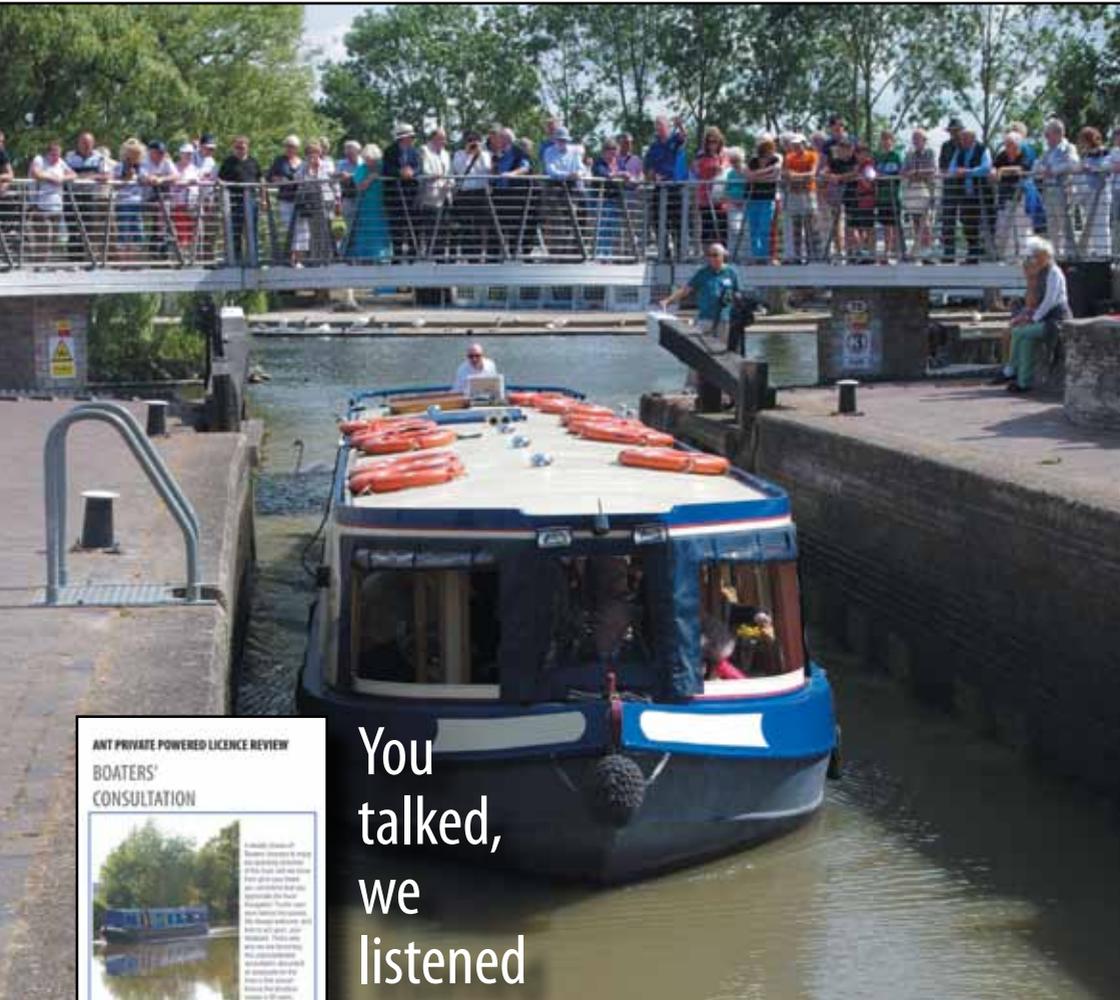


# ANT BOATERS' CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

## THANK YOU

for helping to shape the new licence structure



You  
talked,  
we  
listened

**Thank you**

We received 77 individual responses to the first public consultation in ANT's history - 7% of our boating population.

That means 93% didn't feel the need to directly comment, but we had lots of people saying they welcomed the opportunity.

The majority supported our proposals. Some also offered bright suggestions. We didn't just listen, we made changes to our plans where we could.

**Clear way ahead**

The case for change is clear. Our aging navigation drinks time and money. We must make sure we have enough in the pipeline to protect and enhance our river.

