, ANT has the ongoing challenge of an ageing waterway and always has a series of large maintenance tasks to complete. The latest list includes:

1. Rebuilding Martcliff Weir;
2. Dewatering and repairing Harvington Lock gates;
3. Dewatering and refurbishing Strensham Lock;
4. Dewatering and renewing Avon Lock Paddles;
5. Dewatering and rebuilding Nafford Lock Walls;
6. Repairing and refurbishing Wyre Lock;
7. Repairing Pershore Lock Walls.

Total estimated cost = £300,000.



All aboard

Our income is fuelled by our commercial work, generous donations, sales of merchandise, fund-raising, membership and, of course, licences.

Licence fees have been increased slightly over the years but not by enough to bring us up and into line with comparable waterways.

Clearly we need to take action to ensure that we bridge that annual funding gap and we had

the choice of doing that in 2015. We delayed action in order to consult with you about our proposals, because it is important to us to have everyone on board.

However, that delay presents a potential risk because the money brought in from previous big projects is running out. We have another project this year, but even with this we are still counting on having no big outlays like 2015's Pershore shock.

An engaging proposal?

We have spent months scrutinising what we offer, what comparable waterways charge for what they provide and how the pricing structures differ. It is clear that we are one of the lowest cost waterways. We also provide a great deal for the money.

The Avon is 47 miles long, with 17 locks, which makes us 64 lock miles long.

Compare that, say, to the Severn, which is 42 miles long with seven locks and is therefore 49 lock miles long.

We can boast some of the best levels of facilities on any waterway.

We also provide one of the best support structures in the UK with our 24/7 on-call support for Boaters and River Watch.

Comparing notes

It is very difficult to compare like for like, and so we went as near as possible for the comparison graphs opposite.

As you can see, we picked out CRT rivers, including the Severn, and canals; the Thames; the Cam; the Broads and Anglian waterways.

Our Avon is the green line and you will spot immediately that we are the cheapest by a long way. As the boat length increases, our licences are benchmarked at between 50% to 30% of the price of other navigations.

At the lower boat lengths we are between 70% to 50% of the price of others. This may well be quite an

eye-opener for many of our Boaters, who possibly don't compare prices but choose a waterway simply because they like it.

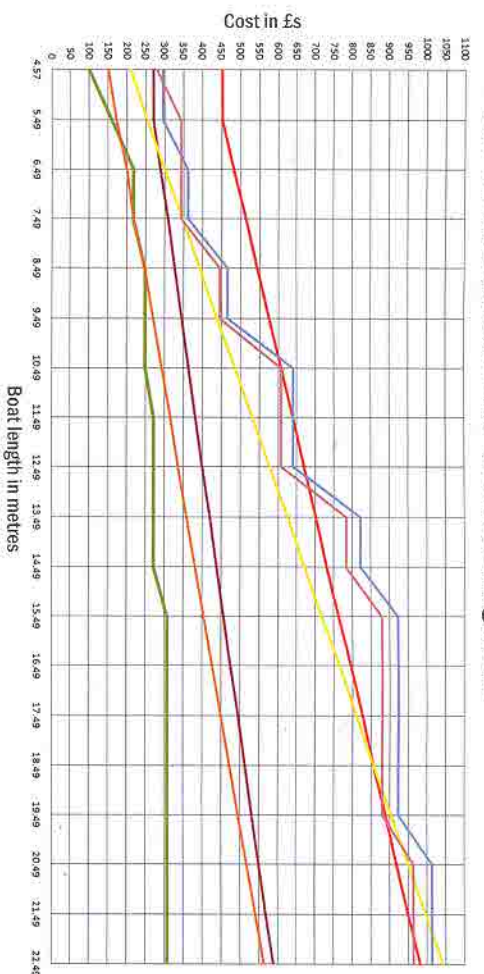
The second chart illustrates how our proposed licensing structure would compare.

As you can see, if this proposal is adopted then only the Broads, which has no locks at all, will be cheaper.

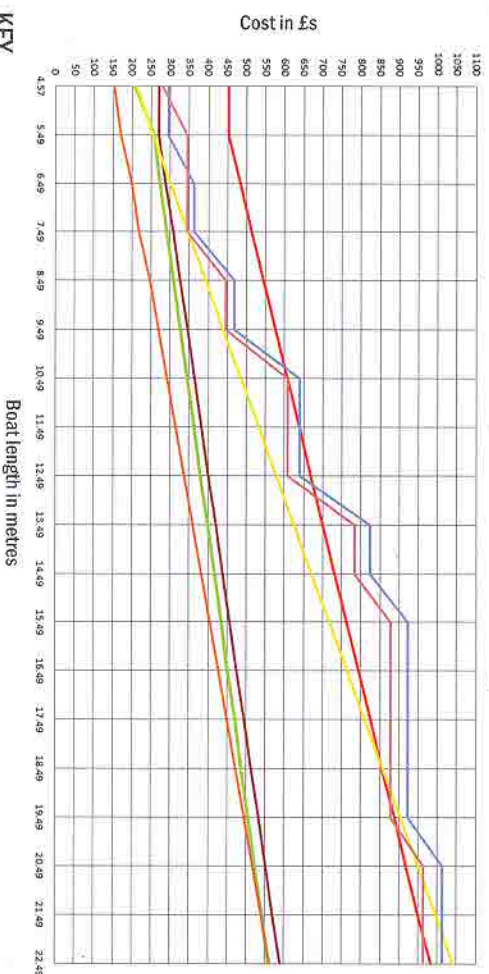
There will be nowhere cheaper for longer boats and it will be half the price of being on the CRT canal network.

So we still think that makes us extremely good value.

ANT Annual Licence 2015 vs Other Navigations



ANT Licence Proposal vs Other Navigations



KEY

- ANT
- CRT Rivers
- CRT C&R
- Thames
- Broads
- River Cam
- Anglian

The current catchment

The majority of the boats on our river are in the 6.49m to 9.49m bracket and those Boaters will see the smallest annual increase.

Our strategy going forward is to continue offering a slightly more expensive short term licence, and number of boats on the river, this structure will generate enough revenue to make us sustainable as a charitable business.

