



AVON NAVIGATION TRUST

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Dear ANT Boater

1st December 2025

RE: LICENCE FEE INCREASES

Following from my letter of 11th November 2025 I wanted to explain the reasoning behind our licence fee increases for 2026 and the coming years. Following the Chancellor's budget, of last week, I am pleased to report that there is a negligible effect to ANT even though many of us as individuals may be affected.

As I explained in my previous letter 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 runs until 2028. This strategy is reviewed, and can therefore be revised, by Council on an annual basis to ensure that it remains appropriate.

1/ FINANCIAL SITUATION

As I reported in my previous letter the Wide Beam Barge impacts to three of our locks, Weir Brake, Nafford and Strensham led us to undertake very expensive unplanned major works particularly at Nafford and Strensham in 2025. The cost of these unplanned repairs was significant, using up most of our emergency reserves. Legally we are required to hold emergency reserves to protect the navigation from exactly these types of situations. The fact that we held these reserves meant we were able to draw on them to reopen the navigation so proving how important they are. However, we are now in a position where we need to replenish these reserves. Also, we will need to dewater Nafford Lock to do phase 2 of the works. This will need to happen in the Spring of 2026 as we believe the lock may not last another season. Therefore, these major works, at a significant cost, will also need to be funded.

We had considered replenishing our reserves and funding the Nafford Lock works in one year, however the increase to licence fees in 2026 would have been significant and we felt that this would be unfair to our boaters, especially as this situation was not of their making. Therefore, the Trustees have decided to spread the replenishment of our emergency reserves over the rest of the 5-year strategy period, the next 3 years. Based on this, the increases for 2026 will be 16% increase for narrow boats and cruisers and 23% increase for Wide Beam Barges.

At the same time, we are also running a very tight ship with a reduced core workforce and cutting costs wherever we can.

2/ LICENCE STRATEGY & COMPETITIVENESS

We will always ensure that our annual licence increases are as defined by our licence strategy. As per our strategy, we undertake to make sure that our fees are always competitive and less than the relevant and appropriate CRT licence. Please see overleaf, charts showing ANT 2026 season licence fees compared to CRT 2026 season licence fees.

3/ CRT LICENCE STRUCTURE CHANGES

As explained in my previous letter ANT will track the CRT Wide Beam increases to try and reduce the significant competitive draw of our much cheaper licence. Therefore, Wide Beam Barges will see a larger increase than other boats.

4/ RESIDENTIAL BOATS THAT NEVER MOVE

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 Wide Beam Barge this licence would be much cheaper than the annual Wide Beam Barge licence and would not see the higher percentage increases over the coming years.

5/ WIDE BEAM BARGE SHORT TERM LICENCE

To try and protect the navigation from significant and potentially existential damage the Trustees have decided to extend the restriction on visiting Wide Beam Barges for another year. We feel we need to do this to try and protect the navigation for the benefit of our annual licence holders.

I hope that the above has explained the reason behind the ANT licence fee increases for the next three years.

Yours Faithfully

Jack Hegarty.
Avon Navigation Trust Chairman

