

Boat registration changes

The Environment Agency (Inland Waterways) Order 2010

The law governing boat registration and related conditions for our waterways has changed.

Please read this information carefully. It tells you about the main changes in boat registration requirements for the River Thames from 1 January 2011.

All boats kept on the river must now be registered

If you keep your boat on the River Thames, you will now need to register it and pay the full annual charge, even if you do not use it. This requirement extends to every part of the River Thames including backwaters and marinas.

We will offer an introductory period until 1 April 2011 to give you the opportunity to register your boat or remove it from river before we take enforcement action. However, we will still take immediate enforcement action if you use an unregistered boat at any time.

Third party insurance now needed for powered boats

You will now need to show you have third party insurance for a powered boat. This insurance will need to be for at least one million pounds.

When you apply to register for 2011, we will be asking you to provide us with the name of your insurer, your policy number and expiry date.

Compliance with construction and equipment standards at all times

You must now make sure your powered boat complies with our construction and equipment standards at all times - not just when it is used (or let for hire) on the River Thames, but also when it is kept afloat.

Unless you have a private, open outboard-powered boat, you must have either a valid Boat Safety Scheme Certificate (BSSC) or, for boats up to 4 years old, a valid Declaration of Conformity under the Recreational Craft Directive when you apply to register for 2011. You will need to submit this with your application if you are a new applicant or your previous BSSC has expired.

Your BSSC is valid for four years and it is your responsibility to ensure it is always up-to-date. If you renew your BSSC, you will need to send us a copy straight away; don't wait until you register the following year.

Other requirements

- If you sell your boat it is your responsibility to inform us of the change of ownership, in writing; until you do so you remain the legal owner of the boat and are responsible for registering it.
- You must display your registration plate on your boat where it is clearly visible to our officers.
- If you own a powered boat, you must mark it clearly with your boat's name.

Offences

The Order has updated our legal powers; you may end up with a criminal record and a fine if:

- You do not register your boat and comply with our registration requirements.
- Your boat does not comply with our construction and equipment standards at any point during the year.
- You do not have a suitable valid insurance policy.
- You do not provide us with change of ownership details or ownership details are incorrect.
- You refuse our officers access to your boat for inspection.
- You do not provide our officers with such information or documents as may be required.

We may refuse to register your boat if you do not comply with our requirements and may cancel an existing registration in the interest of safety. We may ultimately remove a boat from the waterway if it is not registered.

'Block' registration - British Canoe Union, British Rowing and British Stand Up Paddling Association

Block registrations are where we have an agreement with another organisation to sell registrations on our behalf. We are negotiating several new block registrations for 2011.

We are reviewing our agreement with British Canoe Union and have agreed the principles for new agreements with British Rowing and British Stand Up Paddling Association.

If you are a member of any of these organisations you will be registered to use our waterways (BCU agreement will cover Canoe England and Canoe Wales members).

Other types of registration - British Waterways Gold Licence

We have amended our agreement with British Waterways to take into account these changes.

If you purchase a Gold licence you will be able to use both British Waterways and Environment Agency waterways. Make sure you ask for a Gold license; a British Waterways Standard canals & river licence is not valid on our waterways.

Further changes

We have prioritised the changes for 2011 and discussed timing and implementation with customer representatives.

We will be carrying out work to look at introducing further changes from 2012 and we will consult proposals for any further changes with customer group representatives.

If you would like to know more, please visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk/waterwaysorder

Further information – all you need to know

You will find more detailed information about our registration requirements on our registration application or renewal forms and at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/boatregthames

If you would like further advice on how to register your boat, please contact our craft registration team: call 0118 953 5650, email boatreg@environment-agency.gov.uk or by post to Environment Agency, PO Box 214, Reading, RG1 8HQ