

Waterways Code For All Users

Look after your waterways

protect the waterway environment - keep noise to a minimum and don't damage the vegetation or banks

take home everything that you brought with you, and leave the site as you found it

never dump rubbish, sewage or oily bilge water into the water or onto the bank

clean up after your dog and keep it under control

don't light fires

report pollution, fly tipping or fish in distress to the Environment Agency or the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency 0800 807060 (24 hrs)

report birds or animals in distress to the RSPCA 0990 555 999 (24 hrs) or the Scottish SPCA 0131 339 0111

things can go wrong on waterways. If you see something dangerous such as serious damage to structures or water escaping, freephone 0800 47 999 47 (mobile phone companies may charge at normal rate)

make sure you have the right licence or permit to boat, fish or cycle. For more details contact our Customer Service Centre or call 01923 201120

seek permission from the [local Waterway Office](#) to organise a special event or educational visit.

Take care

not all towpaths give smooth, easy walking or cycling

if the water appears frozen, never trust the ice to take your weight

watch out for concealed mooring pins or ropes across the path beside moored boats

the risks are small, but tell your doctor if you become ill within two weeks of getting canal, river or reservoir water into your mouth or an open wound

be prepared for changes in weather and local water conditions

always keep young children under supervision

swimming is prohibited - it's dangerous

watch out for warning signs

children: don't go alone - go with a friend who can help you if you're in trouble. Always make sure an adult knows where you are going and when you will be back

Learn what to do in an emergency

keep calm - think before you act. Don't put yourself in danger

phone or send for help

if a person or pet falls in, don't jump in. Instead you should reach for them with a stick or throw a rope to them. If this is not possible and you must wade into the water always test the depth with a stick first

For Boaters

Look after your waterways

avoid creating a breaking wash and don't run your propeller while moored

Consider others

take care to position mooring pins and ropes so they are not a danger to towpath users - if possible, make them conspicuous with a marker or cover

don't obstruct locks, bridges, water points or turning points

when passing anglers, unless they politely request otherwise, keep to the centre of the channel, reduce your wash but maintain a steady pace

slow down when passing moored or unpowered boats

pay heed to local signs concerning fishing matches

Take care

you and your crew must understand how to operate your boat and navigate locks, bridges and tunnels

children and non swimmers should wear a life jacket or buoyancy aid

Safety

Safety is British Waterways' top priority. The public needs a waterway network that is safe and secure, and our people need a safe working environment. Safety management is integrated into our business and we manage it through:

Occupational Safety - these are the risks that our people and contractors are exposed to during their working day

Customer Safety - these are inherent risks that our business and leisure customers face when using the waterways

Asset Management - this is looking after the condition of our assets as they could pose a risk to neighbours, visitors and our people

We have a [Safety Policy Statement](#) which defines our commitment to safety and our accountability for delivering safety performance.

Boater's Handbook

We produce literature and videos that help provide our customers with safety guidance and information. The [Boater's Handbook](#), developed in partnership with the Environment Agency and the British Marine Federation, offers clear and simple advice on safe boating.

Young People's Safety

Our [Wild Over Waterways - WOW](#) initiative for young people includes a waterside safety pack that encourages older children to assess risks themselves when visiting waterways. We also work alongside Ragdoll Productions, the producers of 'Rosie and Jim', to design and distribute safety information for young children.

Boat Safety Scheme

British Waterways is a joint sponsor with the Environment Agency of the [Boat Safety Scheme](#) whose purpose is to promote safety on inland waterways in respect of boats, their installations and components.

It helps people to 'go boating and stay safe' by sharing information and spreading good practice through its leaflets, website and personal advice.

As a part of our licensing conditions, craft are examined every four years against the Scheme's safety requirements to help prevent incidents of fire, explosion and pollution as well as to advise owners about potential hazards that could endanger their crews.