

Navigation update: What's the latest?

March 2024

Dear Stakeholder

Here is our latest newsletter, updating you on key areas of work and priorities that the National Navigation team are focussing on, which hopefully you will find useful.

Please feel free to share this with those you represent.

Kind regards

Omoniyi Green and Rachael McFarlane
National Navigation Managers



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National Navigation Team news



A reminder that the National Navigation team have a new email address. You can contact us by emailing navigation@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Emails sent to our old address (navconsultation@environment-agency.gov.uk) will be redirected.

Introducing:

Rachael McFarlane

Hi. I have joined Navigation for a year to job share with Omoniyi Green as Navigation Manager (backfilling for Jo Scully).

I come from Incident Management (IM) in the Environment Agency where I was team leader of Incident Role Leadership in the IM Centre for Excellence. I have delivered several IM projects including reviewing and revising the government facing component of our incident response, developing the service approach to incident management, and designing and delivering incident role leadership. I am also EDI lead for Incident Management. I have been in the Environment Agency since 2006 where I started in Area as a Biodiversity Officer.

Navigation brings together many of the things I love; rivers, physical and human geography and recreation in the outdoors (I am a cold-water swimmer and was a keen kayaker). I am really looking forward to learning about Navigation and working with you all.

A decorative illustration at the bottom of the slide showing a blue river flowing through green hills. There are silhouettes of cows, a person fishing, a bridge, and a tractor in the background.

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Navigation Business Plan update



Overview

We have been working closely with our colleagues internally to drive forward our Navigation Business Plan and are focusing on the progression of our navigation priorities for the coming year; Finances (exploring alternative funding sources), Enforcement (influencing government to change legislation and byelaws) and Participation and Benefits data collection.

The winter period is proving to be challenging with the widescale flooding just after the December festivities and the proceeding storms taking place at the busiest time of our Navigation Capital programme, but we have still been able to deliver positive outcomes for Navigation across our areas. Furthermore, there has been lots of great work taking place to deliver elements of our business plan and some of these are mentioned below.

National Navigation Team Update:

Jo Scully is now on maternity leave, and after a competitive recruitment process, Rachael McFarlane has been appointed to job share the role of National Navigation Manager with Omoniyi Green.

For more information please contact the National Navigation Team:

navigation@environment-agency.gov.uk

Navigation Business Plan

Our waterways' contribution to creating a better place



EA 2025
Navigation
Business Plan



Navigation Business Plan theme

You will see this marker throughout the newsletter to identify which Business Plan theme the update is referring to (Sustainable Outcomes, Sustainable Operations or Sustainable Funding)

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Navigation Business & Policy Development



National stakeholder engagement

Our work with our national stakeholders continues, and we are certainly realising the benefits of the new engagement model.

National Waterways Forum member 1:1 meetings

We have been busy over the last few months carrying out more 1:1 meetings with national organisations that are members of our National Waterways Forum (NWF). As with the first round of meetings in 2022-23, these have covered a broad range of interest areas and are helping us to understand the subjects that are most important to our boating and non-boating customers alike. We can't possibly solve every challenge but, by having these conversations – which are very open and collaborative – we are taking steps to listen and work out where we can make positive change. The next meeting of the NWF chaired by the Environment Agency's Board Member for Navigation, Robert Gould, is on 25th April.

National Waterways Technical Group

We are progressing the formation of our first NWTGs, which will be looking at:

- Nationally consistent boat identification
- Visitor registration charges
- EA Participation Strategy & Access

We are currently working up the project briefs for these groups and will then be contacting the stakeholder representatives who have offered to support us by sharing their relevant skill and expertise as group members.

Please contact us: navigation@environment-agency.gov.uk



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Navigation Business & Policy Development



National stakeholder engagement

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Reviewing our Stakeholder Engagement Model

It's already 18 months since we launched our revised national engagement model, we've implemented most of what we set out to do; and are now forming up the first of our technical / delivery groups.

We always said we would keep things under review, and we shortly want to begin an exercise to look at how things are going, evaluating the model and how effectively it's working – both for us and for our stakeholders. We'll be working with our Engagement and Insights team to help kickstart the process – and will of course be talking to stakeholders as well! Expect to hear more in the coming months.

