

New moorings against private offside land



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Growth in boat numbers over recent years has resulted in shortages of moorings in some areas, particularly for boats used for long term residential purposes. We are keen to facilitate the development of long term mooring sites, providing that they do not prejudice the character and environment of the waterways. Customers tell us that very long lines of moored boats along the canal or river bank detract from the general enjoyment of boating, so where new long term moorings are needed, our [policy](#) is to encourage provision in offline marinas or basins where impact on the navigation is minimal.

Restrictions to creation of new online moorings

1. **New online moorings** are acceptable only if **all** of the following criteria apply

- (a) there is clear excess demand for moorings in the area with no vacancies at comparable BW or third party sites.
- (b) there is no prospect in the short or medium term of new off-line mooring development.
- (c) there is low density of existing on-line moorings in the area.
- (d) there are no operational or environmental constraints to online moorings at the proposed location. Constraints include high boat traffic volumes, water availability for navigation, and navigational safety.

2. **Permitted exceptions** to these criteria

- (i) Visitor moorings suitably located along the towpath or offside
- (ii) A proportion of visitor moorings may be allocated temporarily to boaters requiring a home mooring for winter months only.
- (iii) Moorings for the following types of boats will be permitted along the towpath or on the offside, providing that they bring significant clearly defined benefits to the location, and that there are no operational or environmental constraints as per para. 1(d) above:
 - Commercial boats and boats providing services for tourists and day visitors (e.g. trip and passenger boats, floating shops and restaurants).
 - Historic/feature boats that have a specific and documented function for adding value to tourism and enjoyment of visitors to the area.
 - Community boats operated for charitable purposes, for which there is no suitable alternative mooring in the area.
- (iv) Permission will normally be granted for just one leisure boat to be moored adjacent to the garden of a private residential property on the offside of the canal providing that there are no operational or environmental constraints as per para. 1(d) above. This does not apply on the Kennet & Avon Canal which is subject to the provisions of its conservation plan¹.
- (v) Where there is an acute shortage of moorings and new marinas are under development, temporary additional offside moorings may be approved through the issue of limited period (temporary) mooring permits. These will expire subject to 6 months' notice by BW when new off-line moorings become available in the area.
- (vi) BW's operational vessels may be moored as required but will be located away from designated visitor moorings and lock landing areas. Where operational vessels need to moor occasionally at visitor moorings in order to use or maintain facilities, their stay time will be limited to the time required for this purpose.

¹ *Exception for the Kennet & Avon Canal: On the Kennet & Avon Canal we will not permit the creation of any further offside moorings against residential property. This underlines our commitment to delivering the policies within the Kennet & Avon Canal Conservation Plan (second edition, October 2000): Policy H10: There will be a general presumption for the offside bank to remain non-accessible. Policy H10.2 There is a presumption against the creation of moorings, paths and access on the offside canal bank, although a case may be made for this in some urban locations. The term 'urban' shall be deemed to mean the city of Bath and the towns of Bradford-on-Avon, Devizes, Hungerford, Newbury and Reading.*

- (vii) Other exceptions may be made if they are specifically stated within the local mooring strategy approved by British Waterways.

Common questions

My house backs onto the canal/river bank – am I permitted to moor a boat?

Our policy normally permits the owner or occupier of a residential property immediately adjacent a British Waterways canal or river bank to moor a single boat, that they own for private leisure use, on the water adjacent to the property, providing that it does not cause an obstruction to navigation and is not in an area protected for environmental reasons. BW generally owns the bed of the canal or river and a mooring permit as well as a licence is required. This consent does not apply to properties adjacent to the towpath.

I own land up to the canal/river bank but it is not a residential property – am I permitted to moor boat(s)?

No, this will not be permitted, unless the site qualifies as an exemption under our policies designed to limit expansion of linear moorings along the waterways.

If the land is privately owned, then why do I need permission from the navigation authority to moor there?

A mooring always comprises two elements: land and water. Exclusive use of the water space at the mooring requires the consent of whoever owns the river or canal bed. In the great majority of cases this is British Waterways. Check the title to your property to establish its exact boundary – in some cases along certain river navigations, adjacent land ownership extends to the centre line of the river. You should submit this evidence to obtain an exemption from the need for a mooring agreement.

I am seeking somewhere to moor and have obtained permission from the landowner to moor against his/her land. How should I proceed?

Providing that the location is allowable within the terms of our policy, we would expect to enter into an agreement with the landowner on the assumption that he or she is operating a moorings business. You would then purchase a mooring permit from this business. If the owner is not currently operating a moorings business then we may consider granting you a BW mooring permit for your own boat only. The price of this permit is set by reference to the mooring fees for simple online moorings in the area, whether supplied by BW or private operators. A benchmark site is identified and a price discount applied to account for the fact that BW provides the water space but not the access to it from the land or any facilities at the site. The discount is normally of the order of 50%. Please study the information on this page to understand what is involved in creating a new mooring that will qualify for our consent.

