

Canals remain open

The CRT say that their canals and river navigations remain open but distancing should be observed. Towpaths may also be used except where there are boats moored next to them.

NT to release beavers

The National Trust are to release a pair of beavers into each of two locations, Holnicote on the edge of Exmoor near Porlock and the Black Down estate in East Sussex near Haslemere. Unlike the beaver releases by Defra, they should be contained in fenced areas.

claimed that 'the primary function of the canal is for powered licensed craft for leisure use' although it was built before the days of engines or leisure use of canals. Referring to the canoe club, they said 'such access should not be encouraged in this location.' Edinburgh City Council's Canal Champion, Gavin Corbett, is far from happy with the judgement. Forth Canoe Club, Edinburgh Canal Society boating club and the rowers of St Andrew Boat Club are all based on the canal within 2km of this school, which used to appear regularly on slalom results lists.

Generally elected

The following MPs, who had placed Parliamentary Written Questions on river access for canoeing in the previous year, were returned at the General Election in December:

Ben Bradley, Con, Mansfield
Rosie Duffield, Lab, Canterbury
Pauline Latham, Con, Mid Derby
Caroline Lucas, Green, Brighton
Will Quince, Con, Colchester
Gareth Thomas, Lab, Harrow W
Unsuccessful were:
Tom Brake, LD, Carshalton & Wallington
Laura Smith, Lab, Crewe & Nantwich
John Grogan, Lab, Keighley, who chaired the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Waterways

Worrying wildlife observations

The Wildlife Trusts, a grouping of 46 individual wildlife trusts around the UK coast, report that they made a record number of sightings of whales, dolphins and seals last year. They recorded over 800 sightings including 483 grey seals in Cumbria, up a third from the number they saw the previous year, including 360 on the southern end of Walney, last year's favoured holiday destination for seals. They noted 320 whales, dolphins and porpoises off the Yorkshire coast, where bottlenose dolphins had travelled down from Scotland to Flamborough Head, the furthest south they have been identified, and minke whales have been seen off Staithes. A seal in the southwest since 2001 has been recorded as breeding in alternate years on the Calf of Man.

There have also been confusing complaints. If climate change is an issue, why have colder water animals been coming further south? If pollution is an issue, why have seabird numbers fallen where sewage discharges have been cleaned up? If wildlife is 'increasingly being disturbed by people', not least the increasing numbers of wildlife watchers, why are kayak paddlers accused of scaring seals, which often surround paddlers or follow close behind, even being known to bump into kayaks or scrounge sandwiches, hardly the action of scared seals?

INCIDENT FILE

Hudson drownings

Ian Jones, a 32 year old photographer, was lost on the Hudson River near Staatsburg in August after the double kayak he was paddling with 22 year old girlfriend Tali Lennox-Fructmann capsized. He was wearing a denim shirt and jeans and neither of them had buoyancy aids. Tali, daughter of Annie Lennox, was picked up by a ship but Ian was lost in the strong currents. It was 10am, following a friend's birthday party, and alcohol was thought to have been a contributing factor. Rough conditions hampered an extensive search by helicopter, boat and on foot, which had to be suspended overnight. His body was recovered later.

A death on the Hudson in New York in 2015 resulted in 31 months in jail for 39 year old former Latvian Angelika Graswall after she was found to have removed the drain plug of her fiancé's kayak, allowing him to drown in choppy water. She claimed she was fed up with his sexual demands. It was also said she received a significant payout from his \$550,000 life insurance money. In further twists, she said she had discovered religion. While still on parole she carried out a photoshoot for *Elle*, where she was shown smiling up from underwater. She wants to return to Latvia.

Getting it right and wrong on the Forth

The MCA report their coastguards responded to over 24,000 incidents in 2019, 661 in the final week alone. An example of getting it right was two kayak paddlers on the Forth in March. They were 4km off Port Seton when the male was knocked off his kayak and unable to self rescue. His female partner remained with him. PLBs were triggered and Kinghorn lifeboat arrived quickly because they had the exact location. After about 50 minutes in the water they were landed ashore, where an ambulance was waiting.

A contrasting example took place within sight of this event in mid December. A man of about 30-40 launched an inflatable kayak from Portobello at about 3.15pm, wearing jeans, jumper and rucksack but no buoyancy aid. He was last seen about 3km offshore at 4pm, about 20 minutes after sunset. A search by helicopter, two lifeboats, three coastguard rescue teams and the police was called off after members of the public offered information. The paddler had abandoned the kayak and swum back to shore in the dark.

Jura rescue because of 999 call

A paddler injured his foot on a remote part of Jura in late January and was unable to walk. At 5.20pm, an hour after sunset, three quarters of an hour after dark, he called the coastguard with his location. It took

a couple of hours to reach him but he was recovered safely. Without his 999 call it is thought he would have been unlikely to have survived the night in the poor winter weather conditions.

Complex Tees rescue

A paddler was rescued from the Tees at Cotherstone at the beginning of February after capsizing and suffering upper body injuries. His party got him to the bank and called 999 but the steep wooded bank proved a problem. He was attended by the ambulance service with their Hazardous Response Team, who set up a line rig with Teesdale & Weardale Mountain Rescue Team to get the paddler up the bank on a stretcher. A coastguard helicopter was called from Caernarfon but there were further problems because of the tree cover. A clearing was found and the paddler was taken aboard in the dark, the incident having begun at 2.30. Redcar & Hartlepool Coastguard Rescue Teams prepared a helicopter landing site where hospital casualty staff could be met. Co-ordination between the various bodies enabled a very difficult rescue.



Undertaking the difficult extraction up the bank from the Tees.

Teesdale & Weardale Mountain Rescue Team