

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Urgent update for boaters

Dear Customer

These are unprecedented times and here at the Environment Agency we have been working hard to make sure our response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic follows Government advice, in the best interests of the health of our staff and customers.

We have done our best to maintain our sites and services as close as possible to business as usual, keeping waterways and facilities open for everyone to enjoy afloat and on foot, subject to following Government guidance.

Following Monday's announcement from the Prime Minister about the UK's heightened response to the Coronavirus emergency, we have taken the difficult decision to introduce limits to the use of our waterways to stop all non-essential travel.

This means:

- We are asking the owners of all boats kept or used on our managed waterways not to make any journeys on their boats, other than to access essential services and facilities.
- We will not provide 'assisted passage' (staff to operate locks) at any of our lock sites but locks will remain open for self-service use where possible. This will allow those living aboard their boats to reach essential services if they need to.
- At the few locks where self-service is not possible, our local teams will put special temporary operating arrangements in place to allow boats to return to their home moorings.
- We will lift time restrictions on the short stay moorings we own or manage, to assist those who live aboard their boats so they can access essential services.
- We will do the very best we can to keep open the essential facilities we provide (e.g. water supply, sewage pump-out and chemical toilet disposal), for those who need them. However our staff will not be able to offer the sale of keys, cards or tokens. These essential services will not include the provision of shower and toilet facilities.

- We advise our customers to stay at home rather than self-isolating aboard, unless your boat is your primary residence. This is so you do not put yourself at increased risk or place additional burden upon our facilities.
- The river conditions on our waterways are starting to improve and in some places our Strong Stream Advice will be updated in the coming days. However, any travel on our waterways should still be minimised to the essential movement outlined above.

We will keep these restrictions under constant review in the light of the developing situation and advice from Government, but we expect them to be in place until at least 14 April 2020. It goes without saying that our priority is to keep our staff and customers safe, and we will be working to make sure that everybody can get back to enjoying everything our waterways have to offer as soon as it is possible.

You will appreciate our National Customer Contact Centre is very busy at this time, please help us by getting in touch only if it's essential. If you do need to contact us, we encourage you to email us at enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

For the full Government guidance on coronavirus go to www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Thank you all for your co-operation during these very challenging times for everyone.

Best wishes

Alice Mayne

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