



## Guidance for Canal Users during the Covid-19 Pandemic

On 19 December 2020, the Government announced new measures to combat the Covid-19 pandemic by adding a new level to localised tier-based restrictions around local areas. For the first time, Hampshire and Surrey are now in different tiers with different levels of restriction. This will now impact the way you are able to use the Canal site depending on where you live.

The Government have also announced that different restrictions will apply over the Christmas period in Tiers 1-3 but not in Tier 4.

### *On the Canal*

We interpret the guidance as meaning you can do the following:

If you live in a Tier 1 – 3 area – this includes all of **Hampshire** local to the Canal (Tier 2):

- You **MUST NOT** enter a Tier 4 (Stay at Home) area for recreation or leisure purposes. This includes the whole Surrey section of the Canal - east of the River Blackwater.
- You can go boating on the Canal including staying overnight, but you should do so only with members of your household or support bubble.
- You can canoe or kayak on the Canal.
- You can go angling on the Canal.
- You can walk and cycle on the towpath.
- You may travel to visit the Canal but are advised to stay local. See further detail below (slightly different guidance is in place for Tier 3 residents).

If you live in a Tier 4 (Stay at Home) area - this includes all of **Surrey** except Waverley Borough:

- You **MUST NOT** enter a Tier 1-3 area for recreation or leisure purposes. This includes the whole of the Hampshire section of the Canal – west of the River Blackwater.
- You may travel a short distance to the Canal for recreation and exercise but **MUST** stay local – defined as being within the town, village or city area in which you live.

- You can go boating on the Canal but not stay overnight, but you should do so only with members of your household or support bubble.
- You can canoe or kayak on the Canal alone or with your household/support bubble.
- You can go angling on the Canal alone or with your household/support bubble.
- You can walk and cycle on the towpath, alone or with your household/support bubble.

The County Boundary is the River Blackwater adjacent to the A331 over which the Canal passes on an aqueduct.

When using the towpath please respect other people's space and keep as much distance as possible. Cyclists should pay extra care to other users and slow their pace as the towpaths are expected to be very busy especially at weekends.

For further guidance please see [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) .

### **General advice**

If anyone becomes unwell with a new continuous cough or high temperature or a loss of, or change in their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia) they should:

- **not** travel to the Canal or use any boats, instead they should stay at home and follow government guidance for self-isolating / NHS track and trace.
- whilst on board a boat on the Canal, go home immediately and follow government guidance for self-isolating / NHS track and trace. You should also inform the BCA Office as soon as possible where you have left your boat and why.

Good personal hygiene is to be followed at all times to include regular handwashing - 20 seconds with soap and water where possible, and anti-bacterial gel (minimum 60% alcohol) where clean water is unavailable.

### **Visitor Facilities**

The Canal Visitor Centre at Mytchett is now closed. The public toilets at the Canal Centre will be open during the day – except 24 Dec – 2 Jan inclusive. The Canal Visitor Centre is located within a Tier 4 (Stay at Home) area. You should only visit if you are local to the Mytchett area.

Mon-Friday you can still call our team on the general office phone number 01252 370073 or contact us via email [info@basingstoke-canal.co.uk](mailto:info@basingstoke-canal.co.uk) or via our social media platforms - we will be able to respond during normal working hours. The office however will be closed 24 Dec – 3 Jan inclusive. The general office phone number will always have information on how to contact us in an emergency out of hours.

We will be using our Facebook page @basingstokecanal for posting regular updates.

The Canal towpath, car parks, Canal Centre grounds and play area will remain open for daily exercise – please see guidance on where you can travel to above.

Construction works to maintain and improve the Canal will be continuing over the winter period as normal – please watch our Facebook page for details of closures or restrictions on the towpath during works which will commence in early January 2021.

Boaters facilities at the Canal Centre, Ash Lock and Colt Hill will remain open. The Bridge Barn facility at Woking is now closed.

