



Hillingdon Narrowboats Association

Sample HNA Training Course Programme (DofE)

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Overview and Prerequisites

Boat Handling Course

This course is delivered by an approved NCBA trainer in preparation for a group taking a boat out on the inland waterways of the UK. The course is designed to minimise potential risks and provide a level of knowledge and skill to the boat operators, helping to ensure a safe, enjoyable boating experience.

Certificate in Community Boat Management

Fully endorsed by British Waterways and recommended as an inland waterways qualification in the Small passenger Boat code issued by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the course draws on current best practice as supplied by member organisations of the NCBA.

The aim of the course is to give operators of boats on non-tidal waterways training in boat handling, boat maintenance and the management of group safety and welfare.

Anyone over the age of eighteen can obtain a CCBM Certificate. It is however expected that you will have some experience of working with groups and have previous practical experience of 'boating'. Successful candidates qualify to operate boats with a maximum of 12 passengers, on non-tidal inland waterways in the UK.

Permission to attend

Trainees joining us as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme need to obtain permission from the DofE leader; in addition, trainees under the age of 18 also need to confirm that they have obtained permission from a parent or guardian.

Day One – Thursday

Arriving by midday, DofE trainees will meet each other, get familiar with their accommodation for the next four nights, explore the boats and facilities that HNA offers. They see, first hand, the work that goes into running a charitable organisation, help with the preparation of training materials for the course, and ensure that the boats are prepared with water and fuel, as well as lifejackets, anchors/chains, radios and anything else we'll need. They'll also see that we have enough provisions for the course, taking into account any special dietary requirements that others might have. Part of this will also be to ensure that we have an appropriate amount of food – too much chilled product, for example, won't fit in the fridges, so they'll have to think about what we need now, and what we need to purchase later on over the weekend.

Later on in the afternoon, other (non-DofE) trainees will also be joining at which point we'll talk about what we'll be doing across the weekend. New for 2016 is an element around communication skills, where we'll illustrate how important it is to be able communicate clearly and succinctly, involving the trainees in a practical demonstration of this - this also works as a ice breaker very well.

We start talking about safety here, and repeat this element right through the weekend.

We'll show a short video from the Canal & River Trust, which we'll also use as a learning tool, by talking about what is shown. Dinner is served in our boathouse classroom, and trainees will help in the preparation, serving and clearing away, with the supervision and assistance of HNA's trainers. Day one should conclude by 20.30.

Day Two – Friday

Aiming for a 7.30 start, trainees will cook breakfast (often a choice between bacon rolls, toast or cereal) with tea and coffee. This is cooked, and served, on the boats, and will introduce the trainees to the complexities of cooking for a group, particularly in a limited space, and working together to plan, cook, serve, eat and tidy. Again, this, like every other mealtime, is supervised by HNA's trainers. Once breakfast is completed, and following a safety briefing, we'll leave the boathouse.

As we approach the first lock, we disembark everyone to talk about lock operation, use, history and safety around locks, and introduce the tools we'll use. Safe use of the locks is demonstrated by HNA's trainers, with plenty of opportunity for trainees to get involved and ask questions. We also demonstrate what can go wrong, and how to recover in such a scenario. Much of this session focuses on safety and teamwork.

After leaving the first lock, we continue until lunchtime. By now, we'll start rotating trainees through steering the boats, talking to them about how the boats move through the water. A trainer will work 1:1 with a trainee at the back of the boat, and we'll explore activities such as observation, steering, turning, and speed control as we progress. Each trainee will probably get 20-30 minutes or so of "tiller time" during the morning, and we generally work on a "one person steering, another person observing" at this point.

Trainees not steering will be under the care of another trainer, who will talk about canals, history, points of interest, other boats, in an informal setting, and oversee preparation of lunch, and we'll stop for around 30 – 45 minutes to eat and to have a short break.

The afternoon continues as the morning, although there are no more locks. As we head into London, there is more to see, more canal users, more points of interest, and more challenging traffic.

We end the day by mooring up, having a formal end of day debrief, and then preparing and cooking dinner, as a group. Evenings are usually spent talking and reviewing in detail what went well, and what could have gone better over the course of the day. We'll talk through everything, and answer questions that trainees might have, and plan any corrective actions for the following day - this may not just be about boating, but, for example, have we sufficient food for the following days? Do we need to shop? If so, where? Who will go?

