

Coal deliveries and diesel by narrowboat



There are some 2000 miles of canals in England and Wales, and there are a lot of people living and working on and around them. Many canal side properties are still reliant upon solid fuel for heating, and in some cases, cooking too. There are also increasing numbers of people living aboard their boats, and many of these also use solid fuels and need diesel deliveries.

Various narrowboat operators have tapped into this market, having developed a regular trade delivering both wholesale and retail solid fuels, diesel and other products. One has a loading wharf in the West Midlands and travels to places as far afield as Northwich, Gloucester and Oxford. Others operate in Cheshire, Northamptonshire, the Thames Valley and the London and South East. The trade is cost effective as around 19 tonnes of pre-ordered fuel is carried per boat per trip.

Many canal side properties have limited, and in some cases, no road access, which makes this service invaluable. Deliveries of large or awkward domestic items can also be accommodated, including such items as a new Rayburn cooker.

Information about how to contact CBOA members who supply domestic fuel is given below

			Areas served
B McGuigan	07791 345004	enquiries@bcnboats.co.uk	West Midlands
John Jackson	07885-284812	coalboat@waitrose.com www.coalboat.co.uk	Midlands, south-west and north-west
N Wheeler	0121 3083282		Midlands
P Hawker	07984 900613		Midlands

Narrow boats are also used as part of a fleet of boats that moves washed and sorted sand and gravel on the lower Grand Union Canal from gravel pits at Denham (Bucks) to Hanson's concrete making plant at West Drayton in west London; further information is given in one of the case studies.

Narrowboats are sometimes seen on other duties, for example, carrying stone for tow-path works, and carrying building materials to properties where road access is a problem.

The average narrowboat is capable of carrying around 20 tonnes on a draught of about three feet. Leisure boat users benefit from the movement of loaded narrow boats as they help to keep the channel clear. They also provide a colourful example of Britain's canal heritage.