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The Boat Safety Scheme Aims To Become Self-Financing

Ten years after the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) was established to support licensing requirements of the Environment Agency and British Waterways, the Scheme has announced that it aims to become self financing with effect from April 2007.

In its ten year existence, the Boat Safety Scheme has provided safety advice and information to navigation authorities and individual boaters, operated a verification service through its examiners and continued to develop safety checks as modern safety principles have evolved.

Commenting on the plan, Graham Watts, BSS Manager, says: "It's always been the intention for the Scheme to eventually stand on its own two feet when it comes to meeting the running costs of this important safety aspect of the inland waterways. The Scheme won't plan to make a profit, but nor does it aim to make a loss, it just simply aims to cover its costs and continue to offer credible and improved customer service to all Navigation Authorities and thousands of individual inland waterways boaters."

Since being established in 1996 the BSS has been supported financially by both the Environment Agency and British Waterways. In the last financial year this support, both as direct assistance and assistance in kind, equalled nearly £200,000, and while Graham Watts is grateful for this support, he's also keen to ensure that the Scheme is self funding, continues to develop a range of safety information and deliver value for money.

The Boat Safety Scheme has reviewed its work over the last 18 months and identified areas where it can operate with ongoing greater efficiencies while ensuring that quality assurance systems and administrative processes remain robust. BSS Examiners' paperwork commitments will be streamlined and back office systems revamped, helping to bring operating costs down on a continual basis.

Graham Watts comments: "Along with making the BSS office leaner we are also raising the price of BSS Certificates purchased by Examiners. For examinations conducted after 1 April 2007 Certificates will cost BSS Examiners £24 each, excluding VAT (current price £11.25 each). Some people may see this is a steep rise, but when considered over the four-year life span of a BSS Certificate issued to a boat, it means an increase of only £3.20 per year per boat owner. Beyond this price increase we pledge that the cost of Certificates to Examiners will be frozen until April 2010".

- **ENDS** -

Notes for editors

The Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) is jointly owned by British Waterways and the Environment Agency and supported by the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA). It has also been adopted by at least 12 other navigation and harbour authorities. The objectives set for the Scheme are to help address the risks of fire, explosion and pollution introduced by vessels that have been inadequately equipped or maintained and to advise and inform boat owners about pollution avoidance and how to keep themselves and their crews safe. All of these objectives relate to the use of boats, their installations and appliances.

These objectives are met through setting minimum condition requirements related to the installations on boats, supported by an examination regime. They are also met through a process of public communication both by the Scheme directly, and through partnerships with other organisations.