



## Guidance for Canal Users during the Covid-19 Pandemic

On 4 January 2021, the Government announced a new national “lock down” to combat the Covid-19 pandemic requiring people to stay at home: Stay at Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives.

We will revise this local site user guidance once when we receive further clarifications from Government on key issues.

### *On the Canal*

We interpret Government guidance as meaning you can do the following on our site:

- You can use the Canal for personal exercise only – recreation is not currently permitted.
- You may travel a short distance to the Canal for exercise but **MUST** stay local – defined as being within the town, village, or city area in which you live.
- You can walk, cycle, run, or go angling on the towpath, alone or with your household/support bubble.
- You can canoe, kayak or paddleboard on the Canal alone or with your household/support bubble.
- You should not go powered boating on the Canal.

For further guidance please see [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) .

### *General advice*

If anyone becomes unwell with a new continuous cough or high temperature or a loss of, or change in their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia) they should:

- **not** travel to the Canal or use any boats, instead they should stay at home and follow government guidance for self-isolating / NHS track and trace.

Good personal hygiene is to be followed at all times to include regular handwashing - 20 seconds with soap and water where possible, and anti-bacterial gel (minimum 60% alcohol) where clean water is unavailable.

## Visitor Facilities

The Canal Visitor Centre at Mytchett remains closed. The public toilets at the Canal Centre will be open during the day. You should only visit the Canal Centre site if you are local to the Mytchett area.

Mon-Friday you can still call our team on the general office phone number 01252 370073 or contact us via email [info@basingstoke-canal.co.uk](mailto:info@basingstoke-canal.co.uk) or via our social media platforms - we will be able to respond during normal working hours. The general office phone number will always have information on how to contact us in an emergency out of hours.

We will be using our Facebook page @basingstokecanal for posting regular updates.

The Canal towpath, car parks, Canal Centre grounds and play area will remain open for daily exercise – please see guidance on travel.

Boaters facilities at the Canal Centre, Ash Lock and Colt Hill will remain open. The Bridge Barn facility at Woking is now closed.

Construction works to maintain the Canal will be continuing over the winter period as normal – please watch our Facebook page for details of closures or restrictions on the towpath during works which will commence in early January 2021.

## Walkers, runners and cyclists

When using the towpath please respect other people's space and keep as much distance as possible.

Cyclists should pay extra care to other users and slow their pace as the towpaths are expected to be very busy, especially at weekends.

High levels of use in wet winter weather have resulted in some unusually muddy path surfaces especially in the more rural areas west of Fleet, please dress accordingly and wear stout footwear appropriate for the conditions.

Government have indicated that they considered individual angling (fishing) exercise rather than recreation.

## Powered boaters

### *Privately owned boats*

The Canal Authority interpret powered boating as a “recreational activity” and therefore advise that you should not go boating on our waters at this time. We are aware that some other organisations have taken a different view and will update our understanding if we get further guidance on the definition of recreation.

You should not use your boat on the Canal or stay overnight on it – with the exception a of small number of live-aboard boaters for whom their boat is their primary residence.

Gov guidance states that “*maintaining .... boats and other assets is not generally a reasonable excuse for leaving home. However, people may leave home to secure their ... boat in order to avoid it posing a risk of harm/injury to themselves or others.*”

We interpret the guidance as meaning that you, a commercial boat yard or boat maintainer are able to carry out maintenance on a boat moored on the Canal; but only if it is emergency or essential maintenance.

Please check the latest guidance at [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

### **Commercial powered boats**

Owners of commercial (self-drive hire / passenger boats) may move their boats for work purposes (eg, to carryout maintenance).

Self-drive hires and passenger trip operations are recreational activities and are therefore not currently permitted.

## **Unpowered Boaters**

You may only paddle on the Canal if it is local to you – within the village, town, or city district in which you live. You should not travel from further afield to visit the Canal at this time. If you do visit you must do so alone or with members of your household or support bubble.

### **General information for unpowered boaters**

Unpowered boaters are advised to avoid where possible touching popular shared surfaces such as:

- Canoe launching steps
- Waterway Padlocks (*aka* BW or BWB padlocks)
- Height barriers
- Slipway barriers

You can paddle on the Canal if you hold a valid BCA licence or British Canoeing ‘on the water’ Membership (please carry your card).

Paddle in line with your skill level. It is never advisable to paddle on your own for personal safety. We strongly advise wearing of personal buoyancy aids.

Equipment should be wiped down prior to use and on return home.

Do not share equipment with anyone from outside your household/bubble.

Do not share a vehicle with anyone from outside your household/bubble.

Be mindful when unloading boats from vehicles to allow adequate space between vehicles to maintain social distancing.

### ***Organised groups & tuition***

Organised tuition on a 1:1 basis outdoors is a permitted exercise activity. However, group sessions should not currently take place on the Canal, unless it is part of a service provided for disabled people.

### ***Licensing for unpowered boats***

All boats including canoes, kayaks, paddleboards and rowing boats on the Canal must have a licence to use the Canal. For further info on licensing see our website at:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryparks/basingstokecanal/onthewater>

BCA daily, weekly and annual unpowered boat licences can be purchased via our online shop: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/shop/product.php?productid=17330&cat=339&page=1>

Joining *British Canoeing* as an 'on the water' member gives you free access to the Canal – please carry your membership card you may be asked to prove you are a current member. One card is required per canoe / kayak / paddleboard. Rowing boats, skiffs, punts, etc are not covered by British Canoeing Membership scheme – you will need a BCA licence for these.

***For regular updates on the canal please follow our Facebook page @basingstokecanal or on Twitter @TheBCATeam***