

big enough to take a bike but not a motorbike or a pair of canoes tied together. Anyone with a kayak or bike holds it in one hand while swinging out over the water round the end of the barrier. At various points there are barriers which lean inwards at the top, to obstruct motorbikes but also obstructing many other people including canoeists portaging.

Presumably, objections to use of the Aire & Calder Navigation by canoes, as this was described as a commercial waterway, have now been withdrawn.

Most importantly, the 1.5km Foulridge tunnel has been reopened to paddlers. There were no problems for paddlers before and during its use by the Trans Pennine Canoe Race but a long, complex and unmarked portage was subsequently imposed. There are new signs and a pair of leaflets.

The opening was celebrated by relay teams of paddlers who set off from the two ends in August and met at Burnley nine days later.

Canal issues

The CRT are inviting applications for members of their governing body, including representatives of private boating. Eligibility details are on their website. Applications close on Nov 18th.

A survey for the CRT shows a significant decline in satisfaction from 70% to 61%. The survey was conducted among registered licence holders, likely to be mostly powered craft users, reflecting their issues. Boaters in the East and West Midlands were most satisfied while those in Yorkshire and northeast England were least happy. The survey was unlikely to have reflected such issues as the pending change in minimum canoe licences from one day to one week and the halving of the prompt payment discount.

The CRT report that licence compliance was over 95% for a tenth consecutive year, a figure which it fell below only in London and the southeast. The northwest was the only region not to see an increase in boat numbers.

Regardless, powered boat numbers on London's canals have increased by 84% since 2012 although a significant proportion of these are probably moored for residential use by those who cannot afford London housing rather than motoring around the waterways.

The CRT customer service team are now available seven days a week, contactable by telephone, email, social media or via the website. Licence inquiries, finding if a canal is open and obtaining details of events taking place will now be possible even at weekends.

Duty free dropped

Scandinavian Airlines are following KLM in stopping the sale of duty free items on flights. This will reduce the weight of goods, sold and unsold, which they fly around, which adds to fuel consumption and pollution. Instead, orders will be taken onboard, flight crew will get their commission and passengers can collect their goods when they land. That should help those who are already pushing their cabin baggage allowance and there will be no open products in flight. However, the whole concept of duty free was begun not as a perk but to allow travellers to leave at the end of a voyage with unfinished bottles, packs of tobacco and such products rather than feeling obliged to try to finish them off before landing.

On one occasion a Scottish fisherman, stopped at customs, was told he would have to pay duty on a bottle of gin he was importing. He said he was not prepared to do so, opened it and poured the contents down a drain, to the astonishment of the customs officers who were unaware that he had replaced the contents with water.

On another occasion a colleague of mine undertook a tour of a gin distillery. The managing director began by tipping a bottle of real gin down the sink, announcing 'That has cost us 15p.' The rest of the selling cost was duty, transport and profit margins along the way.



Temptation

Many kids and some adults are encouraged to the water by floating objects, sometimes their own. Recovering footballs are the commonest but they include abandoned canoes, perhaps cheap inflatable ones which have burst, or rafts which are no longer wanted. Too often they have resulted in people being drowned, children especially. It must be feared that placing a deposit on returnable bottles will add a financial incentive which will result in increased drownings. At least collect and remove your own rubbish if at all possible.



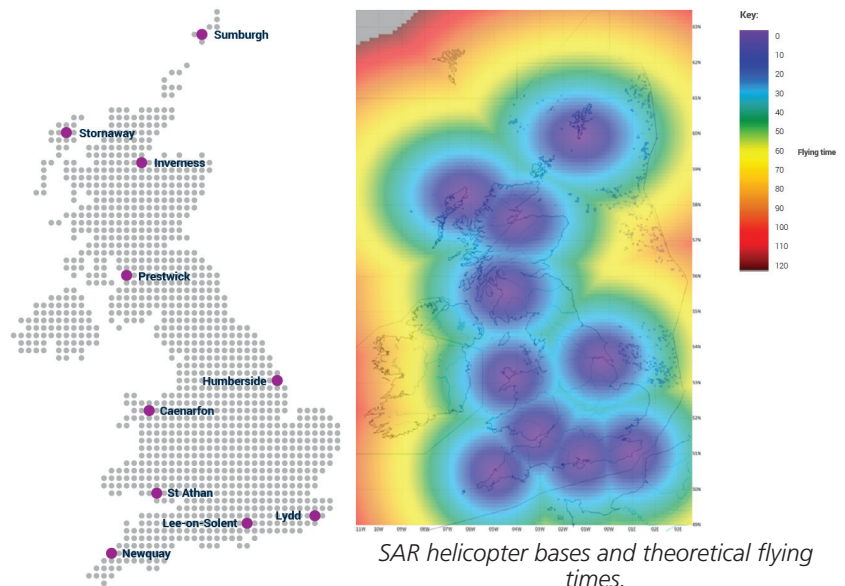
Cleetus McFarland has set a world kayak speed record in the USA of 254km/h for 9.4 seconds. It was strapped to the roof of his drag car, perhaps not as well as some of us might have expected but it did stay on. Being a sit on top, it leaves scope for higher speeds with racing kayaks.

Safety plan launched

The DfT have issued a Marine Safety Action Plan which takes a wide ranging look at boats. Fishing, jet skis, alcohol and inexperience are topics to receive particular attention.

Canadian canoeing and cannabis

The legalization of cannabis in Canada a year ago has quickly resulted in companies offering cannabis trips in the outdoors. The law requires customers to take their own rather than having host companies provide it for them. It has also designated canoes the same as cars as far as intoxication is concerned. Providers say that it is comparable with alcohol and only for use in camp, once off the water. Others say there is no place for it at all in the wild where accidents mean that others have to provide rescue cover, sometimes at great expense. Alcohol was seen as the main cause of death in 19% of Canada's boating accidents in 2017. Paddlers accounted for 138 of the deaths, of which 88% drowned. Of these 70% were without lifejackets.



SAR helicopter bases and theoretical flying times.