

Navigation update: What's the latest?

National Navigation Users Forum – February 2021



Dear NNUF member

Here is our newsletter, which hopefully you will find useful as an update on the key areas of work and current priorities that we are focusing on at the moment in the National team.

Please feel free to share this with those you represent.

Going forwards, we will provide an update for you on a quarterly basis.

We will also be in touch with you soon to invite you to the National Navigation Users Forum meeting which we are planning to hold around April 2021.

Kind regards

Andy Wilkinson
National Navigation Manager

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- We have made really good progress over the last few months. We are a little behind schedule because of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, but this charges review remains a priority for us and we still plan to consult in spring 2021 with implementation from 2022.
- We gave updates to all stakeholder groups in the autumn – thank you for all the feedback we received. We will be engaging with some specific groups over the coming weeks to feed into our final proposals as well as continuing to engage with our staff.
- Our proposed charging scheme framework has now been reviewed by Navigation senior management. We are currently finalising some aspects before seeking the final internal approval we need to formally submit them to Government for approval to consult. This is planned for end of February.
- We are planning our engagement over the next few months, particularly for when the consultation is live. We want as many customers as possible to have their say. So we want to offer opportunities for customers to engage with us during the consultation to ask questions and get clarification before responding.

- Depending on any changes to Government restrictions in the coming months, face to face engagement may be more difficult; however, we are looking at digital options so that we can consult as widely as possible.
- If you have any ideas of how we could best achieve this engagement, we would be pleased to hear from you. This could include the best time of the day or week to hold meetings, locations for any drop in sessions (if these are allowed) or if live or pre-recorded sessions would be better. All ideas welcome.
- We will keep you updated as things progress over the coming months.

Revised project timeline

Project phase	Start	Finish
Finalise proposals for submission to Government for approval to consult	September 2020	February 2021
Engagement – Internal and External	October 2020	February 2021
Submission to Government for approval to consult	February 2021	March/April 2021
Consultation	Spring 2021	+ 12 weeks
Implementation including approvals	July 2021	November 2021 (T) February 2022 (A&M)
Thames charges effective	1 January 2022	
Anglian and Medway charges effective	1 April 2022	

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Spending Review SR20



- We are anticipating a substantial capital Grant-in-Aid settlement of £27m for 2021-2022. We are still waiting for final confirmation, so this is our working assumption. If confirmed, this is a great step forwards for the management of Environment Agency Navigations. We will look to deliver the service and capital programme in line with the latest safe systems of work and Cabinet Office guidance in relation to the pandemic.
- On the revenue front we have been awarded a flat-cash rollover, so the same amount as 2020-2021. This was not unexpected in the current economic climate, with revenue funding pressures being felt across the public sector. Overall though, this is still a really good result for Navigation given that in many places Grant-in-Aid funding for both capital and revenue budgets have been cut. This means we will have to look at how we can best capitalise any additional delivery requirements and work smartly with our supplier delivery partners to secure the necessary resources needed to deliver an exciting but challenging programme.
- Looking beyond 2021-2022, we now await the announcement of the next spending round, SR21, which will probably start in mid to late summer.



Asset Management



- We have pushed on well with our capital works programme over the past year, despite all the issues and complications caused by the pandemic. We have spent over £7m to date since the start of the financial year, which has been our biggest investment year yet. We are therefore well on track to deliver to our budget of £14.8m in 2020-2021.
- Our operational focus is on maintaining safe ways of working into the new boating season, ensuring we provide a Covid secure environment, keeping our staff and customers safe. We have been reviewing the lessons learnt from the previous lockdowns and taking forward any improvements.
- Our staff are continuing to operate our assets, ensuring customers can access essential services and we are reminding our customers to adhere to social distancing requirements to keep our waterways safe and Covid secure.
- We are continuing with the work to complete an asset condition profile of all our Navigation assets, however the recent high flows and flood events have impacted this programme which will now continue into the Spring.

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Commercial activity



- An independent review of our base mooring charges along the non-tidal Thames has concluded that we do not consistently match local market rates in all cases, as is required by HM Treasury Managing Public Money. We are currently considering options for transitioning charges at the sites identified, before consulting with stakeholders and those customers affected. Any changes are unlikely to be implemented before April 2022.
- A simultaneous independent review of the capacity for base moorings at our Thames lock sites has also been completed. This has identified potential for additional boats to be accommodated at a number of sites. Further work is ongoing to confirm this, before we look to promote and fill any additional space.
- We are also reviewing our processes for monitoring and managing capacity to ensure we consistently optimise available space at all of our moorings. This includes assessing the potential to convert a proportion of short stay mooring capacity at Thames locks into seasonal non-residential winter moorings.
- Work to create new and additional mooring capacity is ongoing, as is work to further improve management processes and systems, including introduction of new IT where there are proven cost and efficiency benefits.

Sport England Strategy



- The Sport England Strategy was launched on 26 January 2021. We have worked together with Sport England in the past, and relationships are further developing
- Their five big issues are:
 - Recover and reinvent
 - Connecting communities
 - Positive experiences for children and young people
 - Connecting with health and wellbeing
 - Active environments
- Their guiding principles are:
 1. Investing most in those that need it most
 2. The right blend of local and national action
 3. Simple as standard
- You can read more here: <https://www.sportengland.org/why-were-here/uniting-the-movement>

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Hire Boat Code

- We have been providing input to some final changes to the revised Hire Boat Code, following a number of Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) recommendations. We expect the Code to be published by the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities and British Marine in April 2021 and we will then consult on it becoming a mandatory registration requirement on EA waterways from January 2022.



Recreational Craft Directive - Annex IV Declaration of Conformity (DoC)

- We are working with the Boat Safety Scheme, Canal & River Trust and the Broads Authority to review how we identify new but only partially-completed boats when owners first register with us and present a DoC. This is because these boats will then be fitted out with more systems requiring compliance with our construction and equipment standards during their first year and we need to ensure ongoing control measures are in place.



National Census 2021

- We are working with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in preparation for the next national Census taking place this Spring. One of the lessons learned by ONS in 2011, the year of the last Census, was that residential boaters were not well represented. We will be putting the ONS field teams in touch with our local Area Waterways staff so that locations where people live aboard boats are identified.



Enforcement

- We continue to review our approach to compliance and enforcement to make sure that our strategic ambition is aligned with the rest of the Environment Agency business through the overarching Enforcement Strategy.
- We are currently planning our priorities for 2021, within the safe ways of working we have developed throughout the pandemic.

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Contact us



If you have any questions or feedback about this update please email us:

Navconsultation@environment-agency.gov.uk