

Questions and Answers – BSS Open Meeting

Trading Standards Warwickshire - Ms Janet Faulkner

Wishes to gauge interest in a meeting with Trading Standards Services of all interested parties and to which all Trading Standards Authorities nationally would be invited as a platform to discuss the effectiveness of the enforcement of the Recreational Craft Regulations, and to discuss working together in partnership to support the successful introduction of the forthcoming Codes of Practice in relation to the safe installation, maintenance and use of solid fuel heating appliances on boats.

The BSS will act as a link to Trading Standards. Pass your details onto the BSS Office and the office will gladly forward on that interest. Matters to be discussed with Graham Watts.

Port of London Authority - Mr D M Foster

How does the BSS tie in with the RNLI Sea check system & the harmonised work boat code etc?

There is no direct link, the Scheme exists to support the inland waterway navigation authorities discharge their duties and promote a safe leisure environment.

I think it's clear the Scheme's awareness information is complementary to the RNLI Sea Check system in that whereas 'sea check' is focused on encouraging adequate precautions by ensuring effective life saving equipment the BSS awareness information addresses behavioral risks that may prevent the need for life saving equipment to be used. The RNLI recognise this relationship and indeed were one of the partners that helped develop the information and that promote it.

Concerning the harmonised work boat code or other codes, the Scheme is in place to help ensure every visit to the waterways is safe and pleasant and the recent consultation covered only privately owned craft. As for other classes of vessel the navigation authorities have started along a path to review their responsibilities and it may be that the Scheme can help support this process.

I think its reasonable to say the concerning the areas we are active in, gas, fuel systems, electrical systems, fire protection systems we have developed expertise that should be considered as a benchmark for other codes and the Schemes' expertise can be directed to support the navigation authorities in associated safety areas when called upon.

IWA Navigation Committee - Mr Roger Squires

Are sufficient new inspectors being recruited to cover those who are standing down?

The short answer is yes, invariably each year 20 new examiners come on stream and they replace the 20 on average that leave each year.

Chesterfield Canal Trust – Mr D Trickett

What is being done to deal with the numerous boats which can be seen on our canals, some in poor condition not displaying valid licences name or registration number?

Evasion – As this is not a BSS operation question, and one about enforcement, his question was referred to Simon Salem, director for marketing and customer service to answer.

Simon Salem – BW is determined to address the problem of licence evasion and overstaying by continuous cruisers. The process of removing a boat from the waterways that is not licensed can be lengthy, especially if the boat is being used as a home, as certain legal proceedings must be followed, but many people do license their boat after the first warning letter.

We also know that the problem of licence evasion often appears worse than it is because many boaters don't display their licence disk. We urge boaters to display their licences and to inform us of any boat they spot that is unlicensed via our licence evasion hotline 01923 201122.

British Waterways completed a national boat count last September which revealed a national licence evasion rate of 7.4%. Waterway units will continue to conduct a full survey of all boats every three months, entering the data onto our central craft database. This will provide a regular evasion rate statistic and we'll also publish the number of first letters sent and the number of Section 8's conducted.

The second count was completed in December and the data will be available on 28 January. The first lot of data on first letters and Section 8's will be available by the end of January.

Residential Boat Owners' Association – Mr Len Barry

What action is being taken to ensure that with the goal setting approach, consistency of surveyors is ensured.

GW thanked Len for his contribution to the Consultation.

Although we have moved very much to improve our guide text, checking procedures so consistency hopefully will be assured.

We have equally opened up the options for technological advance and for novel solutions based on probably new equipment coming in to the UK, Examiners will not be expected to interpret any arrangements not meeting those compliance options.

there will be a very fast track, a straight forward process that will allow the innovation and the new technology to be taken account of.

Consistency is a key objective and we have a number of ways in which we think we are going to meet .

Boat Owner – Mrs Barbara Harrison

I have a house boat but I am unable to obtain a BSSC as I have town gas.

The NA and BSS have discussed the need to be able to introduce some new means for the BSS to evaluate house boats and other residential boats that are permanently hooked up to a shore side. We are also looking at other guidance issues around residential boats. The EA will be producing a guidance document of best practice (The Best Practice Guidance) before the end of March 05, which will hopefully be adopted by the NA's but more importantly also by the local Authorities in that there be a much better connectivity between those who regulate life on the land and those who regulate life on the waterways.

A private response was offered to Mrs Harrison in respect of gaining a BSS examination for her own vessel.

Thames Boating Trades Association - Mr Michael Stimpson

GW drew a conclusion that a disproportionate number of fires were reported on liveaboards or residential craft – where do these figures come from?

