



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water

Thank you for sharing your views on the Water Safety Zone proposals. Here is what we plan to do next.

The independent facilitators Hopkins Van Mil have now completed their stakeholder engagement on the Trust's proposed Water Safety Zones on the River Lee Navigation. Having listened to all the ideas, issues and concerns, the facilitators have presented their report to the Trust. Their full report and methods used to reach the findings [can be read here](#).

We have set out below the recommendations from the independent facilitators and what we will do in response. Where we are unable to take a solution forward, we will explain why.

There were five common areas, that all groups agreed on, despite differing views on other points.

They are:

- Creation of a less contested space where all users feel safe and welcome
- Enforcement of existing rules and regulations
- Consult and involve all users on how rules and regulations are enforced
- Provide clear, visual signage and information on existing rules and regulations
- Act with clarity and transparency at all times

The independent facilitator's recommendations, our response, and the next steps

Explaining and enforcing Existing Rules and Regulations

1. It is expected that the Canal & River Trust will as a minimum enforce existing rules and regulations in order to raise awareness that these are not optional and are a requirement for those using the Lee navigation.

The Trust's response:

The Hopkins Van Mil report acknowledges that the Canal & River Trust has a formal duty as navigation authority for the Lee Navigation to enforce existing rules, regulations and guidance. These rules are not new and are intended to provide a safe framework for everyone to use the Lee. It has become apparent through this engagement process that not everyone is familiar with the rules of the river and mooring.

The Trust will provide face to face, printed and electronic information, together with signage promoting existing rules. Our first priority is to work with stakeholders to ensure all waterway users are familiar with existing rules and regulations. We will give people time to reacquaint themselves with the rules before we actively enforce them. Our aim is to support all users to understand what is required to adhere to the rules, and therefore reduce the need for enforcement.

We will be increasing the number of staff working with us and available on the towpath to ensure there is time to have conversations and build understanding about the existing rules. They will be taking sightings as part of their work and, after an initial period of education, we will start enforcing the rules through our improper mooring process from the beginning of November. To facilitate this, we will be working in partnership with colleagues from District Enforcement who will be walking the towpath daily to engage with boaters and towpath users and then to collect sightings data. We have outsourced this work as the quickest way to provide additional support and they will work alongside Trust colleagues to carry out this commitment asked for by stakeholders. From 20th September you will see colleagues wearing tabards saying, "District Enforcement in partnership with the Canal & River Trust". We anticipate that we will be working with District Enforcement on a rolling basis over the next year.

Acknowledging Options proposed by those consulted

2. The Canal & River Trust to acknowledge the options proposed by those consulted as shared in section 6 of Hopkins Van Mils report.

The Trust's response:

The Trust recognises the many, and sometimes conflicting, suggestions that have been provided by those offering their perspective on the Water Safety Zone proposals. All of the proposals have value but they do not all agree with each other. We will therefore be seeking to continue to involve stakeholders in reviewing and discussing these proposals.

We believe further measures are required to aid safety on the water but have committed to reviewing our previously published proposals alongside other alternative suggestions before making our final decision on what to do next.

To help facilitate these discussions, and as recommended by Hopkins Van Mil, we will be asking Hopkins Van Mil to set up a stakeholder group called the Lee Navigation Forum to review and discuss suggestions and ideas for improving safety within the Water Safety Zone areas. This task group will be independently facilitated by Hopkins Van Mil and the Terms of Reference will be published shortly which will include the timeframe for this group. Ultimately, as the navigational authority, the Canal & River Trust remains the decision-making body.

Safety Information

3. The Trust should continue to publish evidence on safety. This should include information on past incidents, but, more importantly, demonstrate how the risk has been assessed, including commissioning new risk assessments for the two proposed Water Safety Zones. The Trust should also share information and evidence on what it is doing to improve safety on the Lee Navigation, including working with other stakeholder groups.

The Trust's Response:

It has become clear during the engagement process that there are many different perceptions and definitions of what safety means. It is important to recognise that, as the navigation authority we need to focus on assessing risk, as well as learning from past incidents, to develop and implement preventative measures. We want to try to stop accidents before they happen.

We want to make it easier for everyone to see and understand the evidence and we will be commissioning and then publishing independent risk assessments for the Water Safety Zones. We will make it make it easier for people to report safety incidents on the waterway and publish annual reports on recorded incidents.