Please contact us: navigation@environment-agency.gov.uk



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Navigation Business & Policy Development



National stakeholder engagement

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Collaborating with other Navigation Authorities

Through our leading membership of the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA), we aim to take a collaborative approach to many of the topics and challenges we are all facing. AINA has an ambitious business plan covering work of both strategic and operational importance; and we are playing a full part in its delivery, through a number of working groups alongside colleagues from the Canal & River Trust, the Broads Authority, Waterways Ireland, Scottish Canals and many smaller authorities.

Current priorities include:

- Climate change and Net Zero
- Growth in residential use of inland waterways
- Development of model byelaws for inland waterways
- Reviewing the Inland Waters Small Passenger Boat Code
- Hire Boat Code compliance verification and enforcement
- Guidance for the sustainable management of dredged material from inland waterways
- Developing a navigation authority approach to asset maintenance based on common headline principles.

Please contact us: navigation@environment-agency.gov.uk



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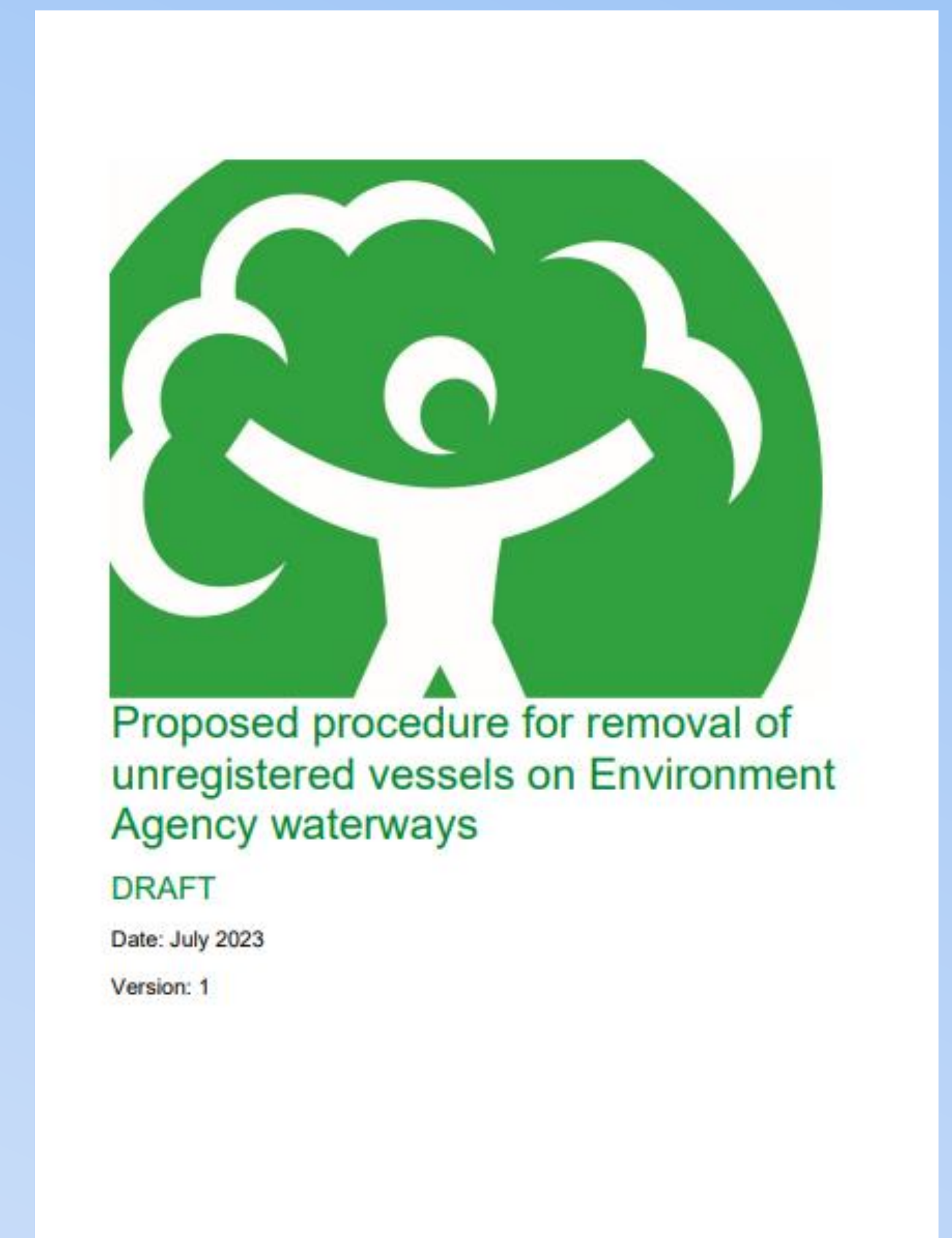
Proposed procedure for removal of unregistered vessels from Environment Agency waterways

