



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
From the Secretary of State for Environment, Food
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Per Dominic,

Thank you for your letter of 22 August on behalf of your constituent, [REDACTED] and the Friends of Hurst Park about the situation of 'slum boats' and sunken craft on our waterways.

I would like to assure you that the government recognises the issues faced by navigation authorities and *bona fide* boat users on the waterways.

The responsibility for operational issues on our waterways sits with individual navigation authorities. With regard to the non-tidal stretches of the Thames, I would like to assure you that the Environment Agency (EA) as navigation authority takes this stewardship role very seriously and recognises how important navigable waterways are to local people; not only in economic and social terms, but also for local identity and landscape. The EA is doing all it can to provide navigations that are accessible for its users.

I understand from the EA that this particular matter with slum boats is on the increase as people move to live on the waterways as a cheaper alternative to housing. The government is supportive of local level discussions to take place between the key parties affected to work together and find an appropriate solution. My officials will liaise directly with the Department for Communities and Local Government and the EA to find the appropriate contacts for these discussions to begin.

Thank you again for your letter.

With every good wish,

Yours,

Michael

Michael Gove