

whether permission has been granted for a particular location. It is illegal to disturb them, even when they are felling trees and damming rivers. This is reminiscent of the eco activists (apparently living not far from us) who illegally released mink into the wild, resulting in the virtual extermination of the water vole, the release of grey squirrels that have largely driven out red squirrels and imported plants which are choking our waterways. Some beavers appear to have been released below Devezes near to the proposed line of the Melksham Link, which is needed for the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal to replace the former line since built over but has been blocked by the EA for a decade and a half and is now being openly opposed by them.

Mon & Brecon emergency water

The Welsh Cabinet have issued a statement that water supplies to the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal are to be ensured for the next five years. The Welsh Government will provide cover up to £400,000 per year. CRT will provide another 100,000 and it is expected that others will also contribute funding. The canal has been supplied from the River Usk to the canal for over two centuries but new licensing regulations have put supplies at risk. Water is being retained in the river to support the declining numbers of salmon and anglers. Water borrowed for the canal is to be charged at an unaffordable rate at a time when the CRT grant from the Government is being slashed. This has a devastating effect on boat businesses and a cascade of tourism industries which depend on the canal. The canal has always had difficult geology and even temporary lowering of the water level in dry weather is likely to result in damage to the canal lining with leakage that disadvantages almost everyone. The commercial value of the canal to the community is put at almost £30,000,000 per year and provides over 1,000 jobs. If angling requires much more water in the river it is not clear how large sums of money will be a practical alternative.

30by30 announced

A 30by30 policy framework has been announced by the Welsh Government, intended to protect 30% of Welsh land, freshwater and sea for people and nature by 2030. While the 14 page introductory document makes reference to forestry, farming, fisheries and communities, it makes no reference at all to those wanting to be on the water. Wales has the most repressive river access policy of any country in the world.

How green you are

The CRT have been awarded Green Flag status by Keep Britain Tidy for 1,134km of canal and river navigation. In addition, they will resubmit the 56km of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal from the Stanley Flight to Wigan Top Lock, which already holds the status. This is from a total of 3,200km.

Conviction rates

The question is often asked whether any canoeists have been convicted over alleged trespassing on inland rivers in England and Wales, the contentious Peters case in the 20th century usually being the one case. Contrast this with the situation for angling, for which figures were given to Charlie Dewhirst (Bridlington & the Wolds, Con) in a Parliamentary Written Answer. In the 14 months from July 2024 there were 1,002 prosecutions, 75 letters of advice and guidance, 1,879 warning letters and 1,258 cautions for angling without licences.

Chicken lawsuit

Canoeist Justine Evans is leading a group of 4,000 bringing legal action against Ivara Foods, Freemans of Newent and Welsh Water over the state of the Wye, Lugg and Usk. They claim 'extensive and widespread pollution' of the three rivers with the formerly clear

Question



Dr Roz Savage

Liberal Democrat

South Cotswolds

Commons

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department will extend the definition of bathers to include other water user types in the context of the Bathing Waters Regulations.

Answer



Emma Hardy

Labour

Kingston upon Hull West and Haltemprice

Commons

Answered on

3 December 2025

Bathing waters are one of the most visible ways in which the public interacts with the water environment, and so it is critical that appropriate regulations meet the needs of water users and those involved with managing bathing water sites. 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 and introducing multiple monitoring points at sites. The Government response to the consultation, published in March 2025, outlined that a clear majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal and many offered suggestions of what water users should be included. The Department is now exploring how evidence to support the delivery of these wider reforms, including expanding the definition of a bather might be developed. The timeline for detailed policy development and research will depend on the outcome of initial scoping work. Defra will engage with local and national stakeholders as this work progresses.

Question



Neil Duncan-Jordan

Labour

Poole

Commons

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to give the public a right of responsible access to all rivers in England.

Answer



Emma Hardy

Labour

Kingston upon Hull West and Haltemprice

Commons

Answered on

11 December 2025

The Government recognises the importance of access to nature for people's health and well-being. There is already public access to regulated rivers owned and managed by navigation authorities, available through their licensing regimes. We are considering our approach to improving access to unregulated rivers and are committed to working with stakeholders as this develops.