

Antisocial behaviour

Wera Hobhouse (Bath, LD) led an Adjournment Debate on antisocialism on canals, particularly the Kennet & Avon Canal in Bath. Problems aired included loud music late at night, bonfires, drug and alcohol misuse, public urination, towpaths obstructed by furniture, rubbish dumped, human waste being dumped in canals, bags of excrement and beer bottles left beside towpaths, diesel and oil spills, vandalism of water safety equipment, abandoned boats, damage to property, physical threats and assault, stag parties, fly tipping, speeding boats and out of control dogs.

She began by recording 'that more than 30,000 boats are licensed to navigate our canals and rivers,' far more if you include PUK's compulsory licenses, even if many of them are paid for by people who do not want them and will not use them. The CRT do not have the resources to police towpaths and their financial circumstances were contrasted with those of the National Trust with 'commercial properties, thousands of paying members and huge tourism resources,' unlike CRT with a portfolio of listed historical properties, expensive to maintain with declining Government support and legal powers not clearly defined. CRT, the EA, local authorities and the police all have responsibilities for different aspects but do not communicate properly with each other, not helped by GDPR restriction on information sharing.

Responding, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Mary Creagh gave the usual excuses for the funding situation and also said 'Canals, towpaths and river banks are shared spaces,' [our emphasis].

She closed by saying 'People deserve to enjoy these blue walkways and amazing places. Who would have believed that it is possible to see a kingfisher on Coventry canal right next to the old Cash's silkworks, one mile from the heart of Coventry city centre? It was a sight I never thought I would see - my first ever kingfisher.' If she got on the water she might find that kingfishers are not so unusual.

A variation on the antisocial problem comes from George Parsonage of the Glasgow Humane Society, who, helped by Land Rover enthusiasts, has been involved with recovering around 60 cars from the River Clyde between Cambuslang and the tidal limit.

Electric scooters with their lithium batteries are a problem in Birmingham, along with bricks, rubble and scaffolding. The bicycles in *The Netherlands* show that this kind of attitude is an international scourge.

How far will Defra budge?

This is one of four Parliamentary Written Answers on water and recreation to Abtissam Mohamed (Sheffield Central, Lab) on January 7th. It is not clear how far reforms will go. At the end of 2024 Defra

From **Julie Howard**, *Paddle Sport Designs, Compton Verney, Warwick*.

I just wanted to say hello and thanks. Thanks, for producing the only canoeing magazine that ever mattered. Thanks for providing so much interesting information and paddling snippets that nobody would ever know about if not for you. Through all my years in the business I have always marvelled at your sheer dedication and pursuit of your passion to report on our sport. It has been a true privilege to know you and I will truly miss having *Canoeist* to read in the future.

From **Graham Mackereth**, *Pyranha Mouldings, Runcorn*.

I was very sad to see you've done your last edition. The end of an incredible era that our sport no doubt doesn't appreciate as much as it should.

Thank you for all the good that you've done over the years, the information you've passed on and especially the inspiration that you must have given to so many.

I know how important *Canoeing* and *Focus* were to me as I was growing up and then *Canoeist* as business developed.

I will always treasure the hard copies that I have kept and the memories they preserve.

My grateful thanks and very best wishes.

From **Colin Broadway**.

I sorry that we no longer have an independent voice letting us know

Question



Abtissam Mohamed

Labour

Sheffield Central

Commons

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans her Department has to improve the water quality in blue spaces used recreationally for activities such as paddle boarding, canoeing and kayaking.

Answer



Emma Hardy

Labour

Kingston upon Hull West and Haltemprice

Commons

Answered on

6 January 2026

The Department is working on a response to the Independent Water Commission's final recommendations through a White Paper and a new water reform bill, bringing forward root and branch reform to secure better outcomes for customers, investors and the environment and restore trust and accountability. The recommendations intend to cut pollution and restore our rivers, lakes and seas, including those used recreationally, to good health for future generations.

The Environment Agency also has an active Research and Development programme exploring innovative contamination detection at bathing waters. It also participates with other UK and international agencies on the development of analytical techniques, with the aim of improving water quality in blue spaces.

In the November - December 2024 consultation on bathing water reforms, we asked respondents about wider reforms including the expansion of the definition of 'bathers' to include other water users.

The Government's response, published in March 2025, noted a clear majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to expand the definition, with many suggesting which water users to include.

The Department is now exploring how to gather evidence to deliver this reform, considering which users to include and how to set safe classification levels for all. The timeline for detailed policy development will depend on this scoping work. Defra will engage with local and national stakeholders as work progresses and welcomes any information they can provide.

held a consultation on bathing waters and expansion of them. The final sentence here does not make it clear whether there will be a wider public consultation or just engagement with selected stakeholders. The Government have announced the launch of *A New Vision for Water*, a White Paper. It will cover water supply and pollution of rivers but not use of rivers.

what is happening across our canoeing world. *Paddler* magazine doesn't do it for me and the centre pages from our governing body tells us nothing about what is happening or plans for the future. Your magazine will be truly missed.

I understand and appreciate the work, hours and effort that you have put in over the years.

Wishing you the best for the future. I'm sure you will be able to fill your newly found hours and stay paddling.

From **John Chamberlin**.

73 years is one heck of a stint and the mag was always something you should have been very proud of!

Take care, matey.

Paul Caffyn - Classic Kayaking Books

Now available in England, both the Australian and South Island books.

Sadly, the exorbitant cost of overseas postage has killed off mailing these A4 size books from NZ.

However, an old work colleague, Mick, loads up his hand luggage after he visits NZ annually. He has already sold out of the recent 2nd edition of the Stewart Island book but the two classics are available in England from: paulskayakbooksuk@gmail.com