

'This prosecution, the first under new watercraft safety laws, sends a clear signal that people flouting the requirements that keep us all safe on the water are liable to be held accountable for their actions.'

Mike Ryan, Harbourmaster at the Port of Milford Haven, said 'The incident on the Milford Haven Waterway was extraordinarily dangerous with a very real threat to life yet it was also completely avoidable.'

'We support the MCA's decision to prosecute the defendant for failing to keep an effective lookout. It is an important reminder that not only do Waterway users have a responsibility to keep themselves and any passengers safe but also a responsibility towards every other user of the Waterway.'

'Keeping watch is one of the most important aspects of staying safe afloat: look ahead, look behind and look left and right, adjust your speed as necessary and take early, clear and decisive action to avoid collisions.'

Russell was sentenced, having previously admitted two charges at Haverfordwest Magistrates' Court on 2nd December 2025:

\* Failing without reasonable excuse to prevent the loss or destruction of another watercraft and/or serious injury to another person, contrary to Section 6 of the Merchant Shipping (Watercraft) Order 2023.

\* Failing without reasonable excuse to comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972, namely failing to

adhere to Rule 5 (look out), Rule 6 (safe speed) and Rule 7 (risk of collision), contrary to Section 6 of the Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals & Prevention of Collisions) Regulations 1996.

Russell became the first person to face prosecution in court under the Merchant Shipping (Watercraft) Order 2023. It was used previously in 2024 to caution a jet ski rider.

### Withernsea dump

The tragic loss of three people in the sea at Withernsea at the beginning of January is a stark reminder of the high tide dump on this beach. While preparing our 2000 Holderness guide I swam ashore here, trying to land at the top of a spring tide, as this time but in summer, not January's snow. With the kayak safely ashore I had a serious dilemma over whether to risk going back in for my paddle, which was floating away. I was relieved to get back ashore with the paddle but lost a wetsuit boot in the process. Relaunching later needed the help of a bystander.

### Killer alligator killed

The alligator that killed a canoeist in Florida (May, p10), in the vicinity of another alligator attack last spring, has now been killed. It measured 3.5m.

## Undercurrents



### New Zealand museum dropped

After spending £31,000 and over four years of planning, Paul Caffyn's intentions for a kayak museum at Shantytown (May 23, p11) have been shelved. A downturn in tourist numbers has been the main problem. Meanwhile, Paul is stuck with a collection of kayaks, books, photos, diaries and historical files.

### Pitching for sport

The Government have announced they are investing £85,000,000 to build and upgrade grassroots sport facilities across the UK in 2026-27 as part of a £400,000,000 boost for facilities over 2025 to 2030. This funding is going to artificial grass pitches, goalposts, floodlights and community hubs through the multisport grassroots facilities programme, with a further £15,000,000 to be invested in England in 2026-27.

In addition, they have published updated lists of 991 projects funded by the multisport grassroots facilities programme so far in 2025-26. A full list can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/multi-sport-grassroots-facilities-programme-projects-2025-to-2026> and will be updated in due course.

Clubs and organizations across the UK are now being urged to come forward and apply for funding available in 2026-27, which they can do by contacting the relevant partner in their country. Further detail can be found on [gov.uk: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-and-upgraded-grassroots-sport-facilities-to-get-the-uk-active](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-and-upgraded-grassroots-sport-facilities-to-get-the-uk-active)

The Government's future investment in grassroots sport will take into account a range of funding options, following engagement with the sports sector and local leaders to understand the demands of regions across the country. This will ensure that funding reaches a wider range of sports so that as many people as possible are able to participate in physical activity.

The emphasis seems to be on 'pitches' so perhaps canoe polo clubs wanting pitches should apply. Activities that do not use pitches might also try as a reminder that many sports do not involve balls.

## Letters

From Catherine Brown.

You have done an amazing job publishing *Canoeist* for so many years. I hope you enjoy retirement.

From Andy Morton.

Golly gosh. It's finally come to an end. How sad. What a fantastic job you have done over all those years, but time marches on does it not?

Johnny Brown: I was born just four days after Johnny Brown, and also started teaching in 1970, but never knew him, despite his proximity to me in Scotland. Our paths never crossed, or if they did, I have no memory of him. So he has died at the age of 78.

Waverley: Saw a wee pic of the old paddler, which is the same age as me almost to the month, but note she is PS Waverley not MV Waverley!

Paddle Steamer not Motor Vessel. I'm a paid up member of PSPS - the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society.

Thanks for publishing my article, but I'm described as 76 years old. I'm 79 now. There is an update: Alan Tordoff, who is 20 years younger than me, and much faster in a river racer, paddled west to east along

Loch Rannoch with me two years ago. The wind was gusting to 40mph. We were both in river racers, and he would normally beat me by six or seven minutes over a 9-mile paddle, but I beat him by 15 minutes, and he was shocked of course. Why? I had a rudder and he didn't. QED. So what did he do? He got an older, spare river racer, and fitted a T-bar and fin rudder. He loves it to bits. A few months later I paddled the same loch in a ski with a gale behind me and averaged 8mph (13kph) for the distance. That's my fastest ever, and I'll never do that again - too risky now as I slowly lose power and balance.

Can't thank you enough for the wonderful work you have done for so many years covering canoeing in all its aspects - a massive achievement.

*I first ran Loch Rannoch in 1985, west to east with a following wind, in a river racer without a rudder, for our guide. The waves got progressively bigger until, by the end of the loch, most of my effort was going into reverse strokes, trying to stop the kayak broaching. I don't recall so much difficulty on any other paddle. Ed.*

From Paul Caffyn.

Indeed, it is the end of an era.

I thought 27 years editing the KASK mag was enough but, my goodness, 57 years!

A hearty well done for your efforts over the years.

Hopefully, I will have the Alaskan books delivered before the end of January.