

Clarification of our position
Further update from Alice Mayne, Deputy Director of Navigation and Commercial Development
14 May 2020

Good afternoon

Following our updated guidance note which we issued yesterday, I wanted to clarify for you our decision to continue to ask boaters to avoid all non-essential travel on our waterways for the next few weeks. I do understand that this might be confusing for those you represent now that some other Navigation Authorities have changed their advice on non-essential travel.

Although Defra have announced that water sports can resume including motor cruising, they are clear that this is at the discretion of the Navigation Authority. We have reviewed our situation and made our decisions with the safety of our customers and our staff as the most important consideration. We have not been able to undertake patrols on the waterways since the high flows earlier in the year due to social distancing guidelines. We know there are some hazards out there such as sunken boats and fallen trees. So we need to ensure that we have identified all hazards before letting people head out on the water for leisure purposes. We are working hard to carry out urgent inspections of the channels and assets for faults to ensure the safety of boaters before we change our advice on non-essential boat movement. We will complete these checks as soon as possible and will issue relevant advice to anyone traveling on the water once our advice changes. We aim to change our advice on non-essential travel by June at the latest on all our Waterways. Until then boaters who do need to travel must be extra vigilant when moving on the waterways and do so at their own risk.

We anticipate that even when we change our advice, we will still need to issue local guidance to alert people to known hazards as we continue to work our way through the required maintenance programme. Some of these tasks will be slower than normal because of the need to adhere to the new safe working practices guidance issued by Government.

We ask our customers to be patient with us. We are keen to get people boating as soon as we can but the nature of the rivers and our structures means we are unable to do this as quickly as some other Navigation Authorities. We aim to resume leisure cruising by June if not before.

We are planning another communication to customer later this week to clarify our position but if you could help with explaining to your members I would really appreciate it.

Many thanks,
Alice

Alice Mayne
Deputy Director of Navigation and Commercial Development