ANT is renowned as the go-to organisation for big river-based projects. But we can't rely on what might come.

We need a consistent, sustainable cashflow. Hence the Avon's first Annual Licence structure review in 50 years.

**Time to pay fair**

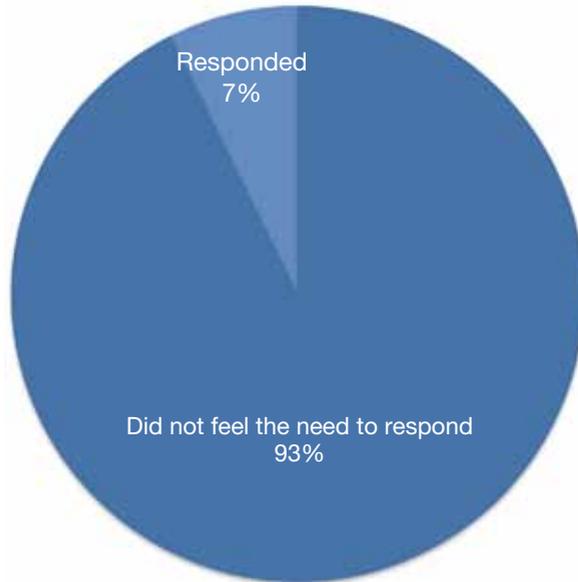
Future proofing was one driver. Just as important was the need for fair play.

We inherited the licence structure from decades ago, when any boat over 50 foot, then rare, was charged the same.

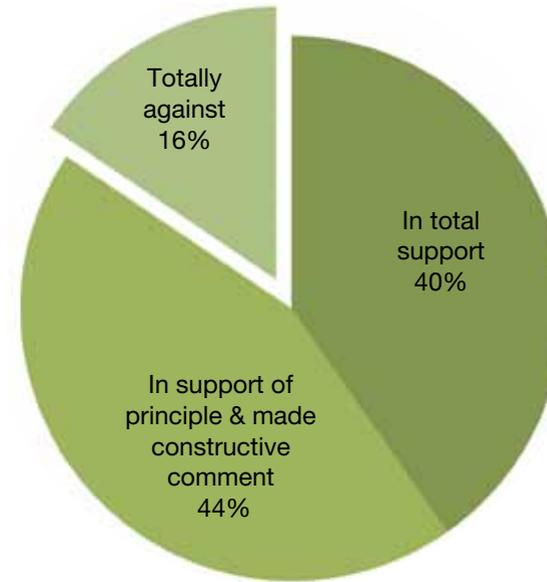
Our Avon was one of the lowest cost waterways. Yet it is one of the best-maintained with some of the finest Boaters' services, including River Watch.

We had to make licences consistent and reflective.

**Response from 1,052 Boaters**



**Breakdown of the 7% responses**



**Action stations**

ANT spent months researching the options to produce a proposal for the groundbreaking July 13 to September 2 consultation.

We sent the 1,052 special leaflets to Boaters, plus all moorings and marinas, and put one online.

Then the Trust spent a very long time scrutinising the results.

**An A for effort**

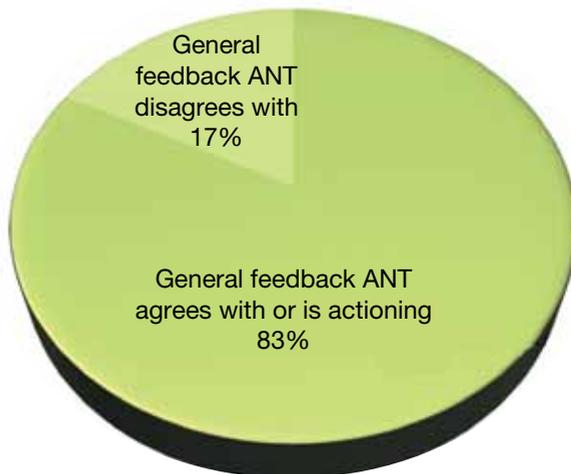
This was never a tick box exercise, We had no obligation to consult our Boaters but we wanted to and we knew they would offer very valuable input.

