



middle level
commissioners

Duties in relation to boat-dwellers

This document is a report that will be updated and re-published on our website annually to discharge the duty 14(2) under the Middle Level Act (2018).

<https://middlelevel.gov.uk/navigation/navigation-governance/>

14 Commissioners' duties in relation to boat-dwellers

- (1) In the exercise of their functions under and by virtue of this Act (including the provision of facilities) the Commissioners must have regard to—
 - (a) the interests of individuals who use vessels as their sole residence (including individuals who do not own or have access to a permanent mooring); and
 - (b) the desirability of safeguarding and facilitating public rights of navigation.
- (2) In each calendar year the Commissioners must publish a report setting out what they have done in the previous calendar year to satisfy the duty under subsection (1).

Given the scale of change associated with the introduction of the Act, along with the COVID pandemic, this specific duty has not been discharged for covering the years 2019, 2020, 2021 & 2022. A retrospective summary is provided below.

With the Middle Level Commissioners under new leadership from March 2023 and now that licensing is more embedded, this report will be updated and re-published proactively in early 2024 (looking back to 2023) and then annually updated and re-published each calendar year.

All of our navigation activity supports all users of our waterways, and as best we can we have regard and consideration for all user types. The navigation pages on our [website](#) summarises key activities.

Previous Years

- Dedicated Navigation Officer appointed
- [Residential Mooring strategy](#) developed and published
- Navigation Advisory Committee established with Residential Boat Owners' Association represented
- [Navigation Byelaws and Boat Removal Protocol](#) developed and published
- 25% of income from licensing ringfenced for link route boater facilities (to meet IWA minimum standards)

- A suite of rural moorings installed across the MLC system as well as improved public moorings in Ramsey.
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2023

- Social media presence refreshed and improved
- Navigation pages on the MLC website improved
- 2022/23 [navigation financial summary](#) published on website
- Engagement of the NAC and marina owners and review of boater feedback in the development of a 'non-standard licensing' proposal that includes clarity on the enactment of the clause within our Byelaws concerning the reduced licence fee for the registration of a vessel that is used as a dwelling for any year in which that vessel remains in a marina. Now referred to as a 'Marina Only' licence.
- MLC Board approval to the 'Marina Only' licence and it will become part of our suite of licences from the 2024/25 season.
- 25% of income continues to be ringfenced for link route boater facilities and a plan for 'Phase 1' delivery of these is being developed. MLC Board approved a [suite of principles for boater facilities](#).
- Specific engagement offered with the Residential Boat Owners' Association to help inform a review of the Residential Mooring Strategy and inform an emerging Business Plan for the MLC navigation.
- Text message [notification service](#) introduced.

2024

- De-silted Salters Lode Lock pen.
- Replacement of downstream gates at Marmont Priory Lock.
- Installation of a water point and visitor mooring at the MLC offices.
- Provision of funding to enable Fenland District Council to install a water point at their mooring in Whittlesey.
- Enabling works started for facilities improvements at Stanground Lock.
- Approach made to the Environment Agency regarding facilities provision on their land at Salters Lode and to the Well Creek Trust regarding provision elsewhere on Well Creek.
- Review of rural mooring offer involving a boater who used their vessel as a sole residence.
- Adjustments to the Skylark rural mooring in light of the above.
- Sought to ensure continued access to Fenland District Council's facilities block in March when consenting Cambs County Council work to Town Bridge.
- Continuing to engage the Environment Agency regarding their responsibilities for the Tidal River link between Salters Lode and Denver.
- Supported an extension to MLC navigation further up Monks Lode.
- Strengthened regulation and enforcement of unlicensed vessels, including trialling a new debt management firm.

2025

- Simplified the Registration Fee Model, including Visitor Registrations.
- Negotiated with CRT to allow Gold Licence holders to register Middle Level as their home waters.

- Updated and republished our Boat Removal Protocol.
 - Secured a 50% funding contribution from the Canoe Foundation towards improved portage. Portage has been installed at Stanground Lock and is available to Paddle UK licence holders.
 - Maximised our weed management efficiency and effectiveness by:
 - Actively re-deploying members of our workforce to be part of our boat crews by using contractors for some other activities (e.g. rural mooring maintenance)
 - Appointed and trained two temporary boat operators for the summer
 - Maximised boat 'cutting time' rather than 'travel time'. This has meant less responding to 'hotspot' weed-growth reports from boaters which has previously resulted in lost 'cutting time' and greater 'travel time'.
 - Improved logistics and fuelling support to our boat crews and the way we tackled minor repairs.
 - Undertaking a new approach to in-channel vegetation removal, by creating conservation bays on the bank (areas of bank that were cut short) to place vegetation removed from the channels which helps birds and reptiles in the area.
 - Regularly posting updates on Facebook.
 - Further repairs to the Marmont Priory lock doors carried out to remedy issues found after the lock door replacement.
 - Removal of four abandoned vessels from the Middle Level system.
 - Engaging with Well Creek Trust members and providing lock handles to allow assistance with the management of water levels in the Creek.
 - Commencing the development of a significant project to refurbish Ashline Lock, including engaging with the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Mayor. This project will continue through 2026 and 2027.
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Your feedback is important to us.

Please get in touch if there are further or specific issues you think we should be considering in order to:

- Better consider the interests of individuals who use vessels as their sole residence (including individuals who do not own or have access to a permanent mooring); or
- Have regard to the desirability of safeguarding and facilitating public rights of navigation.

Paul Burrows
Chief Executive
Middle Level Commissioners

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