Overnight accommodation is, of course, on board in separated male and female cabins, with two of HNA's trainers per boat.

Day Three – Saturday

Much like the Friday, the group prepare breakfast, and we commence with a formal briefing on the day and a repeat of the safety briefing from yesterday. We depart, but today, we'll be introducing the use of ropes to control the boat. We head into Paddington, and start to teach turning ("winding") the boats, again, with trainees rotating through steering the boats in 20-30 minute sessions.

Continuing, we head past Regents Park Zoo and into Camden by about lunch time. At this point, trainees can disembark for an hour or so to explore the famous Camden Market if desired, in which case HNA's trainers will take the boats through the next three locks with any trainees remaining, and then prepare lunch.

After lunch, we continue towards St Pancras, taking the opportunity, if time allows, to practice reversing and winding again, before arriving in Limehouse Basin late afternoon. After a formal end of day briefing, dinner will again be prepared and served on board, with lots of discussion on how the day went, some talk around the theory and practice, and particularly, by now, on what we saw from other canal users: was there anything we saw that other boaters were doing wrong? There is also an opportunity to explore the local area afterwards, if desired, although this is more pleasant during the summer months. Limehouse Basin is home to a number of larger vessels, and worthy of some time. All of HNA's boats used for training carry a number of board games, playing cards, etc, if the group wants to use these.

Day Four – Sunday

Note: Depending on tide timings, we may reverse the order of this day's activities, and perform any elements missed later on in the day.

Breakfast followed by a formal briefing, and then we refill the boat water tanks, before heading out of the basin towards Bow Locks, where every trainee will have plenty of time to wind the boats, under the guidance of a trainer. By lunch, which the trainees will prepare, everyone should have had plenty of practice, and we head back to Limehouse to prepare for the Thames.

Another safety briefing, specific to the tideway is given, and lifejackets are issued, fitted and checked. Anchors and chains are also fitted to the boats, and VHF marine radios tested. The safety briefing will focus on what to do in the event of an emergency.

The tidal Thames will offer some great opportunities for photos, and HNA's trainers will ensure that all trainees get experience of steering in this very busy part of the river, pointing out local landmarks and monuments as appropriate. This is also an excellent demonstration of teamwork, where we'll be in close contact with each other by radio and hand-signals, as well as listening to the river's controlling authority on the VHF radio, and reacting to any instructions.

During the afternoon, HNA's trainers will prepare Sunday Roast dinner, with the help of the trainees, ready to eat when we arrive in Brentford late that afternoon. Again, the day ends with a full debrief, dinner, and a chance to unwind and relax, with hot showers in the basin at Brentford. It's worth noting that all boats have onboard showers, but trainees – and trainers! – do prefer the increased space and water pressure in a conventional, land-based, facility!

Again, this evening will be lots of discussion, backed up with the course trainers talking about their experience on the canals, what they've seen go right - and wrong! - and, more importantly, build on what trainees have learned so far, in preparation for the final day, when we see the trainers step back from instruction, and play an observational role, letting trainees experience things going wrong, and then allowing them to self-correct. This evening often sees us re-visit communication skills, and we may repeat the exercise from the first evening, now that the group has started to work as a team.

Day Five – Monday

After breakfast, and briefing, we start the long journey home. Today will see the trainers step-back from training, and provide more of an observational role. Trainees, again taking it in 20-30 minute sessions, will be expected to control the boat and crew, as they've been taught over the last few days, and to give instructions concisely and clearly. This will become essential as we progress through a series of locks at Hanwell, where a trainee will have the opportunity to take the boat into a lock alone. The trainers will, of course, be on hand to assist where necessary, and to maintain a high level of safety, but it's important that trainees are allowed to make mistakes, and then recover from them.

We continue as previously, preparing and eating lunch at some point around lunchtime, rotating trainees through steering, until we get to Wind in the Willows or Hayes Bulls Bridge, where we'll again practice reversing and winding, often with trainees alone on the boat, working together.

As we head back towards Harefield, HNA's trainers will take over steering the boats, because by this time, trainees are usually tired, and HNA is conscious that this is the time mistakes are more likely to happen. This also gives trainees time to pack their personal kit, and to tidy the boat, ready for our return.

