

Your numbers show a big increase in boats since 2010, but you brought in the London Mooring Strategy in 2018 to help manage this growth. Have boat numbers increased significantly since 2018?

The London Mooring Strategy was developed to address a number of issues related to the increase in boat numbers, but it didn't look at managing potential future growth, and stated that further work may be needed on this.

Since 2010 boat numbers in London have roughly doubled, and they have continued to increase in 2018 and 2019. The 2020 national boat count took place in March when, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we were unable to complete the boat count in all areas of London. While this was sufficient to measure boat licence compliance, it did not provide a full count of all boats. Our boat sighting data from January/February, and September 2019 and 2020, shows a continued increase in boat numbers, particularly amongst those boats that do not have a home mooring.

Do you think this is the right time to be looking at a new policy regarding managing boat numbers, when the effects of Covid-19 are not yet known?

It's too early to know what the long-term impact of Covid-19 will be on boating on London. The early signs are that it is not yet having much impact on boat numbers. However, even if boat numbers reduce slightly, London will still be the busiest part of our network, and so we still need to think about how we manage boat numbers.

Why can't you set up more affordable moorings on the offside?

It is not part of the Canal & River Trust's charitable objectives to provide subsidised moorings. However the London Mooring Strategy does support the principle of long-term moorings being created and managed by diverse providers, including social landlords or community-led mooring schemes, who could offer lower priced moorings. The Strategy identifies some locations where permanent moorings could potentially be created, but it would depend on number of factors such as who owns the land, access to the site, and planning permission if they were to be permanent residential moorings.

You say you will implement a pilot proposal from June 2021, therefore you must have some idea of what you plan to do. Can you give any idea of what your thoughts are?

Before we develop a proposal we want to hear from the different stakeholders. Once we have completed this engagement process there will be a formal consultation on the resulting proposal, which we intend to pilot from summer 2021.

Have you considered what effect this might have on vulnerable boaters within the London boating community?

We will carry out the appropriate equality impact assessments once a proposal has been developed. We already work closely with partners, including the waterway chaplains, to support vulnerable boaters with a range of issues and would look to help any boater who might be affected by any changes.

You mention that the increased numbers of boaters have a negative impact on facilities. Why not increase the number of basic facilities in the area?

The current boater facilities across London were never intended for the current high level of use, so we regularly get complaints about them being broken or congested. We have already set out plans in the Strategy to improve and increase boater facilities across London. For example, we're planning additional and improved water and waste facilities on the Lee, Grand Union Paddington Arm and Grand Union Slough Arm. We are also installing seven solar bins along the Regent's Canal, as well as three in Docklands. These machines feature a built-in compaction system which compresses litter as it is deposited in the bin, increasing the litter-holding capacity of the bin by a factor of x10.

Although there is no legal duty for us to provide them, we already spend a significant amount of money on providing and maintaining boater customer service facilities in London, installing additional facilities will add to these costs and we need to ensure we can do this in a financially sustainable way. In 2019/20 we spent over a quarter of a million pounds on refuse and wet waste customer service facilities in inner London alone.

Waste	£134,236
Pump-out/elsan	£130,130

While it's not possible to break down the cost by area, we spend nearly £400,000 on providing and maintaining water points across the Trust's waterways each year.

Our planned investment in existing and new facilities will help with current demand, but there are a limited number of places where we are able to install new facilities, due to lack of physical space, access (for example for bin lorries), and challenges around connecting utilities across third party land. It's not just facilities that are feeling the strain, but also the infrastructure, with more wear and tear and boat damage to locks, banks, and waterway walls. London's canals and rivers were not designed for the current type, or volume, of usage.

There are many stretches of London waterways without mooring rings. Why don't you put in more rings, so there are more places to moor?

We have identified in the London Mooring Strategy where it is possible and preferable to have more rings. We have already installed rings in a number of these locations, and others will be put in over the next year. Some stretches of the canals are not suitable for mooring alongside because of the canal profile (some of the London canals were built with a shallow dish shape meaning there isn't the depth for mooring boats near to the bank), or because the bank itself is not suitable.

It's important to remember that the canal was never designed for continuous lines of moored boats, and the waterway has lots of competing uses. We need to balance the different needs of those who use the waterways, and make sure there is also space without moored boats for towpath users to enjoy the water, for angling, water sport activities, and for wildlife.

Why do you use negative language when talking about liveaboard continuous cruisers when you should be celebrating the benefits they bring to the waterways?

We agree that liveaboard continuous cruisers can benefit the waterways. We don't believe we've used negative language to describe liveaboard and/or continuous boaters, but we have highlighted that most of the growth in boat numbers in London has been in boats without a home mooring (continuous cruisers). During the engagement sessions we have highlighted both the benefits and challenges that this has brought to the capital's waterways.

Why don't you promote the quieter areas around London, like the western end of the Paddington Arm and the Slough Arm, to help manage boat numbers?

The London Mooring Strategy does already identify plans to put new facilities and improve mooring in quieter locations to help encourage boats to use the less busy areas. There may be more opportunity to promote quieter areas as part of the current work. However, boat numbers have grown significantly more in some parts of London (particularly central and east London) which suggest that there are some areas that will always be more popular, however much we improve facilities elsewhere.

What is a manageable number of boats in London?

We aren't able to set a limit on the number of boats who can have a licence and who can navigate in London. However, the increase in boat numbers in London mean that some areas can be very busy, so it's important that we manage these areas safely and fairly.

How does the growth in boat numbers relate to the population growth of London as a whole, isn't it just natural that, as the city grows, boat numbers will grow?

There has clearly been a growth in London's population since 2010, which puts pressure on the availability and affordability of accommodation. This may have informed some people's choice to live on a boat, however we don't have any official data to verify this. The population growth of London is not within our control but, with a finite amount of waterway space in London, we do have to manage that space safely and fairly. The growth in boat numbers in London has made this more challenging.

Many boats do not seem to move – why?

Our boat licence support team monitor boat movement and anyone who does not move after the required time will be contacted. In some cases, boats are granted permission to stay for a short agreed overstay – for example a short-term illness or a mechanical issue, usually for just a few days. If a boater has a longer-term equality issue (for example they are disabled) they may have an adjustment that allows them to moor longer in some places. Boaters with an equality adjustment are provided with yellow 'Trust Aware' badges to display to make others aware, without disclosing details of their personal situation (these are displayed at the boater's discretion). With the sheer number of boats in London, even though most boats do move, if people see places with boats always moored there, they may think that they haven't moved – even though they may be different vessels.

Where is the reason that you need to do something to manage busy area in London?

A number of different factors have persuaded us of the need to manage the busy areas of London's waterways. There has been a significant increase in boat numbers in London since 2010 (particularly the growth in the number of boats without a permanent mooring) as evidenced by the national boat count. Over the same period we have also seen a growth in other towpath and water space uses, for example canoeing, kayaking and paddle sports. The increase in boats has resulted in increased use of customer service facilities, and with this increased cost for the Trust. We have also seen consistently low boater satisfaction scores in London. Finally, the powers we have currently are not effective for managing high number of boats in a finite area and provide no way to limit numbers.

Are you just trying to remove boats from London?

No absolutely not. We will always welcome boats onto the waterways in London, but we have to make sure that we manage the waterways safely and fairly for everyone who wants to use them – particularly in areas where there are lots of boats.

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