

**Canal & River Trust held a forum event at St James' Centre, Devizes on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024.**

Questions raised during this event are summarised with response below:

Question	Response
Why have the water tap and bin compound at Crofton been removed?	<p>There is still a water tap at this location, it is downstream of the landing stage for lock 60, Crofton Lock allowing boaters to get water without needing to continue up the lock flight.</p> <p>The bin compound had to be closed for the works to Crofton pumping station and after careful consideration the decision was made not to reinstate. Recorded weights of waste removed from this location have been consistently low and there are alternative bins available within a reasonable distance (see our <a href="#">policy</a> for more information).</p>
You have mentioned you work with West Berkshire Council, do you have similar contact with Wiltshire Council?	<p>Contact with local councils varies according to local circumstances. There are more activities and issues in the West Berkshire area and therefore we have more contact. We do and will continue to work with Wiltshire Council where appropriate.</p>
Who is responsible for dog poo bins?	<p>The Trust is no longer responsible for dog waste bins. Those remaining on our towpath are now managed by local communities. This change has significantly reduced operational costs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Views noted regarding impact with some reporting increased frequency of dog poo on towpath, others noting an improvement as removal of bins has stopped the accumulation of piles in locations where bins overflowed.</li> </ul>
Concern raised regarding the undercutting of the towpath at Newbury – linked to flooding	<p>The Canal &amp; River Trust does not own the land in this location, it is local authority property. The local Council are aware of the situation, have surveyed the area and are working up plans for repair which is likely to include the piling. They are aware they need to work quickly. The Trust can provide advice where appropriate but cannot undertake the works ourselves.</p>
Can a waterpoint be installed in Newbury?	<p>We have been working with Lidl to do this and a pipe has been installed to the edge of the towpath. Unfortunately, this has not been completed as Thames Water are unable to permit a high-pressure system so close to the water and we don't believe a low pressure system will meet customer expectations.</p> <p>There are very few alternative locations in Newbury as we do not own much land here, we do have to work with others. We have approached the council to highlight the benefit of boating to the area / economy and the need for facilities to be available.</p>
Now the towpath at Aldermaston has been resurfaced are there plans to carry out more works in the area?	<p>We do have other areas that we would like to improve, for example Hambridge to Bulls Lock. However, we do have to consider if this surface type is appropriate in all places – tarmac is not in keeping with the character of many areas of this rural canal and we want to retain the 'green highway' towpath as much as possible for the benefits it has for wildlife as well as the character of the canal.</p>

	We aim to continue to upgrade some areas to improve access for all our customers, however there will always be lengths where it is advisable to go with boots and be prepared for uneven areas.
Are there alternative surface options that might be more absorbant?	All areas are assessed individually seeking a balance between our commitment to maintain good access for customers whilst ensuring the integrity of the waterways. For more information take a look at our <a href="#">Towpaths for Everyone</a> policy
How wide a verge do you leave between towpath and water's edge for boats mooring.	It depends on the individual situation, there are various factors to take into account, including ecology and protected species. Reeded areas tend to maintain a wider verge than other areas as the vegetation protects the edge from erosion.
The coir & reed bank improvements have made it much easier for boats to get closer, but the ground behind the coir is very soft and doesn't hold mooring pins effectively. Can this be improved?	We often use material recovered from the canal (eg dredged material) to fill behind the coir meaning the area can be soft and the ground needs time to settle once works are complete and give the vegetation time to develop. Bringing in harder material from elsewhere would increase the cost of the task and would reduce the benefit we can offer boaters through removing material from below water level.
Do otters keep mink away?	We think (and hope) they do. Both species need the same things and so tend to want to be in the same places. Otters are highly territorial and will defend their area to keep other otters and mink away.
Do otters eat water voles?	Fish are the main prey for otters, however, they would eat water voles if they can get them. Water voles have learned an escape strategy, they kick up the river bed to make the water cloudy giving them a chance to get back to their burrows. Otters are too big to fit down the entrance to these and so the voles are safe.
Accessible Waterways Association	A link to the <a href="#">Accessible Waterways Association</a> more information
Why is the Trust introducing a surcharge for boats that don't have a home mooring when only 40% of the consultation responses supported this?	None of the options had clear support. The decision to make this change is based on the review of data and the additional services that are required by these boaters. We do understand that some will struggle with this increase, we can offer support and encourage individuals with concerns to contact us.
How many members does the Trust have?	We don't have a membership, but we do have a ' <a href="#">Friends</a> ' scheme. Approximately 26000 friends support us with regular donations.
How does the Trust communicate with local residents who are not boaters? Specific local concern	Communication is tailored to the situation. We do prepare and release statements to local media outlets, however, these are not always used.
Are any of your welfare team also boaters?	Of our two national welfare officers one lives on a boat, we also have representatives on our Council from many areas including liveaboard and continuous cruiser boaters.