



## The WABC newsletter

[www.wabc.org.uk](http://www.wabc.org.uk)

### From the Editor

It's mid-summer now and we are well and truly underway for our second season of passenger trips – and what joy it continues to be! All is well with our Wheelyboat, WOW-one, and following a highly successful volunteer recruitment drive over the winter we are working through our comprehensive training programme with them. The objective is to get more fully trained crews up and running so we can increase our capacity to handle more passenger trips.

We continue to be thankful for the generous use of the facilities at Benson and the mooring availability offered by a local resident. Hopefully, with our 'New HQ' facility coming mid-2023 this will be the last full season of our Benson-based operation. With our back-office systems now fully up and running – see [www.wabc.org.uk](http://www.wabc.org.uk) and the Bookings tab - we can look forward to many successful passenger trips for the remainder of the season. The joy our passengers - disabled and elderly people, their friends and families – get from the efforts of our amazing volunteers is so very special to behold.

If any queries arise as a result of anything in this issue of Wheels on Water please get in touch – it will be great to hear from you. In the meantime, happy boating!

John Jenkins MBE

Chair of Trustees

[John.Jenkins@wabc.org.uk](mailto:John.Jenkins@wabc.org.uk)

### Our new headquarters (HQ) takes shape

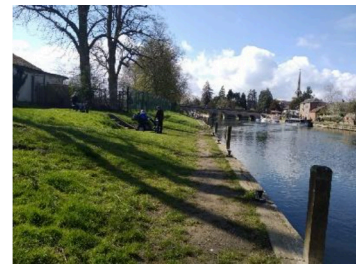
It has been a long battle but we are getting there and the development of our new HQ is taking shape. SODC came to our rescue 3 years ago. Their requirement was to create and improve leisure and recreational facilities for disabled people in South Oxon (as per the Neighbourhood Plan) and WABC was a great opportunity to do just that. Thank you SODC!

The selected location is The Riverside, Wallingford on the site of the old diving boards demolished in the 1960s, close to the swimming pool. Being an 'existing facility' has been convenient as various funding pots have become accessible contributing to the £148k budget allocated for the project. The facility will be for the wider public as well as WABC but, rest assured, our requirements are first and foremost!

Our HQ has a wheelchair friendly pathway to the water side, passenger ramp and pontoon, storage cabin, access to toilets, and ample car parking – just what we wanted!

We plan to moor WOW-one at The Boat House pub, thanks to the agreement of their management, Greene King, and Wallingford Town Council as well as Pure Boating, the current frontage users, for their accommodation.

A recent update from the SODC Project Team suggests delivery mid-2023 so we will likely continue with our current Benson Marina base for the first half of next season. What a big difference the new HQ will make to our day-to-day operations!



## Our Glorious Thames

We are so lucky to have our glorious river right on our doorstep and be able to show it off to our Clients who take a trip on our Wheelyboat, WOW-one. It is a jewel in the crown of Wallingford and Benson and certainly something to be very proud of. Based in Benson we have two options available to us, each with their own characteristics:

**Benson to Day's Lock** – our upstream stretch. A lovely part of the river, much of it lined by weeping willows, taking in the ornate frontage of Rush Court, through Shillingford and its lovely bridge, past the mysteries of Little Wittenham with its oft-told stories of hauntings of the Manor House and the church, past Dorchester and on to Day's Lock and its adjacent weir.



**Benson to Cleve Lock** – our downstream stretch, 7 miles of lovely countryside, the longest lock-free stretch on the river. The downward journey takes in Benson Weir with its happy childhood memories of fish and fishing, to the lovely historic town of Wallingford and on to Cholsey, Moulsoford and through open water meadows towards Goring.



## Having Fun Fundraising!

As with every voluntary charitable organisation we have to keep an eagle eye on our finances and be prepared to raise funds. Our annual costs including insurance, maintenance, operations and subsidiary items runs to around £10,000 and we have to top up what we can gather from grant aid bodies, donations and the generosity of our sponsors by our own fundraising activities – it's important we are seen to help ourselves.

This year we are aiming to have a 'bucket shake' or two but our main thrust is our Christmas Raffle. This year we have collected some lovely prizes – restaurant meals, golfing tuition, a 4-Ball at Hadden Hill Golf Club to name a few. Plus our star prize, a Champagne Picnic Cruise for 4 on WOW-one in 2023! Our sincere thanks to all our donors for their generosity. We plan to make tickets available electronically via our website so make sure you don't miss this amazing opportunity to get involved.