The presentation drew reasonable conclusions from the records of fires and explosions in 2004. The records indicated that, taking into account the proportion of liveaboards to the other classes of vessel that a disproportionate number of fires were reported. This conclusion was being moved forward with the Fire Service Community liaison service to identify and appropriate actions.

Association of Waterway Cruising Clubs – Mr David Pearce

Question 1: The scheme is effectively being relaunched on April 1st. Can you confirm that all boaters covered by the BSS will be receiving a complete copy of the replacement for the current Boat Safety Scheme Guide to support this timing?

The key issue is the timing of the publication of any guidance and also the cost. We have discussed this matter in length at the BSS Management Committee and we asked if this should be free and we feel that the answer is yes, but in its simplest format. We do want to provide a higher quality format. CD-Rom and DVD versions are being investigated and would if produced, be available at cost with no profit to the BSS. We have to be very careful ourselves about costs. Both BW & EA contributed approx £105,000 to the Scheme this year. In the current financial climate we must be careful that our own costs are kept reasonable, at the same time it is very important that all of the information that we need to get out to you the boaters is available. Information will be available from the website; simple printed material will be free.

Then there's the question of distribution, now because we believe that there are relatively small numbers of practical changes, we regard the approach as being proportionate and given the funding restraints that we have. As Navigation Authorities at the moment, for us and speaking from a safety context it is much more important that we are spending any available money that we have at the front line of where we can make a difference to your safety. It then remains open to the individual Navigation Authority to decide how they are going to distribute to individual boaters and when. The material can be purchased by the NA from the BSS and be distributed as the NA's feel fit. This comes live on the 1st April we recognise that there will be a small number of people who are going to be having their boats recertified between now and April. We have contacted all the examiners, they are aware of the changes and they would be able to advise individual boat owners of changes that need to be made. You can see that there might be a small number of people who would fall between that information and having changes that they might be making to their boats, that they are going to be making on the basis of the old advice.

Association of Waterway Cruising Clubs Mr David Pearce

Question 2: AWCC remains concerned at the proposal to alter the examination of some check-list items to a 'condition check', rather than by reference to a definitive standard. Can you please explain: Firstly, how these will be applied consistently; and Secondly, how will they be applied in the case when examining new or recently refitted installations, as a condition check may be somewhat pointless under these circumstances?

Condition checks will be applied consistently in the same way that they are now by examiners applying laid down checking procedures that describe what to look for. Examiners will also have the benefit of training and assessment to test their application and ensure a common approach. For owners the BSS Guide will continue to describe what constitutes poor condition. There are one or two performance checks that will be converted into condition checks and hence it is possible that concerning these few items a fault may no longer be identified until such time as its condition has deteriorated. The BSS Management and support committees regard these particular changes as a reasonable shift as measured against the nature of the risk. The BSS guide will clearly promote the best industry installation practice and people will have no doubt as to how to install these particular items to the safest and best practice. If the NA denies a person having such an appliance the right to navigate will be specific to the nature of the risk that it represents to others

Edinburgh Canal Society – Mr Bill Purves

Would it not be prudent to take account of the incident information field by insurance companies?

The data collected to date does include information from some insurance companies. We hope to work closer with marine insurers & brokers to ensure available incident and accident information is as complete as possible.

Examiner – Mr Thomas Randell

Why does the Scheme not cover safety items such as the steering/reversing, ropes etc... also the condition of some of the banks re over growth is also a safety issue.

The Scheme coverage supports navigation authorities aim to prevent fire and explosions caused by boat systems. There is no evidence to suggest that incidents and accidents linked to failed steering or reversing mechanisms. However some of these matters in Mr. Randell's question are covered in either navigation authority bylaws or other areas of law and legislation. These matters will have to be raised with the individual navigation authority(ies) concerned

Examiner – Mr Philip Mitchell

Where does the examiner stand in relation to advising on the changes, when will the training be given?

A letter was issued in the Autumn to all examiners, which advised what to say. To advise and encourage your customers to arrange the BSS examination in the normal way and to encourage them to go through the process without delay. Through consultation and modernization the intention is to develop frame works that will allow the Scheme to operate without outside regulators looking in and support the NA duties and balancing the needs of the users.

The impact is small in terms of the examination, my advice to examiners is to continue the close liaisons with your customers, encourage them to go through and explain the items that are to change.

Also the seminars for examiners are bring held in March, this is to focus on the changes to the checking procedures and explain whys and hows of the new approach.