

Coronavirus

Update for waterway users - 5 March 2021

Following the Prime Ministers announcement of the 4 step road map for lifting Coronavirus restrictions, this is our updated guidance for boating customers, which we are issuing ahead of 8 March when the Government begins to cautiously ease lockdown restrictions in England. Each step of the roadmap will continue for at least 5 weeks to allow the Government to make an assessment before easing restrictions further. Further guidance on the Government roadmap can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021-summary>

What this means for our waterways

- For all steps of the Government roadmap, those who live aboard their boats can continue to travel to access essential services and facilities.

All boating activity on our waterways should follow the guidance in the Table below. From 29 March, as part of the first step, 'Stay at Home' restrictions will be lifted, however Government guidance instructs you to continue to stay local where possible and minimise travel throughout the first 3 steps of the roadmap. "Staying in your local area means stay in the village, town, or part of the city where you live." Guidance – National Lockdown: Stay at Home updated 22nd Feb 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>. This means that during the first step from 29th March, people should avoid travelling further than is reasonably necessary on board their boat or to take part in their waterway activity.

All references to permitted activities must still adhere to the latest social distancing rules. COVID-Secure guidance will also remain in place up to and including Step 3 (subject to a proposed review of social distancing rules ahead of Step 4).

Boats and businesses must not cater for groups larger than the legal limits at each step unless meeting the conditions for a permitted organised gathering. These will be reintroduced at Step 2 for outdoor gatherings and Step 3 for indoor gatherings.

Anyone making plans for later in the summer should follow government advice carefully and check GOV.UK to ensure you are keeping yourselves and others safe.

Our service at this time

We will continue to support this national effort through these challenging times and will, as always, make protecting the safety of our customers and staff our top priority.

Our staff continue to work, managing and maintaining our waterways within the safe ways of working we have implemented over the past year. As we start to follow the roadmap out of Government restrictions, our operational priorities will be:

- Ensuring safe navigation, by inspecting each reach of our waterways for obstructions and marking them accordingly.
- A safe, phased approach to resume assisted passage in line with government advice that gives staff time to adjust to new ways of working.
- Recruitment of Environment Agency seasonal staff, aiming for their return on 1 April.

As we start to move out of the current lockdown, some local restrictions may still be in place and assets could be subject to closures for maintenance. Our level of service may also be affected due to some staff who are vulnerable and still need to shield. This means some tasks

customer service line **03708 506 506**

floodline **03459 88 11 88**

incident hotline **0800 80 70 60**

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may not be carried out straight away, including assisted passage at some locks, however wherever possible we will maintain essential services and facilities for those boaters who live aboard and who have to make essential journeys.

To keep up to date with local information, see the following websites:

River Thames: <http://riverconditions.environment-agency.gov.uk/>

Anglian Waterways: <https://www.visitanglianwaterways.org/>

River Medway: <http://allingtonlock.co.uk/home.php>

For the latest guidance on Boat Safety Scheme certificates, please see the Boat Safety Scheme [website](#).

We will continue to update our guidance as the national situation develops so please do keep checking the guidance [via this link](#) for the latest information on restrictions.

Andy Wilkinson

National Navigation Manager

Road map for navigation on Environment Agency waterways:

	Step 1		Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
	8 March STAY LOCAL (stay in the village, town or part of the city where you live)	29 March MINIMISE TRAVEL	No earlier than 12 April MINIMISE TRAVEL	No earlier than 17 May MINIMISE TRAVEL	No earlier than 21 June
Private boats	Private boating on an open boat permitted for recreation for a single household or bubble - subject to the requirements to stay local and minimise time spent away from home	Private boating on an enclosed boat permitted for recreation for a single household or bubble or 6 people / 2 households per boat if vessel is open - provided social distancing can be maintained between people / different households No overnight stays	Same as Step 1 plus restriction on overnight stays lifted for single households or bubble only	Same as Step 2 but now with 6 people / 2 households on enclosed boats On open boats, up to legal capacity (but no more than 30 allowed)	No restrictions (subject to review)
Watersports activity	Private watersports permitted for exercise - 2 people / 1 household. Stay local and minimise time spent away from home	Formal club activity can restart, outdoor venues. Private groups of 6 people / 2 households	Same as Step 1	Private groups of up to 30 outdoors	No restrictions (subject to review)
Self-drive day hire	Permitted for recreation on an open boat for a single household or bubble - subject to the requirements to stay local and minimise time spent away from home	Single household or bubble in an enclosed boat or 6 people / 2 households per boat if vessel is open - provided social distancing can be maintained between people / different households	Same as Step 1	No restrictions (other than the usual capacity of the boat) in an open boat or 6 people / 2 households per boat in an enclosed boat	No restrictions (subject to review)
Self-drive holiday hire	Not permitted	Not permitted	Single household / bubble per boat	6 people / 2 households per boat	No restrictions (subject to review)
Skipped passenger / charter boats	Not permitted	Government advises it is up to the discretion of each operator / skipper to determine whether their boat may operate compliantly under each step. Operators / skippers should consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The social contact rules governing indoor and outdoor gathering which apply at each step. Your ability to ensure appropriate social distancing between individuals/households at each step. <p>Nb. the skipper does not count towards Rule of 6 or 2 household limits</p>			No restrictions (subject to review)
Hotel boats	Not permitted	Not permitted	Single household / bubble per booking (must be self-contained accommodation with no sharing of facilities)	6 people / 2 households per booking	No restrictions (subject to review)
Fixed trading boats	Takeaway only	Takeaway only	Outdoor table service, 6 people / 2 households per booking	Up to 30 people per booking outdoors, 6 people / 2 households per booking indoors	No restrictions (subject to review)