## Booking Your Voyage

If you are disabled or have mobility issues or know someone who has why not jump on board and book a voyage on our Wheelyboat WOW-one. We know you will not be disappointed – apart from maybe the weather! We have a lovely boat, safe as houses, with a capacity of 8 people including up to two wheelchair users.

The booking process couldn't be easier – simply follow your preferred option below:

Website: [www.wabc.org.uk/bookavoyage](http://www.wabc.org.uk/bookavoyage)

Send us a message on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/wallingfordaccessibleboatclub](https://www.facebook.com/wallingfordaccessibleboatclub)

Email: [enquiries@wabc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wabc.org.uk)

Hope we will see you out on the water!

## About WOW-one

We are very proud of our Wheelyboat WOW-one. She is a Coulam V20, a custom-built flat-bottomed craft about 20 feet long with a capacity of 8-10 people, up to 2 of them wheelchair users, and including 2 crew. Our maximum loading is 8 persons well within the weight threshold. Powered by a 40hp Suzuki outboard engine, a unique feature is the drop-down bow which allows easy access for all our passengers, so no steps or other obstacles to worry about.

Come and see WOW-one in all her glory!



## Meet just some of our new volunteers

We had a very successful recruitment exercise over the winter period and managed to attract 20 or so additional volunteers. Welcome all! Here's just a few of them – more to follow next time.



**Jane  
Haigh**



**John  
Kendall**



**Annaliese  
Quinn**



**Martin  
Woolley**



## Swan Upping steals the show

The passengers of a very recent voyage were blessed to witness the wonderful sight of the annual Swan Upping when it passed through Wallingford and Benson very recently. Our skipper took some great shots – what good fortune to bump into the Swan Uppers as they carried out their duties. You never know what you are going to see on the river!

If you don't know what Swan Upping is, you can learn more here: [www.royal.uk/swans](http://www.royal.uk/swans)

## Sincere thanks to our sponsors

We have been very fortunate indeed over the last 6 months or so to attract the goodwill of several local companies which believe in what we are offering the community and wish to support us as a consequence. The finance they offer enables us to plan ahead with greater confidence than we otherwise would. So, a big thank you to all our sponsors – we are very grateful indeed to you!

**CHAMPION & CO.**  
ESTABLISHED 1869



*Pettits*  
of Wallingford



**np** design & print ltd  
[www.npdesignprint.co.uk](http://www.npdesignprint.co.uk)



## Our volunteers are brilliant but our passengers are the real stars!

Getting WABC up and running has not been an easy task – there has certainly been a lot more to it than we the trustees first thought way back in 2017. But here we are, 5 years on, and we are now reaping the rewards and with every passenger voyage we undertake those rewards just grow and grow. For it is the sheer joy demonstrated by our passengers, young and old alike - especially our youngsters – that makes all the hard work more than worthwhile. We couldn't do it without our brilliant volunteers of course, that do a wonderful job, whatever their role, back-office or crewing out on the water, but it's our passengers with their big smiles and happy chatter that are the real stars of the show.

We have had some wonderful passenger feedback:



Thank you for the most wonderful afternoon today! The crew were great and my whole family had the best time, particularly Toby! Thank you for making this possible, we really hope to be able to join you all again soon!



My son Toby is 13 years old and is a wheelchair user however loves adventure and being on the water! We would love to find out more about opportunities for our family (myself, my husband, Toby and his 2 sisters).



I just wanted to say thank you so so much for today! It meant the world to us all to have been able to make it and made my dad so happy to have been able to go on the river with my boys (even if he did fall asleep for some of it)! You are all doing such a wonderful job!



It was such a pleasure to get out on the Wheelyboat yesterday! We had a lovely time. We used to swim and boat on the Benson stretch of the river a great deal as youngsters but now we are so old and immobile we thought doing the same these days was not possible. But WABC and the Wheelyboat WOW-one has changed all that! Thank you - and our thanks to the crew for being so knowledgeable and helpful!



It was so exciting to be offered a ride on the Wallingford Accessible Boat. The crew were incredibly knowledgeable about the river and my children and I learned a great deal about the wildlife and history of the Thames.

My six year old daughter is a full-time wheelchair user and she misses out on so many experiences due to her disability. The team at WABC were so welcoming, and she was over the moon to be able to get on to a boat, and see what the river had to offer. The trip has been the highlight of our year, and I can't wait to get out on to the water again.



Enabling experiences like these is what WABC is all about.  
May we have many more!

