

Readers' views on the future format and content of Boaters' Update

I like boaters update as it is. I hate podcasts, can't be bothered to waste phone battery watching a video and enjoy reading the parts I'm interested in to my husband. So please leave it as it is.

I suggest don't link Facebook videos in the very helpful updates as faceache just tries to harvest user data.

I'm a visual person - I prefer email, as I can read it, re-read it if necessary and save it if there's something I may want to refer back to in future. I never listen to podcasts, and I tend to watch videos with the sound off, so's not to disturb other people on board, so neither of those is a great way to communicate with me.

I think the length is about right at the moment, and I like the way you've been highlighting the different regions.

What should be in the updates?

1. Definitely news of stoppages and work being done - that's part of what we pay our licence fees for, and it's important we know where we can and can't travel. The story behind the stoppage, too.
2. Definitely any good news!
3. Keep up the regional updates, especially if there are particular issues.
4. It would be good to know a bit more about how Head Office works - it gets a lot of flak from boaters, particularly about how "our" money is spent, so that *might* be a way to avoid some of it (I'm not saying it *will!*). Maybe highlight one department per issue, as you've done with the regions. It would be great to see photos of HO staff getting out and about on the cut - there's a perception that they don't actually know much about canals and boating, and it would be good to see them finding out (or, if they have a boat, demonstrating how much they *do* know).
5. Sing your Volunteers' praises - they're keeping the Trust afloat, doing what used to be paid work, and I don't think they get enough recognition.

I would enjoy a You Tube version as I am already subscribed to the CRT channel.

My most important point is that I am getting increasingly worried by the poor facilities for depositing rubbish and recycling. In the last few we found that the Barbridge bins have been removed, the ones at Nantwich were overflowing and the bins at Norbury Junction have been removed, although the wharf now has bins which are quite difficult to get to. As Continuous Cruisers we really need water, toilet emptying and rubbish disposal facilities. Heated toilets etc. and showers are great but they are not essential for most of us. Rubbish disposal is. If the situation continues to deteriorate I am sure that people will soon be illegally dumping bags of rubbish. Please stop the reduction of these necessary utilities.

Firstly let me say I really appreciate the boaters' updates, especially how well written they are in an age when grammar and spelling seem to be unimportant for many.

Covering your points...

Videos are great if they don't contain padding, are short, professional looking and get to the point quickly. I'd certainly watch those.

I listen to a lot of podcasts so yes, I would listen to an interesting podcast from you. I used to listen to the Waterways World podcasts but they seem to be no more.

I get most of my canal news from you or friends and other boats passing by.

Stoppages are certainly important but the email notification system is so good it may not matter to some boaters if they aren't in your newsletter. On the other hand, it certainly doesn't do any harm to see them in both places.

Boaters' update is probably around the right length but if anything I'd prefer shorter rather than longer.

I find your boaters update very useful in its current format and not really interested in video or podcast versions.

My thoughts, as a middle aged (that's relevant) extremely technology capable early adopters.

Video version. No. Actually I'm a strong advocate for video or audio delivery; 8% of the population has reading challenges, mostly due to dyslexia. Most people under 30 tend towards video consumption. However, us older folk still like the written word (though I listen to podcasts when driving). Video is too slow (I read much much faster than I listen) and tends to wake my wife up!

By all means do video, but not at the expense of the web page blog.

I wouldn't want closures etc in the newsletter, there are far too many, most of which are irrelevant. I would like Twitter and WhatsApp channel options however.

The length is good. I read most of it most of the time, but skip some bits as appropriate.

I'd like to see a regular feature on sustainability and NetZero activity, plus boat-borne technology.

- Would you like to receive news and articles in video format? No - I like the current web-based format. For boaters using mobile wifi the download costs for video could be high
- Do you listen to podcasts and, if so, would you listen to a Boaters' Update version? Have never listened to any podcasts. Not sure what that would add to dissemination of information. Also, the bits in Update I always skip over are the long quotes from CRT management. Podcasts with someone simply talking about an issue could be boring!
- How do you receive other news about boating/the waterway network? Waterways World, narrowboatworld.com
- Is there a particular subject, such as stoppages, that should be in every edition? We get all our stoppage info direct from CRT on the standard stoppage email system. Not obvious what Update could add to the smaller stoppage info. Though updates on progress with major stoppages (longer than one month say) giving an

indication of problems affecting completion might be useful (though this might contradict the stoppage notices)

- Is Boaters' Update too long or not long enough? About right for something produced weekly.

At present Update provides some background info on waterways issues, aimed at boaters - which seems sensible. However, need to avoid giving the impression of simply justifying what CRT does and so being accused of "propaganda". For example, avoid the "hundreds of millions of visitors" line (which, as you know, no boaters believe) - or else produce the justification.

Funding is a big CRT problem, so some explanation of where money actually goes, looking round department by department, might be a good regular feature. For example, boaters complain about the number of legal staff employed by CRT. I can see why many of these are needed, but CRT doesn't explain what they do on a day to day basis. A few reviews of what CRT has done with boats/boaters who refuse to pay licence fees would be interesting (especially as many boaters think CRT doesn't do enough to force payment) and perhaps a warning.

Many boaters (me included) think there is insufficient preventative maintenance and that CRT is now running on breakdown maintenance only. It would be good to be proved wrong by a regular review of what inspections have been done by civil engineering teams. I occasionally see someone walking round with an iPad, but what are they looking for, what criteria do they have for lock leakage before work is done?

A regular review/update on vegetation management would also be good. This is terrible on the Oxford canal where we moor and presents real personnel hazards in some locations (as I know from personal experience falling down a hole). Restating CRT's policy isn't what is needed, but rather a weekly review of what and how much management has been done.

Presumably CRT has a timely review process like every other big organisation - objectives, targets, reporting etc... So such data should be easy to extract.

We like Boaters' Update largely as it is.

It is about right length; preferably not too much longer.

Certainly we do not bother with most videos or podcasts, just written information and CAPTIONED pictures, especially news on maintenance, stoppages, and restoration/heritage.

No videos, please. Fine when we're at home, but difficult to get enough Internet when out boating.

I think Boaters' Update is about right as it is. The odd video is fine, but bear in mind that a lot of boaters out on the cut rely on mobile data (assuming they get a signal!) and won't want lots of video content. Other sources of news and information are Facebook and Towpath Talk for me. Keep up the good work!

Although I agree that there is a trend to use Video and Sound I believe that whatever is produced for a news bulletin should not be just in one format as there are many people who find it difficult to see and/or hear alongside those who still aren't tech savvy. In short the

bulletin should be all inclusive and the articles in all formats so that you are not excluding anybody, bearing in mind the different types and sizes of technology being used.

Video format: not videoed news so much as that's likely to be more in interview form which comes over clearer in writing. If you're demonstrating maintenance skills, repairs in progress, boating skills then yes, that could be good.

Podcasts: not a fan, so I'm afraid it would pass me by. The written word is simpler to deal with when one's interrupted whilst reading.

Other watery news: A combination of Facebook sites, Formal closure notices I subscribe to, word of mouth and maybe more.

Stoppages: maybe so, for some. What I'd find interesting is illustrated skills (mooring techniques, knots, how to navigate awkward turns...) or historical backgrounds. On the Bluebell Railway members' newsletter we have "On This Day..." where a 50 year old date identified photo is posted with a short article and a modern photo to contrast. Otherwise variety is welcome.

Length: It's about right, although the more engaging you make it, the longer it could be!

Simple request, please caption your photos.
