

PRESS RELEASE

30 April 2020

CANAL & RIVER TRUST: NATIONAL BOAT COUNT NUMBERS

The Canal & River Trust's annual national boat count shows that licence compliance on its waterways remains high with 96.2% of boaters holding a valid licence (2019: 96.4%). This is the fourth highest compliance figure in the last 10 years and is the eleventh successive year with evasion below 5%.

The national boat count sees the Trust's teams physically recording boats on every stretch of waterway to check if they are correctly licensed. The COVID-19 restrictions meant they were unable to access some marinas and stretches of canal, while flooding and high-water levels have also prevented access to some rivers to obtain sightings. This will likely explain a reduction in the overall number of boats sighted on the waterways this year with 33,672 boats sighted across England & Wales, down 1,568 boats on 2018/19. The numbers of boats sighted on waters where Trust licences are required also reduced by 323 to 31,110. In comparison, the Trust's licence system showed that 34,435 boats held valid licences at 31 March 2020, a slight uplift on the previous year (31 March 2019: 34,367).

Jon Horsfall, head of customer service support at Canal & River Trust, said: "I'd like to thank all those boaters who pay their licence on time. It's important that boats are licensed correctly. Not only does this mean they're insured and hold a boat safety certificate, but it means they're playing their part in contributing to the huge task of keeping our canals and rivers open. Boat licences contribute around 10% of our total income, which goes into operating and maintaining the network, so it's important that everyone who keeps a boat on our waterways pays their fair share.

"Our Boat Licence Customer Support team is out every day helping boaters who might be struggling with their licence requirements. We always urge boaters to talk to us, as in the vast majority of cases we're able to find a way to keep people on the water.

"However on occasion we do have to take robust action to remove boats. In 2019/20, 105 boats were removed from our canals and rivers as they were unlicensed or in breach of our terms and conditions despite the best efforts of our Boat Licence Customer Support team."

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The survey, completed in March, records boats on waterways across England and Wales and provides a comprehensive snap-shot of licence evasion. The information is used to support the day-to-day work carried out by the Trust.

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For further media requests please contact:

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Notes to editors

Area	Evasion	2019 boat numbers where CRT licences are required	2020 boat numbers where CRT licences are required	Year-on-year % change in boat numbers	2020 all boat numbers (including private marinas etc)
East Midlands	1.9%	4502	5037	+11.9	5770
London & South East	6.7%	6891	6740	-2.2%	7170
North West	4.1%	5549	5531	-0.3%	5669
Wales & South West	4.0%	3425	3270	-4.5%	3741
West Midlands	2.3%	7897	7386	-6.5%	8164
Yorkshire & NE	3.5%	3169	3130	-1.2%	3147
	3.8%	31,433	31,094	-1.1%	33,661