

Art kayak cleared

Japanese artist Rokudenashiko has been found not guilty for displaying a kayak in a sex shop based on a scan of her vagina. The judge decided its bright yellow colour and covering of graffiti did not obviously relate to its origin. However, she was fined ¥400,000, about £1,900, half of what the prosecution wanted, as the data used in its manufacture could be used for other purposes. When she was first arrested in 2014 she received over 17,000 signatures in her support.

Funding rescue boats

Between a quarter and a third of all lives saved on navigable waterways are by independent lifeboats. Between 2014 and 2020 the Government shared £5,660,000 between 104 independent rescue boat charities but then stopped the grants, which have not been reinstated by the current Government. In 2004 2,000 people were assisted, reckoned to have saved the public £2,600,000 in that year alone. A Commons debate called for the grant to be reinstated. Matt Rodden (Reading Central, Lab) drew attention to bodies such as canoeists who already have rescue boats on the water for their own members and turn to help the general public when necessary, wanting them to receive financial assistance. There was also a call for independent lifeboat bodies to be better represented.

PI having taken issue with the RNLI's claim to be the charity saving lives at sea, to the disadvantage of the independents, we are pleased to see at least one example of being a charity saving lives at sea.

Funding bureaucracy

Canal restorers have long had to pay the EA commercial consultancy rates to ask them what they need to do to comply with EA rules. Now, the CRT, faced with having their Government grant successively slashed, have resorted to the same approach and it is not going down well. The Friends of the Cromford Canal's *Portal* complains 'We are not some vast corporate entity, we are just volunteers who are trying to restore lost sections of canal across the country.'

'How do they expect us as a Charity watching on a weekly basis the many, many dedicated and hard-working volunteers sell tea towels, running boat trips, cutting back Himalayan Balsam, producing this journal, saving every penny, and chipping in whenever they can, to see us being asked to fork out many thousands of pounds on more unnecessary bureaucracy being foisted on us by what was formerly the Government funded institution British Waterways into the 'Charitable' Canal & River Trust.

'The question has to be asked, how did we get to this point where we should be in such a dire position when a Charity is being asked to fund an organization to check and monitor its aspirational goal of restoration?'

Dangerous weirs

The weir at Barnard Castle on the Tees, downstream of the fatal accident, was built in 1963 and was a popular

play site. However, it stopped fish ascending so it was rebuilt in 2014 to a dangerous design. Blocked in at each end, it has an anti scour lip which damages boats at low flows. At high flows there is a section of surfing wave towards each end but each with a hole below it. In the centre there is a narrow Larinier fish pass which looks shootable in spate provided the metal baffles in it are not damaged. Immediately next to this and twice as wide is a deep hole which does not release at any level. From upstream there appears a horizon line with the position of the concrete walls in the centre virtually invisible. This photo was taken in November in spate two days before the accident.

Compare it with Haverfordwest weir, these days the tidal limit, where a party leader is now four years into a ten and a half year jail sentence after four paddleboarders were drowned. There is a fish pass in the centre, shootable at some levels. This photo was taken near high water and low flow. With the tide out there is a high drop beyond a horizon line and the dividing walls are barely visible in spate. Again, the ends of the weir are closed in and the fish pass is in the centre of the river where it is hardest to give assistance to somebody in trouble. It is not clear at what level the fish pass becomes a holding stopper. A comment online about the Barnard Castle weir suggests 'Interesting that engineers seem to have taken nothing from the knowledge gained by the paddling community about the safety of their riverine constructions. On the Medway, the combined fish passes cum canoe slides are formed with nylon brushed baffles which mean they are safe for both uses. Adding lips to the bottom of weirs has long been the cause of dangerous recirculating stoppers such that you would think they would have developed something safer.' In fact, research into safer weir design was undertaken by George Parr and his civil engineering students at Nottingham University some years ago.

Tryweryn dam change

Llyn Celyn, Wales' largest reservoir, serving Liverpool, is having a second dam spillway added. Rules on spillways have been updated, not least after the Toddbrook problems, and spillway capacity has been increased. Although just upstream of Canolfan Tryweryn, Wales' most active centre for white water canoeing, the new spillway will not reach as far as the river's competition area, from where the fish grill has been removed at the WWR start. Contractors could leave behind a new parking area at the foot of the dam.

Spinning a line

Apparently, UK anglers use enough line each year, mostly Nylon, to reach three times as far as the moon. Now bins have been set up at Trefor, Criccieth and two at Pwllheli in northwest Wales to collect line for recycling, using it for various products including making more bins for angling line. The Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau SAC state 'It takes 10 years for a 1 lb breaking strain line to break down, so a 10 lb line takes 100 years!' Does that follow?

New Louth slipway

A new concrete slipway has been installed at Austen Fen on the Louth Canal. This is to provide easy launching for unpowered craft and gives access to 11km of lock free water from Outfen Lock to Tetney. The canal runs from Louth through disused locks to reach this section and on tidal waters from Tetney to the North Sea.

Oxford scheme reps wanted

The Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme, which aims to reduce flood risk and provide wildlife areas, has implications for those on the water as it makes changes to water channels. There are plans to launch a Stakeholder Advisory Group next year and it is important that boaters are represented. Register your interest now at oxfordscheme@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Top five photos

The Boot Düsseldorf show is seeking the Top 5 Photos of Two Decades. Entries must be taken between November 2nd 2024 and December 30th 2025, the closing date for entries. The Top 100 will be displayed on the exhibition's website at the beginning of February with the top 20 displayed three weeks later for public voting. The winners will be announced at the show in January 2027.

Protesters obstruct port

Climate protesters blockaded the fairway from Newcastle, New South Wales, a major Australian coal exporting port, preventing two ships from sailing at the end of November. Dozens of kayakers were involved, mostly yellow and grey inflatable doubles, which must have taken a fair while to inflate. Police arrested many people because of unsafe practices.

