



Canal &
River Trust

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Michelle Donelan MP
House of Commons
London
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Sent by e-mail: michelle.donelan.mp@parliament.uk and hard copy

Dear Michelle,

Term Time Cruising Proposal

Please accept my apologies for the delay in following up on my letter to you of 22 August.

Since then we have been giving this matter some careful attention, and our welfare officer has spoken to a number of families, including some of those who attended our meeting in Bradford-on-Avon in July.

Our considered view, having taken soundings from various other parties with an interest in and concern for our canals, is that - whilst we are very willing to give guidance to those families in this situation - it would not be right to modify or relax the legal requirement, given all the demand and other pressures the canal faces. All boaters without a home mooring have agreed to the requirement that the use of their boat be "bona fide for navigation". Whilst we accept that we cannot unlawfully discriminate against boaters with school-aged children, we feel there is a clear objective justification for our approach, given our legitimate aims of managing the waterways, mitigating congestion around certain parts of our network and fairness to other boaters. Whilst we accept that the education of children is of paramount importance, we do believe the onus is on those who choose to adopt this lifestyle to also satisfy us that they meet their boat licence conditions, or adopt an alternative that enables them to support their children's education, as others have done and continue to do.

We are happy - as I offered at our meeting - to discuss with each family how they can adopt a pattern of movement that would comply with the legal requirement. We know some are doing this already, and from our own assessment can conceivably see how a family could moor within 3-4 miles of a canal-side school during school terms, progressing steadily every fortnight, and remain compliant, provided their range of movement is then much greater throughout the non-school periods of the year (around 13 weeks altogether). Of course, there are also responsibilities on schools and local authorities to help transport those children with long journeys who they have accepted into their school.

I hope this explains our position, I would of course be happy to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Parry
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