In our last update we talked about the results of the external consultation on our proposed procedure relating to our power to remove unregistered vessels under Article 16 of The Environment Agency (Inland Waterways) Order 2010.

Our Legal Services colleagues have been looking at all the responses in detail and it's clear that we have some more thinking to do around some of the areas our customers were concerned about, particularly welfare and human rights issues and equality impact. We must also ensure that any process can be carried out within our staff resource capability.

Once we have finished looking at the legal advice, we will revise the draft process with an internal task and finish group before discussing it with our National Waterways Advisory Group (NWAG).

Please contact us: navigation@environment-agency.gov.uk



Compliance and Enforcement



Sustainable Outcomes



Environment Agency

Development of a new Community of Practice on Tree and Vegetation Management

Last time we told you about our new compliance and enforcement Community of Practice (CoP). Now we are busy forming up a new internal CoP to get the right people talking and sharing best practice around the issue of keeping our navigation channels free from obstruction by trees.

You may or may not know that it's a riparian (riverside) landowner's responsibility to ensure that trees and vegetation on their property are maintained so that they don't block our waterways – either physically or by obstructing lines of sight). But we know this doesn't always happen and it's a source of regular complaint from boat users, so our staff spend significant amounts of time trying to locate and speak to those responsible. Sometimes we end up dealing with the issue ourselves, and that also costs us money that would be better spent elsewhere.

By bringing together staff from our Waterways teams across all our navigable rivers, as well as colleagues from Legal Services and also Biodiversity / Natural Environment teams, we hope to take a more strategic and joined-up approach to dealing with the challenges. We are also talking to our partners at the Country Land and Business Association to see how they can help us raise awareness through their members.

Please contact us: navigation@environment-agency.gov.uk

Creating a better place for people and wildlife



Boat Registration



Sustainable Funding



Environment
Agency

A new digital service for Boat Registration

We are continuing to develop a digital service for boat registration, with the ultimate vision to have an automated system for our customers to register boats online through GOV.UK.

Our focus has been on developing a new platform for managing boat registrations. This work is progressing well, and we aim to migrate data from our current IT system to the new data platform in Mid 2024.

We will work hard to make this transition as seamless as possible. However, we recognise it could impact our service while we transfer the data and make sure our teams are trained. We are letting customers know about this through the registration renewals and are asking them to bear this in mind when applying for their registration. The earlier they apply, the less impact there should be for them. If you are able to help us spread the word, we would appreciate it.

Development of the externally facing system should start in 2024 to 2025. There are no significant changes that external customers and Stakeholders need to be aware of currently, but we will keep you informed as the project progresses.

If you have any feedback please email us at navconsultation@environment-agency.gov.uk

A stylized landscape illustration at the bottom of the page. It features rolling green hills, a blue river winding through them, a white bridge, a person fishing, a tractor in a field, and various trees and animals like cows. The sky is light blue.

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Boat Registration



Sustainable Funding



Environment Agency

Boat Registration update

We recently sent out our Anglian and Medway registration renewals for 2024 to 2025. We have also sent reminder emails to those Thames customers who have not yet renewed for 2024. We have seen a positive response to these reminders, seeing an increase in call volumes to our renewals telephone line. We will send reminders to Anglian and Medway customers in May. We have increased charges for 2024 by 2%. This is the final year of our 3-year charging plan. We are now developing proposals for charges from 2025. We are planning to consult in Spring 2024 and will let you know more as soon as we can.