Overall, as you can see from the pie charts on these pages, 40% respondents were in total support of our proposed changes, 44% in support of the principle with some suggested tweaks and only 16% were totally against.

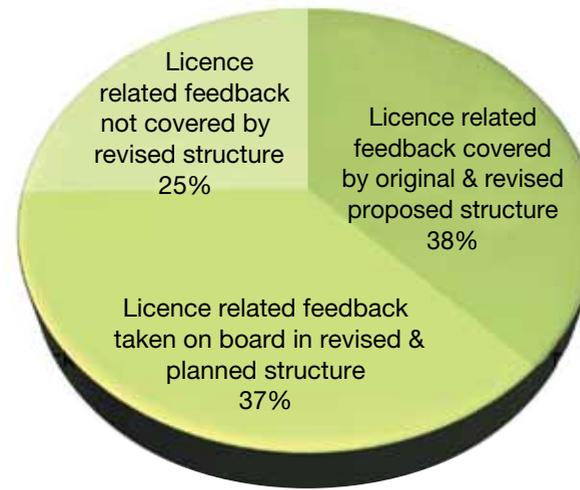
Every comment and suggestion, positive or negative, was scrutinised and considered. A resounding 37% of feedback was taken on board and we revised the proposals, which have now been ratified by ANT's full Council.

We also got quite a few non Licence-related comments, which were also carefully logged and considered for action.

**Breakdown of general comments & feedback**



**Breakdown of licence comments & feedback**



**Caring and sharing**

We wanted to share the consultation feedback with you and you are holding that appraisal in your hand. Turn over the page for more.

ANT spent a lot of time analysing all the comments, cross matching them against the proposed Licence structure and adjusting it where we could make the suggested changes work. All respondents were guaranteed anonymity, but here we list the common themes, in order of frequency, with the most asked at the top.

TOP COMMENT: In total support of the proposed structure change.

**ANT says:** Thank you for your understanding and support.

2. Small boat increase too high. Small cabin day boats do not use any or many Locks or facilities.

**ANT agrees.** We have modified the structure to reduce the increase for small boats.

3. Higher increases for longer boats

**ANT says:** This is one of the principles behind the new structure to ensure parity.

4. Class as unpowered sailing boats with outboards as auxiliaries.

**ANT agrees.** We have now modified the Licence definition of unpowered boats.

5. Put Licensing online?

**ANT agrees.** We are working to implement that in the future.

6. Increase short-term Licences.

**ANT agrees.** We plan to review the short term Licence structure in 2018.

7. Charge for area, taking width into account.

**ANT says:** We did consider this option. However the majority of other navigations charge by length and so this is therefore the industry standard. Also, the issue on our Avon is the space that boats take up on overnight moorings.

8. Offer opportunity to pay in instalments.

**ANT agrees.** We have included this option in the Licence structure.

9. Unpowered sailing craft should have a special Licence.

**ANT agrees.** The new structure classes sailing craft as unpowered.

10. Boats that cannot go on to the upper reaches due to depth should have a discounted licence.

**ANT says.** We did consider this, however it would be very difficult and costly to police and administer. The Avon's current limitations are known when boats come on to the river, but ANT is also working to improve the upper reaches to reduce limitations.

11. Hire boats and commercial boats should pay considerably more.

**ANT agrees.** We have a separate Commercial/Hire Boat Licence structure, with significantly higher rates than private licences.

12. Reduce or remove the residential supplement.

**ANT says:** We considered this and have reduced the supplement to £20. A small charge is required to cover administration costs. It is important that ANT has logged where residential boats are, especially when the river is in flood.

13. Residential Boaters often can only just afford to pay bills as they are on the minimum wage.

**ANT says:** We understand and sympathise and therefore have reduced the residential

supplement and offered the option to pay in instalments.

14. Phase increase over two to three years.

**ANT says:** We did consider this. However, after the consultation showed that only 7% of Boaters showed an interest and only 1% of Boaters were against the change, we decided not to phase the change. All extra income will be used to improve the river.

15. Add a higher increase for residential Boaters.

**ANT disagrees with this.** Residential Boaters are more likely to spend more time moored in marinas, thus using the navigation less. Plus residential boats already pay a surcharge.