Online Forum

4. HVM will enable all those who use the river to share information and concerns on safety, including the logging of safety incidents. This could lead to regular online briefings on safety including on what each constituency is doing to improve it. Each constituency should take responsibility for contributing information and evidence on safety, initially collated by HVM.

The Trust's response:

We see creating this shared framework for safety as a shared ambition for all users so we are going to create an easier way for people to report incidents using our 'contact us' web form that will include all the key information that we need. The quality of information we receive is crucial to help us learn from past incidents and reduce them in future. The web form will make it easier for us to publish the results and be transparent. We will publish this information annually.

We will ask Hopkins Van Mil to work with stakeholders and groups so that they can share their own plans and measures that that are in place to contribute to everyone being able to share the space. Our aspiration is that these are also shared publicly, this could be on our website, but we will discuss with stakeholders what forum would be best.

Building shared understanding and education

5. Create the conditions for all those using this shared space to gain mutual understanding of each other's needs and concerns. This might include ways of enabling people to put themselves in the shoes of various river users. For example, providing accessible filmed, written and or visual testimony on:

- a. Life as a liveaboard boater and continuous cruiser
- b. What it feels like to row on the River Lee, including in terms of navigational safety, because if people don't *feel* safe on the water there is a safety issue
- c. Co-created series of joint communications sharing, showing and celebrating what each constituency brings to the Lee navigation
- d. Shared opportunities to learn from each type of river user e.g. rower spending time on powered boats, liveaboard boaters having a canoe or rowing lesson.

The Trust's response:

We will commit resource to facilitate these recommendations to ensure there is a fair representation of voices heard and experiences recognised from as many waterway users as possible, and to reflect all the groups involved. There is the potential to also develop these ideas through the independently facilitated Lee Navigation Forum.

Lee Navigation Forum

6. Establish a Lee Navigation Forum with representatives from all constituencies. In the initial stages, while tensions remain high on areas of contention, it is recommended that these meetings are independently facilitated. The meetings should be publicly minuted and transparently run so that all those present have an opportunity for meaningful engagement. They should not create more tensions by providing an arena for verbal abuse or aggression.

The Trust's response:

We will support independent facilitation as previously stated. The remit of this group will be to look at and review the actions in this document and to continue the dialogue with the assistance of independent facilitators. We will aim to ensure there is a fair representation of different interest groups involved.

Signage

7. Create new signage along the relevant stretches to explain the existing rules and regulations. The information contained in the signage should also be published online and issued in email form to all those who hold continuous cruiser or home mooring licenses on the River Lee. This information should also be issued to those renewing or buying a new licence.

The Trust's response:

The signage will be updated to reflect the existing rules. We will liaise with the Lee Navigation Forum around any different information required. We are looking to add QR codes to signage to provide a more detailed explanation of the rules where necessary.

Personal Safety and Crime prevention

8. Give recognition to the safety issues which have been raised which are related to personal safety and crime prevention as well as navigational safety. This might include supporting police-led forums on personal safety on the river.

The Trust's Response:

As part of the conversations with individuals and groups regarding the Water Safety Zones, strong feedback was received about wider issues of personal safety and crime prevention. The Trust recognises the importance of personal safety as a concern for many users on and off the water, in particular for the boating community, and will continue to facilitate conversations and engage with the police. We encourage everyone to continue to report incidents to the police. We are committed to continuing to explore ways to continue to improve safety on the towpath via joint community partnerships.

Creating positive environment future engagement

9. An acknowledgement that this process hasn't gone smoothly with an agreement from the various constituencies that a clean slate is needed to move forward and take the necessary steps to having a dialogue on the issues raised by those who have taken part in this engagement process, leading to shared understanding of each other's needs. A Code of Conduct (Code) for all river users and the Canal & River Trust is suggested to agree how stakeholders will engage with one another going forward. A draft Code has been provided in appendix 2. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to co-create the responsibilities in the Code in the first meeting of the Lee Navigation Forum.

The Trust's response:

We recognise the strength of feeling in the response from the community and acknowledge our part in the breakdown in communications. We are learning from this and want to move forward in a constructive way that engages as widely as possible with stakeholders. We acknowledge the variety of different views, including both the importance and urgency of the safety concerns expressed and the anxiety around their implementation. We are keen to begin by working on the points of common interest and we will look at the other ideas and proposals. Our intention is for all users to enjoy and share the River Lee Navigation.

Wednesday 1 September 2021