

Navigation update: What's the latest?

Anglian Waterways Group – May 2021



Dear AWG member

Here is our latest quarterly newsletter, this time featuring a timeline of key milestones which hopefully you will find useful, together with an update on other key areas of work and priorities that we are currently focusing on in the National team.

Please feel free to share this with those you represent.

Kind regards

Andy Wilkinson
National Navigation Manager

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Timeline of key milestones

We have a number of key milestones coming up over the next few months and thought it would be useful to share a timeline with you:

When	What
5 May 2021	The revised Code of Practice for Hire Boats (the 'Hire Boat Code') launched by British Marine and the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (details shared via separate email)
19 May 2021	Navigation Business Plan to be presented at EA Environment & Business - Business Board for sign-off
w/c 31 May 2021	Navigation Business Plan to be circulated to stakeholders
21 June 2021	Boat Registration charges consultation to go live (final date tbc dependant on necessary approvals)
24 June 2021	National Navigation Users Forum (NNUF) virtual meeting – focus on Navigation Business Plan and Boat Registration charges consultation
24 June 2021+	Meetings with other area stakeholder groups (to be arranged) – focus on Navigation Business Plan and Boat Registration charges consultation
End August 2021	Boat Registration charges consultation - close

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Charges review



- Since our last update, we have continued to work hard to bring the final charges proposals together.
- We held a workshop with representatives from the 'business sector' across our waterways to discuss specific proposals for 'business boat charges' in February. This was a really engaging and positive session and helped us to shape our final proposals. Thank you to those who attended the meeting.
- We are currently working closely with Defra to get the approvals we need to consult on our draft proposals.
- Unfortunately there have been some delays in finalising the proposals. This has pushed back the timing for the public consultation. It is now likely the consultation will go live in mid to late June, as long as we get the necessary approvals from the Secretary of State (SoS). We are hoping to sit down with the SoS to agree our proposed consultation in the next few weeks. The consultation will now be open for 9 weeks rather than the original planned 12 weeks.
- We recognise this timing (over the summer months) and the reduced duration of the consultation is not ideal. However, we are still planning to implement new charges from January 2022 for the Thames, and April 2022 for Anglian and Medway, so this is unavoidable.
- To help, we will have a variety of ways that customers can contact us to get more information and seek any further clarification while the consultation is live. This will include running external workshops with stakeholders to explain the proposals in more detail and allow you to ask questions, seek clarity and raise any issues before they formally respond. A meeting for NNUF is planned for 24 June and we are in the process of setting dates for the area stakeholder groups.

- We are also engaging with our staff to make sure they are fully briefed before the consultation goes live.
- We will be reviewing all responses throughout the consultation and will use these to help us shape the final proposals before submitting them to the SoS for approval to implement them.
- Once we have the necessary approvals, we will notify all customers that the consultation is live either by email, or post for those we don't hold an email address for.
- We have included an updated timeline below for your information:

Revised project timeline

Project phase	Start	Finish
Phase 1: Development	April 2018	March 2021
Phase 2: Approval to consult	March 2021	May 2021
Phase 3: Consultation (9 weeks)	June 2021	August 2021
Phase 4: Approval to implement	September 2021	October 2021
Phase 5: Implementation (including planning)	March 2021	November 2021 (T) February 2022 (A&M)
Thames charges effective	1 January 2022	
Anglian and Medway charges effective	1 April 2022	

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Water Resources Charges review



- Alongside our review of charges, we have been updating you on progress with the Water Resources Strategic Review of Charges (WR SRoC) over the last few years.
- Following delays to the project because of the coronavirus pandemic, we now have approval from the SoS to consult on proposals and are planning to formally consult with customers this Summer.
- We continue to work closely with the Water Resources team to understand what this means for the future Water Resources funding contribution to our navigable waterways.
- We will let you know when the consultation is live.

Online Boat Registration Service



- One of the questions we get asked regularly from our customers is 'Why can't I pay for my Boat Registration online?'. We also know that an online system would make administration of boat registration much more efficient and flexible.
- It has been our ambition for a number of years to develop an online service for boat registration.
- In recent years other services across the wider Environment Agency business have had to take priority due to various technology and statutory reasons.
- The good news is that an online service has now been recognised as a key priority in the new Navigation Business Plan. As a result we have now secured funding to begin work to develop an online service hosted on Gov.uk for Boat Registration.
- We have been working with the Regulatory Service Programme team (who develop online services on Gov.uk across the Environment Agency) over the last few months to help them understand the current service and business processes. We are currently developing a plan for this financial year and beyond to progress this work.
- We are currently recruiting additional temporary resource in the National Navigation team to support this piece of work.
- We will be engaging with customers to get input into the new service.
- It is early days in the project at the moment and we are still developing the project plan timeline, but we will give more details and keep you up to date as this exciting project develops.

