

Undercurrents

Less watching

The National Coastwatch Institution have made some deletions from their list of coastwatch viewpoints. No longer listed are Caister, Herne Bay, Hayling Island, Stokes Bay or Christchurch Bay.

Abandoned boats

A Lords debate in June covered abandoned boats in rivers and estuaries, their removal and who should pay for it. While they were concerned mainly about powered craft, the question about the correct method of disposal for us remained unanswered.

Liverpool theft

Four canoes were stolen from the B 4 Biodiversity community gardens at Ford Lane, Litherland, at the end of June. They were normally used by volunteers to keep the Leeds & Liverpool Canal clean and tidy.

Karnali to be dammed

Some of the biggest and best rapids in Nepal are on the Karnali. However, this is due to be dammed. Before they are lost to the world it might be time to experience this superlative river.

Hunting kayak returned

An Invaluit hunting kayak from the western Arctic is one of 62 Inuit objects being returned after a century by the Vatican. It is not immediately obvious why the Vatican had such a kayak in the first place.

Unmanned boat trials

The Maritime & Coastguard Agency are seeking areas to trial unmanned boats. It is not clear whether these will be able to identify small users such as those in sea kayaks. Presumably they will avoid areas where there may be swimmers but sea kayaks may be much further offshore.

Early warning dismissed

Talking to the Windsor & Maidenhead branch of the Railway Correspondence & Travel Society in September, Dick Fearn observed that the most important incident during his decade at the head of Irish railways was the collapse in 2009 of the Malahide viaduct, 14km north of Dublin, carrying the main east coast railway line. A train carrying 50 passengers had crossed safely. The driver of the following train, with 500 passengers, stopped before the viaduct because something did not look right, preventing what could have been a major tragedy, caused by scour at the viaduct. What Dick did not say was that, a week earlier, sea kayak paddlers from Malahide Sea Scouts had reported that the weir below the viaduct had changed. Railway engineers had inspected it as a result and given the all clear.

Value for money

The Canal & River Trust are one body hit by Government cutbacks. They are number five in the size of British water operators. However, they are not number five in the amount of income they receive, unlike the others in the top handful, who are all water authorities. Furthermore, aid is being cut year by year both by numerical cuts and by inflation. If the money is not spent, the benefits do not result. Yet they are often not obvious. A study a couple of years ago by the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust in connection with the country's longest restoration puts some numbers on benefits hidden in plain sight. If money is not spent on canals it is obvious in terms of cash but not in terms of public health, wildlife or even the general dissatisfaction with politicians of all parties, of which this is just one example. Rather than cutting back on canal funding it seems we ought to be building new canals to save overall Government expense.



CRT licence rates for next year have been set to rise by 4.8%, 1% above predicted inflation rates. The Broads Authority are proposing a rise of 2.5%, less than inflation, despite a decline in boat numbers and total absence of Government funding support.

Sport for young people

Another Lords debate in June followed a question from Lord Moynihan (Con) 'To ask His Majesty's Government what is the timeline and budget to deliver the Prime Minister's commitment... to ensure young people have equal access to high-quality sport and extra-curricular activities.'

He noted 'that some 3.9 million children—an increase this year to nearly 40% of our schoolchildren—do not meet even the Chief Medical Officer's basic recommendation for daily physical activity'.

As usual, most did not get beyond football. Lord Addington (LD) climbed onto the bottom rung of the ladder by asking 'Will the Government commit that they will not create unique monocultures for sport but that people will have options? Some people will be hockey

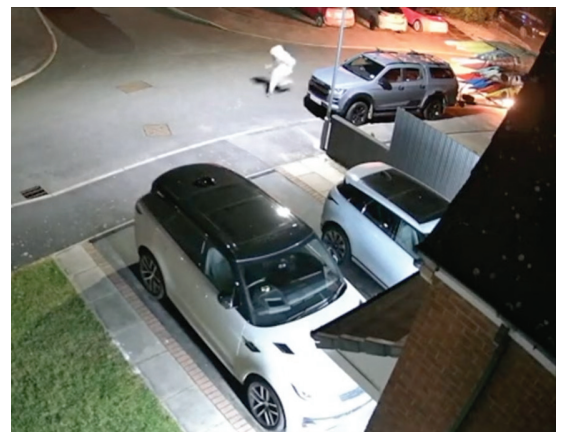
players, some people rugby players, many people will be soccer players, netball players, et cetera.'

Lord Cryer (Lab) got away from ball games and expressed concern at the loss of swimming pools. 'We need to stop that decline and reverse it so that schoolchildren increasingly have access to pools, not just to create the champions of the future but to save lives, because swimming is the one sport that might make a difference between living and dying.'

In a country with 300-400 sports, their lordships did not reach double figures. There was some acceptance that ordinary people are involved, not just potential champions.



Infrastructure works valued at £71,000,000 have been awarded for the Central Docks section of the Liverpool Waters regeneration project. Publicity artwork includes the Liverpool Link being well used by kayaks.



Arson attack

In March a trailer loaded with 18 kayaks was set on fire at night in a residential area at East Leake, between Nottingham and Loughborough. As well as destroying the kayaks, the fire wrote off two vehicles and damaged other vehicles and property. A neighbour's CCTV, released by the police in September, shows someone running to the trailer and then running away again once the kayaks were alight. They think the culprit may have suffered burns and was local or knew the area well. Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue showed chemicals were used to start the fire.

In late November a door camera recorded somebody stealing a Christmas tree from a house front porch in Loughborough, later found damaged in a local park. The locations are about 6km apart, the incidents took place at night and the perpetrator was dressed in white from head to foot in each case. Was it the same person or is this the usual dress code for nocturnal miscreants on the Nottinghamshire/Leicestershire border?