We monitor registration numbers throughout the year and compare these with the previous year. We also compare with 2019 as the last pre-COVID registration year. The table below shows an increase in 'powered annual' registrations to the end of December 2023 of 125 compared to the same period for 2022. This is positive news. However, when compared to 2019, numbers are down by 1303. This means our registration numbers have not yet returned to pre-COVID levels. This has an impact on our overall income and funding for the Navigation service.

Waterway	Powered annual registrations to end of December 2019	Powered annual registrations to end of December 2022	Powered annual registrations to end of December 2023	Change from 2022 to 2023	Change from 2019 to 2023
Thames	8204	7318	7344	+26	-860
Anglian	4232	3777	3855	+78	-377
Medway	697	610	631	+21	-66
Total	13,133	11,705	11,830	+125	-1303

NB: data accounts for any refunds given during the year

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Commercial Development



Sustainable Funding



Environment Agency

Progress is being made on the Mooring Development and Improvement Programme (MDIP). We are in the process of securing a contractor to undertake appraisal and design for mooring extensions along the Thames, with the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) now submitted for review. The current aim is to progress to Full Business Case in the summer, and if approved, we'll be aiming for construction to take place in Q3 & Q4 of the coming financial year.

The extension to the moorings at Denver Complex on the river Great Ouse almost complete, whilst we are also in the process of refurbishing the Jenyns Arms pub, with a new tenant anticipated to be in situ by the summer. The income from these developments will help to support the ongoing management of the site at Denver, which includes a plan to install additional security measures.



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Electric boat trial



Sustainable Outcomes



We are working with internal and external partners to progress a 3-year electric boat trial for up to 4 work boats and 2 charging points, in our Anglian and Thames waterways areas. This bid has been successful, and we are currently working to create the specifications for two Pulse 63 ribs and two catamarans, electrically-driven. These are being specified to meet the requirements of Anglian and Thames waterways, however, we expect they will be seen across our navigation areas once built as, alongside their use as internal work vessels, they may attend various river-focussed events to showcase what they can do. We aim to have the first Pulse 63 ribs to be ready in June 2024 for the Henley Regatta and Henley Festival. Please do contact us if you think there are any events in your local area after this which you think may be of interest to promote electric propulsion boats.

We will also be installing two fast-chargers during the trial, which will become available to the public and form part of our infrastructure to support electric-propulsion as one of the key avenues to sustainable boating. For more information on the electric boat trial, please visit: [Environment Agency wins bid for net zero workboats on Thames - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/environment-agency-wins-bid-for-net-zero-workboats-on-thames)



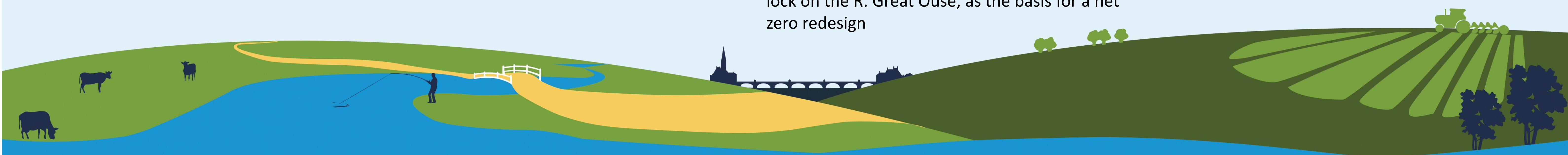
Early stock designs of the pulse 63 ribs, updated designs are currently in progress



A current catamaran in the fleet, at hermitage lock on the R. Great Ouse, as the basis for a net zero redesign

In addition to electric propulsion, we are conscious of various alternative power and propulsion solutions for the EA to be aware of as we develop our strategies for sustainable boating. There are a wide variety of vessels on our waterways and, just like road vehicles, there is a cost to changing to electric. We have to be mindful that there isn't a 'one size fits all approach' at the moment, but making the changes in the right direction more accessible to all in some way should be a priority.

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Water Safety



Sustainable Operations



We supported the Royal Life Saving Society's 'Don't drink and drown campaign' from 11 to 17 December with messages through our social media channels over the Christmas period and linking in with the flooding across our waterways in January. Water safety is a high priority for our communications for 2024. We will continue to work with partners including the [National Water Safety Forum](#) to increase awareness of risks associated with inland waterways and our assets and what to do if people are in difficulty.

