

STATEMENT

4 June 2020

CORONAVIRUS UPDATES: 16 APRIL – 29 MAY 2020

In these unprecedented times, our priority continues to be supporting the national effort to keep people safe. We're following the government's advice and taking the appropriate action so that everyone who visits, or lives on or around, our canals and river navigations is able to enjoy their time by or on the canal whilst remaining safe.

Update Friday 29 May

In line with the latest government advice for England issued earlier this week, we are pleased to be able to welcome the phased reopening of navigation to private boats and the return of angling and paddle sports*. Our towpaths remain open for people to enjoy exercise and being in the outdoors, close to nature.

Enjoy your local canal but please follow the advice around social distancing at all times, keeping your distance from both other people and moored boats where people may be living aboard.

When on the towpath, please move aside to allow others to pass safely, using the full width of the path. If you are a cyclist, please remember that pedestrians always have priority, so take it steady and be ready to slow down to give way to others, including those by their boats or fishing. You may want to consider using an alternative route away from the towpath for your exercise if you want to avoid other people.

Our plea to everyone thinking of visiting our canals and river navigations is to act always with consideration and respect for other users.

* In Wales, local exercise is allowed. We strongly advise that you [regularly check the Welsh Government website](#) for updated information.

Update: Wednesday 13 May

In line with the latest government advice issued today, 13 May 2020, we are able to announce the phased reopening of navigation to private boating across our waterways in England.

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From today, Weds 13 May 2020

Private boaters may undertake short boating trips – avoiding use of locks and any staff-operated structures if possible – providing, as per current government guidance, they do not stay away from home overnight and return to their home mooring (where they have one).

From Saturday, 23 May:

Mooring exemptions will come to an end and our guidance for continuous cruisers comes back in to force. This doesn't mean that every boat without a home mooring needs to move on this day, just that we expect it to move off its current mooring within 14 days (i.e. by 6 June*). Boaters in a high-risk group who need to continue to shield or self-isolate can agree special arrangements with their licence support officer if they haven't already done so.

From Monday, 1 June:

On this date, we anticipate that our navigations will re-open in full, subject to some local exceptions, making longer journeys possible.

According to current Government guidance, those who do not liveaboard should not stay overnight. We are seeking further clarification as to whether overnight stays will be permissible once full navigation resumes.

Richard Parry, chief executive of the Canal & River Trust, comments: "I am delighted that government has enabled us to announce plans to start to get boating back to normal across English waterways. We ask customers to make just short, local trips from today, with full navigation restored from 1 June, as it will take time to get the entire network fully operational, and booking for some passages and services will be required.

"Some sections may be closed for a longer period and our website will be kept up to date with the latest information and advice. Please remember that social distancing continues to be maintained, with only members of your household able to go aboard your boat until further notice."

Wales: Boats on Welsh canals must follow the [latest advice](#) which may be different from above.

*Please note that short-stay visitor moorings will return to their summer stay times from 23 May so if you are moored on one of these you will need to have moved off it by then.

Update: Monday 11 May

Last night the government announced the first steps in lifting restrictions on outdoor activities and is now allowing people to drive to spend time outdoors with members of the same household. Based on this decision, from Wednesday 13 May we are lifting restrictions on boat owners visiting their boats.

At this stage general navigation still isn't permitted and boats should only be used for minimal travel, for example for essential services or repairs. Where visiting, people should expect to return home the same day. We will be reviewing when we can restore navigation in light of the new government advice. In the meantime, mooring exemptions are extended by a further two weeks until Saturday 23 May.

Following government advice, angling and canoeing, kayaking and paddle boarding for exercise, can resume from Wednesday 13 May, but this must be on your own or with members of your household, and shouldn't be for long distances as navigation is still restricted. In all instances, social distancing must be maintained at all times, keeping your distance from both other people and moored boats.