16. Why not Anniversary, rather than Annual Licences?

**ANT agrees.** We will be putting the required administration systems in place in the future.

17. Why not have a more consistent percentage increase over the different lengths?

**ANT says:** One of the reasons for the new structure is to put in place a fairer linear increase by boat length. A more consistent percentage would not achieve this.

18. A toll per Lock with an honesty box or toll booth?

**ANT says.** This would be unworkable and potentially significantly reduce the income.

19. Please keep steam and electric discount.

**ANT continues to agree** and the new structure includes a discount.

20. Why not charge a price per foot?

**ANT disagrees** as this would mean that the longer boats would be paying significantly more than the proposal and we would be uncompetitive when compared to other waterways.

21. The increase is much more than inflation.

**ANT says:** This is true. However, the purpose of this review was to change the Licence structure to be more fair and in line with other waterways and to raise much needed funds to maintain the river and therefore the increase will be naturally higher than inflation.

22. An afloat Licence for trailable boats?

**ANT says:** We did consider this, however it would be very difficult and costly to police and administer and could potentially significantly reduce income.

23. Why does ANT have to be the cheapest?

**ANT says:** We wish to be competitive and offer the best value for money we can.

24. If we have the best facilities we should charge more.

**ANT says:** We wish to be competitive and offer the best value for money we can.

25. Why should longer boats subsidise the shorter ones? Have a more level structure.

**ANT says:** Longer boats take up more room in Locks and on moorings and the marketplace norm is to charge more for longer boats.

26. There should be one Licence for each side.

**ANT says:** We already provide a Licence plus a copy, for the other side.

27. There should be a Licence holder for inflatables.

**ANT says:** It is for the boat owner to sort out the best way to display the Licence.

28. Put up fishing Licences.

**ANT says:** We do not own the fishing rights on the river.

29. A second or third boat discount scheme?

**ANT says:** This would be difficult to administer and police.

ANT analysed all comments, whether they were directly Licence-related or not. We value all Boaters' feedback at any time. On these pages you will find a record of the rest of the amalgamated views, again headed by the most-mentioned and with our replies.

TOP COMMENT: ANT's doing a good job. Excellent work and river well maintained.

**ANT says: Thank you for your support.**

2. Better patrolling to nab Licence dodgers.

**ANT agrees. We have been steadily increasing patrolling and now have three Patrol Officers and boats but would also welcome reporting.**

3. Longer boats take up more room on moorings.

**ANT says: This is one of the reasons behind the Licence restructure.**

4. Narrowboats cause more damage.

**ANT says: Potentially, as narrowboats are normally of steel construction and of considerable weight.**

5. Shortage of overnight moorings.

**ANT agrees, especially on the lower reaches. We are always striving to work with landowners to add moorings, with two more opened since 2015. And another planned.**

6. Improve and invest in mooring sites and address imbalanced spending.

**ANT says: We continually look to invest in new moorings and facilities. Resources are allocated on a most-need basis.**

7. Narrowboats to breast up on overnight moorings.

**ANT says: This is requested on all overnight mooring signs and in the visitors' guide.**

8. More work on trees and dredging, plus on the upper reaches.

**ANT agrees. We continue to do as much as we can afford.**

9. Twyning mooring not suitable for small boats,

**ANT agrees and plans modifications. A new design has been developed and has been used on the new mooring at The Angel Hotel, Pershore.**

10. Boats may leave the river because of the new structure.

**ANT says: Obviously we hope not and that's why we are ensuring we remain the cheapest. We understand that some may struggle, which is why we are introducing the pay by instalment option.**

11. Comparisons with other waterways are wrong as they are very different.

**ANT agrees and therefore it is difficult to make direct comparisons. However, we felt it important to test our rates against the UK marketplace to measure how competitive we are.**

12. Why not hold an EGM to discuss with members? Why not discussed in 2016 AGM?

**ANT says: A lot of members are not Boaters and therefore we would not be talking to our customers. We felt it important to have a clean consultation and not muddy the waters with AGM discussion before a proper consultation.**

13. Publish all consultation replies.

**ANT says: The consultation guaranteed anonymity. However, we agreed to share the outcome, hence this feedback report.**

