

Rampant oysters

In 2016 the Marine Management Organisation were advised of concerns about the expansion of oyster trestles in an area at Whitstable used by swimmers and boats. A report was commissioned and the MMO decided in February this year that they could not prove any criminal offence.

This was followed by a further expansion into the area the next month and there were further complaints about this and about the use of non native oysters. Indeed, Whitstable has long prized itself on its Royal Whitstable Natives which have been a benchmark for the oyster trade. The MMO have warned that any future development will need to be referred to them for consideration in advance.

Keam's Yard carpark has been a possible launch point, there being a shortage of places to park and launch near Whitstable harbour, but there are new notices by the Whitstable Oyster Fishery Co banning watersports within the yellow buoyed area which now fronts a significant length of this coast west of the harbour. As there is normally a right of navigation on tidal waters, what is the legal basis for these banning notices?

Another notice bans use of the tidal beach on foot, needed for launching and landing. Land below the high water mark usually belongs to the Crown and is open

to the public in normal circumstances. What is the legal basis for the prevention of this here?

Who is the approving body for the extent of the buoyed area, which has been expanded greatly of late and which claims to close off this section of coast to the public? ISKA have asked the Whitstable Oyster Fishery Co and MMO for clarification.

One way info

Assorted consultations come thick and fast on management of the marine environment but this information is purely about species and who will manage everything. There is no information on how present users might be affected. ISKA have lost track of how many of the symposia we have attended but this has been scaled back until there is some meaningful feedback the other way. PhD research for the UK Coastal Government Survey is being undertaken by Natasha Bradshaw of the University of the West of England, who is a sea and white water paddler. In response to our concerns that this might lead to an extension of Defra's behaviour inland, she commented 'I am supervised by a property lawyer so I will seek any opportunities to raise these access issues. The problems seem to go against the government and EA rhetoric that a healthy society is one where people can enjoy the environment.'



Marine rubbish bin

Sailing racers Land Rover BAR have installed the first Seabin on their pontoon. It collects rubbish down to 2mm diameter microplastics. It is expected to remove oils, detergents and 500kg of debris a year from Portsmouth Harbour.

Gove's farming policy

In January, speaking to the Oxford Farming Conference, Secretary of State Michael Gove signalled a marked change in Government policy over farming, including countryside stewardship. There will be 'public money for public goods'. That was the basis for such schemes as Tir Gofal, of which public access was to be a significant part, yet not one metre of river access has been added. Gove is still equating 'countryside' with 'land' or 'earth'. Defra still have fake news on their website under Information to help boaters on the River Wye, even after being told about it. The indications seem to be just a change in who gets the financial handouts.

INCIDENT FILE

Dart fatality

Paddling with six others, 23 year old Tobias Hamer was drowned on the Dart in early December when he became wedged upside down under a tree, still in his kayak. The accident occurred in the morning by Bellpool Island, on the Dartmeet to New Bridge section, the location meaning it took rescuers three hours to reach him, by which time it was too late. The group were praised by rescue crews for being well equipped and assisting the recovery. Tobias was a Dorset teacher, including outdoor activities. The location was close to where Chris Wheeler was drowned in similar circumstances.

Given the slip

When Kim Rowlands needed to nip into the Adventure Beyond office in Cardigan to get some cash she left her silver Mini outside on the slipway down to the tidal Afon Teifi for a few moments. On returning, the Mini, containing daughter Kiara, almost three years old, had gone. Thinking it had been stolen, she called the police, resulting in

a two hour search before the car was found in the river. Tragically, the little girl did not survive.

Whatever happened will probably never be known. If parking a vehicle on a slope, leave it in gear, reverse if facing downhill, 1st if facing uphill. Remember that inquisitive children are tempted to play with car controls, regardless of what they have been told, but at an appropriate age it would pay to advise how to apply the brake if the vehicle does start to move.

Dragon boat accident drowns 17

A major catastrophe has occurred on the Toahua River at Guilin in southern China. A dragon boat crew were training when they hit a difficult current where two flows merged, capsizing. A second boat arrived and also capsized, resulting in 60 paddlers in the water. Some 200 people worked through the night in a fleet of recovery craft, pulling out some 40 paddlers, but 17 were confirmed dead.

Throwline failure investigation

The failure of a throwbag during a canoe capsize rescue drill in March is being investigated by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch. This body occasionally investigates accidents with RIBs but more usually craft from fishing boats up to the largest commercial shipping.