Towpaths have remained open throughout the pandemic, with people required to observe social distancing rules and taking extra care on narrow sections. As more people return to work and are encouraged to avoid public transport, we could see an increase in the use of towpaths. Please keep moving, don't congregate and stand aside to allow others to pass, using the full width of the towpath. Once again, keep your distance from other people and moored boats. If you are a cyclist, please be aware of our towpath code. Remember that pedestrians have priority, so always take it steady and be ready to slow down to give way to pedestrians. Consider using an alternative route away from the towpath for your exercise, especially as traffic on most roads is much reduced.

Overall, our plea to everyone thinking of visiting our canals and river navigations is to be mindful of others and act always with consideration and respect.

For clarity, this **does not apply** on our Welsh canals where different rules apply - <https://gov.wales/first-minister-wales-message-people-wales>. The Welsh Government is still applying the 'stay at home, stay local' regulations. We strongly advise that you [regularly check its website](#) for updated information and certainly before planning to visit your boat.

Update: Thursday 7 May

The weather forecast for much of the bank holiday is set fair – with warm weather and sunshine expected for much of the country on Friday and Saturday. There is also much speculation about what the government might or might not say about the gradual easing of social distancing measures.

Our canal towpaths have remained open for local people and liveaboard boaters throughout the pandemic, but all the time our advice has been that use should be limited and local, with people strongly advised to keep their distance from others and away from moored boats. Our advice remains for people to follow Government guidance and to strictly observe social distancing measures.

We appreciate the important role our canals play in urban areas - providing vital green space for that vital exercise in the outdoors. However we urge everyone to take extra care on narrow towpaths: please keep moving, don't congregate, and stand aside to allow others to pass, using the full width of the towpath. If you are a cyclist, please be aware of our towpath code – remembering that pedestrians have priority, so always take it steady and you must be ready to slow down to give pedestrians priority, or consider using an alternative route away from the towpath for your exercise – especially where traffic on most roads continues to be much reduced.

Overall, our plea to everyone thinking of using the towpath is to be mindful of others and act always with consideration and with respect. If we all continue to observe government guidance - to strictly apply social distancing, and follow advice to stay local and limit towpath use - then together we can combat this pandemic, and be able to enjoy getting back out on or by our waterways more freely when Government advice allows.

Update: Friday 24 April

The Canal & River Trust is [extending all leisure boat licences by one month](#) in response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The situation will be assessed again in a month's time when a further view will be taken about the extent and likely timescales around the coronavirus disruption on boating.

All leisure boat licences that are due to expire at the end of April will be extended by one month to run until the end of May. All other current leisure boat licences will be similarly extended by a month from their current expiry date.

Update: Thursday 16 April

The Canal & River Trust continues to urge people to follow Government guidance to stay at home. If you do venture out, please remember that use of local canal towpaths should be strictly limited, keeping your distance from others and moored boats.

We appreciate the important role our canals play in urban areas - providing vital green space - however towpaths should be strictly for local use only during the coronavirus pandemic. People must follow social distancing measures at all times, taking extra care on narrow towpaths. While it may be tempting to go for a towpath walk, we want to remind people that public health officials have stressed the importance of staying at home, saying that the single most important action we can all take in fighting coronavirus is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives.

Our plea to everyone thinking of using the towpath is to be mindful of others and act always with consideration and with respect. If we all continue to observe government guidance - to strictly apply social distancing, and follow advice to stay local and limit towpath use - then together we can combat this pandemic, and be able to enjoy getting back out on or by our waterways when we've beaten it.

There are particular issues with using towpaths as they are often narrow and, in some places, have people living in boats moored alongside. Where a local journey is essential, we are asking people to try and avoid stretches with multiple moored boats, use the full width of the towpath when passing, keep moving, and stand aside to allow others to pass, in single file. If you are a cyclist, please be aware of our towpath code – remembering that pedestrians have priority, so be ready to slow down, stop to let pedestrians go first, or consider using an alternative route away from the towpath for your exercise – especially with traffic on most roads much reduced. Banners, signs and posters at busy locations are reminding people to limit their use of towpaths and we have built an [online hub](#) of canal-related films, images, interactive content and stories for everyone to enjoy safely at home to get their enjoyment of the waterways virtually.

Ends