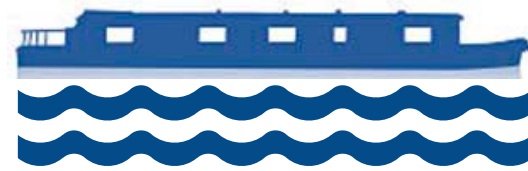
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Asset Management



- We have continued to successfully deliver the £14.8m capital budget for 2020-2021 despite the significant challenges we have faced because of Covid this year, this has been a great success.
- Having worked hard on putting together a strong case to Defra for an even larger capital budget, it has been confirmed that we have received £27m for 2021-2022. We are now finalising our programme to maximise the use of this budget.
- Despite the ongoing pandemic, staff have continued to operate our assets, ensuring customers can access essential services and safely enjoy our waterways as government restrictions are lifted. We continue to remind our customers to adhere to social distancing requirements to keep our waterways safe and Covid secure.

Commercial activity



- We are working with our Area colleagues to develop the commercial ambitions within each of their local waterway plans. This will help to ensure that each waterway team is committed to:
 - Agreeing and applying consistent commercial policies and principles
 - Applying consistent administrative processes
 - Ensuring that all services provided are charged for at an appropriate rate
 - Making full and best use of existing assets to maximise commercial income
 - Promoting & increasing participation on our waterways
- We continue to assess the potential for additional boats to be accommodated at a number of mooring sites on the non-tidal Thames. Work is progressing to better identify appropriate locations before we look to promote and fill any additional space
- We are also working at Lydney Harbour to develop short and medium-term plans for the site. We are currently awaiting the outcome of an asset condition survey before further assessing our options.

Climate change adaptation



- We have refreshed our specific Navigation objectives and actions with regard to climate change adaptation and have fed these into the wider EA obligations under the Environment Act. These include:
 1. Our teams to work with other functions to develop adaptation measures that include navigation.
 2. Develop a more quantitative understanding of predicted climate change impacts on waterways, navigation and associated activities.
 3. Continue to develop our strategic role working with other Navigation Authorities to meet the challenges of a changing climate.

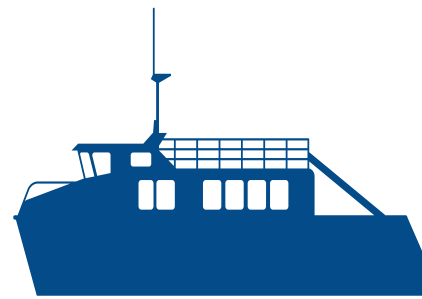
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Hire Boat Code



- Work on the updated Code of Practice for Hire Boats (the 'Hire Boat Code') has now been completed by the working group being led by the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA). We have been a part of this group, along with the Canal & River Trust, the Broads Authority and British Marine. The Code has been published and we have shared the details with you. Our intention is to make compliance a mandatory registration requirement on EA waterways from January 2022. This will form part of the public consultation on our charges review.

Review of non-private boat standards



- Work has now begun to scope the review of the construction and equipment standards for non-private boats (other than hire boats). We are part of an AINA-led working group which is feeding in to the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS); currently working to identify all the current standards applicable to non-private boats and any gaps that need addressing through new or revised standards. The work will be put into the planned programme of the BSS Technical Committee, ultimately working towards replacing the current 2002 BSS standards for non-private boats.

National Census 2021



- Following Census Day, we had an email of thanks from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for our guidance and the support of our staff in working with their field teams to identify locations with residential boats, which was a particular area of focus for ONS this year. In turn, we have asked ONS if they can share any headline figures with us around the number of people living aboard boats / renting boats as accommodation, which is currently largely anecdotal.

Enforcement



- We have held our second internal workshop to develop an enforcement regime plan for our waterways. This work is a part of the Environment Agency's overarching 'strategy for reducing environmental offending'. This new strategy sets out a more proactive approach, putting the 4P model of law enforcement (Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue) front and centre of our thinking, in order to drive our work on enforcement across all enforcement regimes within the Environment Agency.
- Having an overall framework and strategy within which each function develops its approach will help us to make best use of available resources and skills, and ensure that we are taking a proportionate approach, both within and between regimes. It also provides a mechanism for sharing learning and best practice and supports development of a common enforcement culture.

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Contact us



If you have any questions or feedback about this update please email us:

Navconsultation@environment-agency.gov.uk