



AVON NAVIGATION TRUST

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Email: office@avonnavigationtrust.org, Web: www.avonnavigationtrust.org

11th November 2025

Dear Boater

RE: LICENCE STRATEGY, STRUCTURE & FEES

We are sending this letter to you to give you a background and explanation on how the Trust decide the annual licence structure and fees. Due to the potential effect of the Chancellor's budget, due late November 2025, we have had to delay finalising the fees for 2026 until we can see the effects of the budget on the Trust which potentially may be significant. Therefore, unfortunately the sending of the renewal packs will be slightly delayed for this reason.

The licence structure and fees are the responsibility of the Council of Trustees and not the staff. The fees are based on the current 5-year strategy, put in place from 2024, which is a continuation of the strategy implemented following the consultation and licence restructure in 2017. This strategy is reviewed, and can therefore be revised, by Council on an annual basis to ensure that it remains appropriate. Attached is the updated strategy for 2026.

1/ COMPETITIVENESS

As you can see from the strategy, we undertake to make sure that our fees are always competitive and less than the relevant CRT licence, however we do closely monitor the CRT licence structure and fees to ensure that we are not too competitive therefore creating an artificial draw on any particular type of boat.

2/ CRT LICENCE STRUCTURE CHANGES

As you may be aware since 2024 CRT are implementing a change in their licence structure taking into account the beam of a boat.

CRT have split their licences into three beam sizes:

- Band 1. CRT Standard Licence: Narrow Boats (under 2.16m) with a home mooring, standard fee (STDF).
- Band 2. CRT Medium Wide Beam: Medium Wide Beam Boat (2.16m to 3.24m) with a home mooring. STDF plus 13% to 25% over 5 years.
- Band 3. CRT Maximum Wide Beam: Maximum Wide Beam Boat (over 3.24m) with a home mooring. STDF plus 26% to 50% over 5 years.

The CRT table below shows the increases for the different boat sizes.



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	Narrowboat under 2.16m with a Home Mooring	Narrowboat under 2.16m without a Home Mooring	Wide Beam 2.16m to 3.24m (Band 2) with a Home Mooring	Wide Beam 2.16m to 3.24m (Band 2) without a Home Mooring	Wide Beam over 3.24m (Band 3) with a Home Mooring	Wide Beam over 3.24m (Band 3) without a Home Mooring
2024	Standard licence fee	Standard licence fee Plus 5%	Standard licence fee Plus 13%	Standard licence fee Plus 18% (5% + 13%)	Standard licence fee Plus 26%	Standard licence fee Plus 31% (5% + 26%)
2025	Standard licence fee	Standard licence fee Plus 10%	Standard licence fee Plus 16%	Standard licence fee Plus 26% (10% + 16%)	Standard licence fee Plus 32%	Standard licence fee Plus 42% (10% + 32%)
2026	Standard licence fee	Standard licence fee Plus 15%	Standard licence fee Plus 19%	Standard licence fee Plus 34% (15% + 19%)	Standard licence fee Plus 38%	Standard licence fee Plus 53% (15% + 38%)
2027	Standard licence fee	Standard licence fee Plus 20%	Standard licence fee Plus 22%	Standard licence fee Plus 42% (20% + 22%)	Standard licence fee Plus 44%	Standard licence fee Plus 64% (20% + 44%)
2028	Standard licence fee	Standard licence fee Plus 25%	Standard licence fee Plus 25%	Standard licence fee Plus 50% (25% + 25%)	Standard licence fee Plus 50%	Standard licence fee Plus 75% (25% + 50%)

3/ WIDE BEAM BOATS (WB) EFFECT ON THE RIVER AVON

Mooring & Navigation Capacity

The River Avon maximum boat dimension is 70 feet x 12 feet 9 inch.

WB boats are typically 60 feet x 12 feet.

Narrow boats are typically 60 feet x 6 feet, 10 inches

Cruisers are typically 30 feet x 10 feet.

Therefore, WB boats take up the space of two cruisers or two narrow boats.

WB boats reduce marina capacity and therefore reduce the potential number of boats licencing and potentially reduce ANT's licence income.

WB boats reduce visitor mooring capacity.

WB boats reduce the navigation capacity taking up a whole lock, especially on the lower reaches. Two cruisers or two narrow boats can normally fit into a lock.

Potential Risk to Navigation Structures.

WB boats are typically 40-ton.

Narrow boats are typically 20-ton.

Cruisers are typically 10-ton.

An impact from a WB boat with one of our lock structures is likely to cause major damage.

Over the last 15 years we have had many impacts from cruisers and narrow boats all of which have caused minimum or medium damage not requiring a dewater or major repairs.