Once we arrive back at the boathouse, trainees are expected to unload the boat, and attend a short debrief of the course, and complete any remaining paperwork, before heading home.

Learning Objectives

Focus Area	Specifics
Teamwork	Looking out for each other's safety; listening or giving instructions; working in a confined space; what to do in an emergency; working together to achieve something.
Planning	Considering the day's events; thinking about food requirements; planning meals; thinking ahead.
Responsibility	Making decisions and choices; managing the consequences of a bad decision.
Confidence	Working with other parties; speaking to a group; meeting new people; living in close confines with others.
Observational	Watching what's going on, both near and far; looking for risk; judging opportunities; examining surroundings (such as weirs) to predict effects on the boat.
Risk Mitigation	Identifying, managing, understanding, mitigating and avoiding risk.
Communication	Controlling a crew; clear and concise instruction; interacting with other parties; reacting to instruction; understanding differences between requests and instructions; watching for misleading signs.

Safety and Security

- All HNA's trainers are experienced in working with young people; are CRB/DBS checked; and are trained and certificated by the NCBA (National Community Boats Association) to deliver training. Trainers are subject to regular review and refresher by the NCBA to retain their status as a certificated trainer. HNA is also an accredited (by the NCBA) training centre and subject to regular moderation and assessment.
- The course has been delivered upwards 2-3 times per year over a number of years; the course route is well known to HNA's trainers, and mooring places take into account safety and security of the surrounding area.
- Boats have fire extinguishers, fire blankets, first-aid kits and carbon monoxide detectors on board. HNA's Safety Briefing also details actions to be taken in the event of a fire, injury or man overboard.
- Self-inflating life jackets are available for use at any point, and are fitted to each individual. Life jackets are compulsory on the tidal Thames, and will also be worn by HNA's trainers at this point. All life jackets are regularly serviced by a third party.
- HNA trainers supervise food preparation and cooking to help ensure no food cross-contamination or injury. Meals, and preparation, take into account any special dietary needs (for allergen, religious or other requirements).
- Whilst HNA would recommend it, trainees are under no obligation to participate in every part of the course, except both daily briefings. All HNA staff involved in the course will also attend every briefing.
- HNA asks all trainees to provide a brief summary of any medical/health conditions which may affect their participation in the course - this includes allergies. In addition, each trainee is asked to complete a fuller medical statement, which will be sealed upon completion, and held by the lead trainer. In the event of a medical emergency, HNA may open and pass the contents of that envelope to the emergency services or medical personnel. The sealed envelopes will be returned to trainees at the end of the course, or securely shredded if left behind.
- For safety reasons, HNA reserves the right, as a condition of booking, to curtail any trainee's participation in the course in the event that they pose an unacceptable risk to the safety of themselves, other trainees, other canal users, HNA's boats or staff.

Timing

- Other than the first day, each day will start with breakfast, as a group, around 08.00. Lunch will be around 13.00, and the training day will end around 17.00 each day. However, the last day is very much dependant on progress along the canal, but HNA would intend to finish the instructional part of the course around the same time, but take over steering of the boats to allow trainees the chance to rest.
- Much of the non-steering part of the course is informal, although the final day does have a group element in book-work and theory. Parts of the theory are repeated several times across the weekend, so that all trainees get good exposure.
- End of day briefings cover what went well and what could have gone better. Morning briefings cover the plan for that particular day, and any other opportunities that trainees want to take advantage of.
- HNA's trainers debrief separately at the end of each day to compare notes on each trainee, to ensure that we have a consistent approach and opinion, and can address any development areas.

Day	Start	End	Hours (less lunch/dinner)
Thursday	12.00	20.30	7.5
Friday	08.00	17.00	8.0
Saturday	08.00	17.00	8.0
Sunday	08.00	17.00	8.0
Monday	08.00	18.00 (approx)	9.0
Total			40.5

Hours are approximate, and may be slightly more or less depending on canal progress, availability of mooring spaces, delays, tide timings, lock availability, weather or other canal traffic, but are a good approximation. Should unforeseen reasons demand an extended day, HNA staff will take over control of the boats to avoid unreasonable demands on the trainees and their abilities.