## **Powered boats**

Ash Lock is now closed to navigation and secured. There is no winding hole heading downstream after the lock and before the County Boundary, please turn immediately above Ash Lock. Boats in the Surrey section of the Canal should turn at Ash Wharf – this is the last winding hole before the County Boundary when heading upstream.

### ***Privately owned boats***

If you live in Tiers 1-2 there is no restriction on travel including for private boating or staying overnight on your boat, but you are advised to stay local.

If you live within a Tier 3 area you are advised not to travel to the Tier 2 area including the Hampshire section of the Canal. Different guidance applies on staying overnight; please check current Gov guidance.

If you live in Tier 4 you may only use your boat if it is also moored within the Tier 4 area and it is kept locally to your residence. You may not stay overnight on your boat. You may not visit your boat if it is moored in the Tier 2 part of the Canal.

Should you use your boat it must only be with members of your household, or if you have formed one a support bubble with one other family.

You can travel to carryout winterization or maintenance on a privately owned boat if you live and the boat is moored within Tiers 1 – 3. You cannot travel to maintain or winterize your boat if you live in, or the boat is moored in the Tier 4 area.

Please check the latest guidance at [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

### ***Commercial powered boats***

Owners of commercial (self-drive hire / passenger boats) may move their boats for work purposes (eg, to carryout maintenance).

Self-drive hires are permitted for single households or support bubbles in Tier 2, but not in Tier 4.

Passenger trips are unlikely to be able to meet the single household/bubble. Passenger operators should discuss their Covid risk assessments with the BCA office before resuming any operations.

## **Unpowered Boats**

If you live in Tiers 1-2 there is no restriction on travel including for paddle sports, to another Tier 1-3 area including the Hampshire portion of the Canal - but you are advised to stay local if possible. You may participate in paddle sports with up to 6 people as long as the activity is entirely outdoors.

If you live within a Tier 3 area you are advised not to travel to the Tier 2 area including the Hampshire section of the Canal, but please check current Gov guidance. If you do visit you must do so alone or with members of your household or support bubble.

If you live in Tier 4 you may only paddle on the Canal if it is local to you and is within the Tier 4 area. If you do visit you must do so alone or with members of your household or support bubble.

### ***General information for unpowered boaters***

Unpowered boaters are advised to avoid where possible touching popular shared surfaces such as:

- Canoe launching steps
- Waterway Padlocks (aka BW or BWB padlocks)
- Height barriers
- Slipway barriers

You can paddle on the Canal if you hold a valid BCA licence or British Canoeing 'on the water' Membership (please carry your card).

Paddle in line with your skill level. It is never advisable to paddle on your own for personal safety. We strongly advise wearing of personal buoyancy aids.

Equipment should be wiped down prior to use and on return home.

Do not share equipment with anyone from outside your household/bubble.

Do not share a vehicle with anyone from outside your household/bubble.

Be mindful when unloading boats from vehicles to allow adequate space between vehicles to maintain social distancing.

### ***Organised groups & tuition***

Organisations wishing to restart group training or tuition sessions should discuss their Covid-19 risk assessment with the BCA office before restarting operations.

1:1 paddle sport tuition can be carried out outdoors in Tier 2 (Hampshire).

***Licensing for unpowered boats***

All boats including canoes, kayaks, paddleboards and rowing boats on the Canal must have a licence to use the Canal. For further info on licensing see our website at:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryparks/basingstokecanal/onthewater>

BCA daily, weekly and annual unpowered boat licences can be purchased via our online shop: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/shop/product.php?productid=17330&cat=339&page=1>

Joining *British Canoeing* as an 'on the water' member gives you free access to the Canal – please carry your membership card you may be asked to prove you are a current member. One card is required per canoe / kayak / paddleboard. Rowing boats, skiffs, punts, etc are not covered by British Canoeing Membership scheme – you will need a BCA licence for these.

***For regular updates on the canal please follow our Facebook page @basingstokecanal or on Twitter @TheBCATeam***