We also continue to work with British Canoeing on improving safety in paddle sport. In November we attended the first British Canoeing Safety Conference which focused on stand-up-paddleboarding. This was a positive event; you can read more about it on the [British Canoeing website](#).



Following this conference, they have set up some working groups to focus on different aspects of safety. The aim is to work collaboratively to develop and promote clear and consistent safety guidance and messaging.

We have representatives on 2 of these groups which focus on weir safety and retailer safety messaging. We will keep you up to date as this work progresses.

We will also be supporting British Canoeing's summer safety campaign again this year. This will launch in June so watch out for that.

Some may also be aware that British Canoeing is changing its name to reflect the demographics of their evolving membership. From mid-March, they will become known as [Paddle UK](#).

Boat safety



Sustainable Operations



Environment
Agency

Boat Safety Scheme Limited set up

The Canal & River Trust, Environment Agency, Broads Authority, and the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities are announcing some governance changes to the Boat Safety Scheme which will see it become a not-for-profit company.

As a company limited by guarantee, Boat Safety Scheme Limited has been incorporated to take on the work of the existing Scheme from 1 April 2024.

The Scheme's structure remains unchanged, with all income returned into the running costs and continuing the safety improvements brought about by the Scheme since its inception in 1995.

Boating customers of the various navigation and harbour authorities won't see any change to their existing BSS Certification or boat licence/registration processes because of these changes. The current Boat Safety Standards will continue to apply in the same form - with current BSS Certificates remaining valid until their existing renewal date.

Boat Safety Scheme Limited will also continue to regulate the training and accreditation of BSS Examiners in the same way as the current Scheme.

The governance changes will bring greater transparency on decision-making and clarify relationships between the existing stakeholders.

You'll be able to find further information including Q&As on the BSS web pages www.boatsafetyscheme.org

If you have any enquiries about the changes, you should email them to bss.enquiries@boatsafetyscheme.org

A stylized illustration of a river landscape. The river is blue and flows through green hills. On the left, there are silhouettes of cows and a person fishing. In the center, a white bridge crosses the river. On the right, there are silhouettes of trees and a field with rows of crops. The background is a light blue sky.

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Boat safety & Asset Management



Sustainable Operations



Environment Agency

Boat Safety risk management – essential training for waterways staff

By requiring most boats on our waterways to comply with the common, minimum requirements of the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) we are taking positive steps to reduce the risk of death or injury through fire, explosion and Carbon Monoxide poisoning for those on or about our rivers. Sometimes incidents do occur however, and as the statutory Navigation Authority, it's our job to investigate the most likely cause – so we can do our best to stop it happening again. The BSS pulls together data from all boat-related incidents so it can consider if there are common themes emerging – which can help determine the possible need for new standards, safety campaigns or even replacement of failed components.

In most cases we will work with the Fire and Rescue Service but our staff need to have an essential level of training in this area to enable them to ask the right questions of the right people, and make sure the necessary information is gathered and passed to the BSS for any further consideration. We are working with the BSS to deliver a new online training package for nominated Waterway staff to be able to meet this need across all our Areas. We are also going to be working with the BSS on another training package for staff – identification of immediately hazardous boats – in the near future.

Asset Management

- We are liaising with the national recovery team to assess the impact of the recent storms on Navigation assets and supporting area colleagues to identify any remedial actions needed.



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Contact us



If you have any questions or feedback about this update please email us:

navigation@environment-agency.gov.uk

We have received requests for the contact details for the area teams in order for you to be able to get in touch with them regards to any area specific issues. Please find these contact details below:

Thames - WaterwaysThames@environment-agency.gov.uk

Anglian - Enquiries_EastAnglia@environment-agency.gov.uk (East Anglia area)

LNenquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk (Lincolnshire & Northamptonshire area)

Medway / Rye Harbour - enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Wye / Lydney Harbour - wyenavigation@environment-agency.gov.uk

For any national issues, please continue to contact us at navigation@environment-agency.gov.uk



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