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Over 2024 we have had three reports of WB boat impacts at three lock sites. Weir Brake Lock, Nafford Lock and Strensham Lock. The cost of these unplanned repairs was significant using up most of our emergency reserves. The Trust cannot sustain such a level of unplanned major works and if this continued, we would have to close sections of the river while funds were raised. Also dewatering locks closes the navigation and as this is only possible out of the flood season, it is likely to inconvenience boaters wanting to navigate as occurred this year. This will reduce ANT licence income and affect marinas and mooring sites as boaters will potentially move away to waterways that do not need major repairs in the season.

Strensham Lock was fully dewatered in 2018 and was fully refurbished. This structure should last 40-50 years before major works. Due to the significant damage caused by a WB boat impact in 2024 we had to dewater the lock before the 2025 season, only 8 years after the last major refurbishment. The lock just managed to stay operable in the second half of 2024, and it was considered that it would not survive another season. The damage was a major cill and foundation failure.

Unfortunately, we could not identify the actual boats that caused the damage so we could not claim from their insurance. We did narrow one impact down to a possible visiting WB boat. However, when challenged, the boater denied it was them and we did not have solid evidence that reached the required threshold for our insurers to claim. We are now raising funds for the installation of CCTV at all our locks, of good enough quality, so that the footage can be used to claim or prosecute an offender.

Navigation Public Safety

Typical WB boats are the maximum size that the navigation can cope with. There are a number of parts of the navigation, especially on the upper reaches where two WB boats cannot pass safely. An example is the Canyon channel below Bidford Grange Lock. As the number of WB boats increase on the river then the probability of collisions at pinch points increases.

At various pinch points we are going to have to consider traffic control measures that are suitable for each location. Examples are, allowing upstream traffic before noon and downstream traffic after noon or prioritising downstream traffic where there is line of sight or the use of traffic lights. All of which will inconvenience boaters. We have had many near misses reported in the 2024 and 2025 season.

An Analogy

An analogy is a country lane and a lorry. A lorry is the largest thing that can just get down a country lane. The odd delivery lorry is ok. However, if the number of lorries travelling up and down the lane increases, the risk to infrastructure, disruption to other traffic and the risk to public safety increase. If more and more lorries are parked on or near the lane then the probability of increased lorry traffic rises together with the effects of such traffic.

If you consider the River Avon in parts as a single file country lane, we now have three large potential lorry parks on the lane. One at each end of the lane and one in the middle. Shakespeare Marina in Stratford, Evesham Marina in Evesham and Tewkesbury Marina in Tewkesbury. All three of which are increasing the numbers of lorries parked with them. All of which, even though parked for long periods, have the freedom to travel up and down the lane at will.

WB Boat Summary

- CRT's WB licence increases are potentially driving WB boats to the River Avon.
- The more WB boats, the more risk of major damage and public safety issues.
- Large numbers of WB boats are a potential existential threat to the River Avon Navigation and in a short number of years could cause enough damage that ANT would not have the funds to keep the navigation open as a through navigation.



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Conclusion

Our only lever to try and influence and effect the number of boats, is the licence structure and the cost of licences. We can suspend or restrict the issuing of particular types of licences as we have done this year by not allowing visitor licences for WB boats, however we cannot ban boats all together.

We need to ensure that the difference between the CRT WB licence fee and the ANT WB licence fee is not significant therefore reducing the artificial financial benefit that will draw such boats to come to the river Avon.

As per our licence strategy, we plan to track the CRT licence fee and stay just cheaper for all types of boats. This means that the licence price is not a barrier to a boat coming to the Avon however it will not be a large enough difference to artificially draw boats to the Avon.

4/ ANT LICENCE STRUCTURE 2025 ONWARDS

CRT have split boats into three widths. However, WB barges over 10 feet wide are the cause for concern for the River Avon. Cruisers and narrow boats do not reduce the rivers capacity nor risk causing major damage or create potential public safety issues.

From 2025 ANT split the licence structure into:

1. Narrow Boat & Cruisers. Track the relevant CRT licence (Band 1 & 2).
2. Wide Beam Barges, with a width of 10 feet and above of any construction. Track the CRT WB licence (Band 3).

5/ RESIDENTIAL BOATS THAT NEVER MOVE

ANT has a licence category for Houseboats where a Houseboat is defined as “an unpowered, static, permanently moored boat with living accommodation for residential or pleasure use.” Clearly, any boat which is powered and has the capability to navigate on the river does not fall within this definition. Therefore, a residential boat owner who does not intend to ever move could opt to become unpowered and as long as the boat is static, permanently moored and is not powered then this boat would be classed as a Houseboat. In the case of a WB boat this licence would be much cheaper than the annual WB Barge licence.

I hope that the above and attached document suitably explain the ANT licence structure and fees.

Yours Faithfully

Jack Hegarty.
Avon Navigation Trust Chairman