14. Have better training for narrowboat hirers.

**ANT agrees and is working with hire companies and CRT to try to ensure this,**

15. Do more contract work to earn money.

**ANT says: Over the past six years we have significantly developed our contracts division, successfully winning major projects, leading to major reinvestment into the river. But it is a**

**balancing act. We have a finite set of resources and large contracts divert them from our main function of river maintenance and improvements. Also high levels of contract work cannot be relied upon, which is one of the reasons for the new Licence structure.**

16. Can't you reduce costs, labour, overheads etc?

**ANT says: That's a continual aim. Over the past six years we have reduced administration staff costs, made major savings on insurance contracts, saved £16k on mowing thanks to Volunteers, bought major works in house and invested in equipment to reduce hire costs. We are currently implementing a new integrated system to increase administration savings.**

17. Better and clearer directional signage.

**ANT agrees. We are installing new signage as funding is available.**

18. Use the tributaries for mooring sites.

**ANT agrees. However such development is down to the private landowner.**

19. Issues with Pershore Lock.

**ANT says: We are very aware of the problems and are actively working on improvements. One of the reasons to raise more funds is to be able to do more major works like this.**

20. Why don't you provide doggy bins?

**ANT says: With 17 locks and 20+ mooring sites, it would be logistically and financially impossible.**

21. Better training for Volunteer Lock Keepers.

**ANT says: We continually improving training for our growing Volunteer team.**

22. Shallowness at Marlcliff.

**ANT says: We are aware of the issues with Marlcliff weir and major works are planned.**

23. Man the Stratford Basin Lock.

**ANT says: The Lock is CRT's and manning it would be costly. We are planning on installing CCTV to catch Licence dodgers.**

24. Leave both gates open and put signs on all Locks.

**ANT says: We are rolling out new signage.**

25. RIBs and small boats launched unlicensed?

**ANT says: We are working with slipway owners and planning to increase patrolling.**

26. Allocate some moorings as not for narrowboats?

**ANT says: There are currently not enough moorings for a segregation system.**

27. Make all locks hydraulic.

**ANT says: Very desirable but would require a massive investment.**

28. The new floating Lock sheds show you have money.

**ANT says: They contribute to an annual saving of £16k for mowing now done by Volunteers. The sheds were paid for from the first year's savings.**

29. Save money by moving main office onto a barge.

**Our PortaKabin was much cheaper than a barge and running costs are the same on water or land.**

30. High Licence fees may deter volunteering.

**ANT says: We believe our Volunteers understand the reasons for the Licence changes and want to help make the river as best as possible.**

31. Why not spread this increase over the last few years while having high bridge income and invest that in the river to avert rises?

**ANT says: The proposals weren't ready until end-2015 and we wanted to properly consult before implementing. We were prepared to spread the increase if feedback indicated this was desirable. The strategic decision to use bridge income to improve navigation and equipment safeguards the future and brings major works in house.**

## The Boaters' Consultation Feedback: other comments

We have carefully studied every single one of the comments we received and will retain them for future reference. We cannot share correspondence directly, because we pledged public anonymity to encourage frank feedback. However, here are some of the brickbats and bouquets you sent in.



“Are you sure you’re heading in the right direction with these suggested increases?”

“Why are longer boats charged more? A 60’ narrowboat creates less wake than a 40’ broad beam.”

“I cannot see a direct benefit to me in relation to the increase.”

“Thank you for a consultation, but we all know it is a tick box exercise.”

“Getting fed up of subsidising non payers.”

“Your glossy consultation does not consider all users fully and so seems insufficiently considered for such a large step increase at a time of austerity.”



“I congratulate you for your efforts to restructure fees to bring them into the 21st century.”

“We wholeheartedly agree that long boats - which take up sometimes the double the space of typical cruisers - should pay more”

“Thank you for giving people the chance to express their views.”

“For years boats over 40’ have enjoyed a discounted Licence.”

“The work carried out by the Trust is without question an incredible achievement.”

“You do a great job keeping a beautiful river alive and prosperous and I also understand the challenges you face.”

A big tick from us

“I agree with the proposed increase and would like to offer my help as a volunteer.”

We always value your feedback, on any subject. You can contact us via:

☎ 01386 552517

@ office@avonnavigationtrust.org

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