Do I need planning permission?

Any physical works to create a mooring (installation of pontoon or landing stage) will probably need planning permission as this is considered 'development'. If it's a residential mooring you are planning, this will constitute a change of use of the land and you'll probably need to submit a planning application to the local planning authority for change of use. In both cases, check with the local planning authority. We have published [guidance for the development of new residential mooring sites](#) to assist both developers and local authorities in considering residential mooring site applications.

British Waterways is a statutory consultee for planning applications. In commenting on your application in this context we will use only the published criteria relating to mooring site development that you find on this website which relate to the physical, not commercial characteristics of the scheme

I would like to dig out a small lay-by to accommodate new moorings

These are technically relatively complicated and expensive to construct. Contact our New Marinas Unit for advice.

Conditions for British Waterways consent

At its very simplest, a mooring site may be little more than a stretch of bank which includes a ring or post to which you can tie the boat and go ashore. There must be sufficient depth of water, the bank must be firm and the freeboard (height difference between the water level and the land) small enough to allow easy and safe access between the bank and the boat.

Our minimum responsibility is to ensure that before granting consent to moor, we are confident that:

1. the applicant has a legal interest in the land element of the mooring. This could be a consent to moor issued and signed by the lawful occupier of the land.
2. the establishment of a mooring at the particular location is consistent with our moorings policy and would not constitute a hazard to navigation or to the environment.
3. the applicant has obtained the necessary consent from the local planning authority.

4. the works required at the location to create a safe mooring have been properly considered by the applicant and where necessary approved by us.

Application and assessment process

This starts with completion of an [Expression of Interest or application form](#). The information you provide in this will be reviewed by our staff using the following steps:

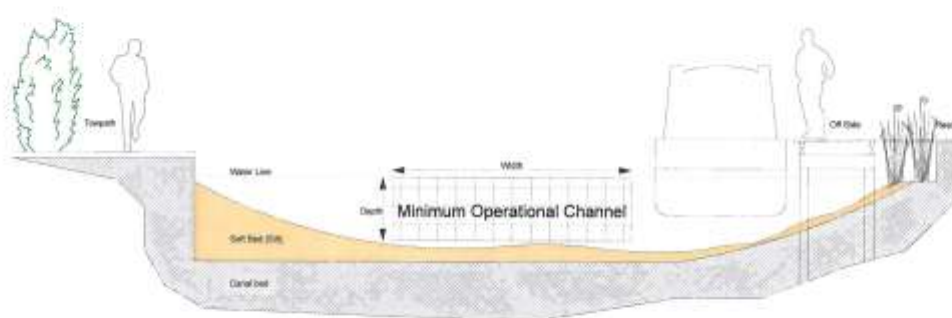
1. Moorings policy check

Because you are applying for consent to establish moorings along the line of the canal or river, we must consider whether the local circumstances are such as to allow us to make an exception under our moorings policies (conditions 1 and 2 above.)

2. Navigational Safety Assessment

New moorings must not prejudice the operation of the waterway or its safety for navigators. We will consider the following questions:

- a. Is the canal edge in good condition?
- b. Is the depth of water at the proposed location adequate or would dredging be required?
- c. Is there safe pedestrian access to the mooring or mooring platform?
- d. How close is the proposed mooring to nearby navigation structures, such as a bridge, lock or weir? If it is in close proximity, it may not be considered safe.
- e. To what extent will the line of sight for those navigating the stretch of waterway be impaired by a boat moored at the location you are proposing?
- f. Overhanging vegetation – a minimum 3m air draft should be available above any landing stage / other structure constructed to facilitate the mooring of boats.
- g. Are there long term or visitor moorings on the towpath side of the waterway at this location? (Normally we would try to avoid moorings along both banks).
- h. By how many metres will the moored craft, together with any landing stage or other structure extend from the bank into the navigation? The Minimum Operational Channel criteria are illustrated in the diagram below.



Minimum Operational Channel-	Width	Depth
Lee Navigation	12.00 Metres	1.30 Metres
Grand Union	10.00 Metres	1.30 Metres
Stort	7.80 Metres	1.10 Metres
Grand Union (Slough Arm)	5.30 Metres	1.10 Metres

3. Maximum site capacity and land ownership

The line of boats proposed to be moored at the site must fit entirely within the boundaries of the property and not overlap onto neighbouring land. For applications that request more than one mooring, or in cases where a mooring against the property already exists, we will pay particular attention to whether the maximum site capacity is being exceeded.

4. Appraisal of environmental and heritage considerations

This will highlight issues that may be of concern to the Trust, local planning authorities and/or other regulatory bodies.

5. Angling Rights

We must assess whether the proposed mooring site is likely to have a negative impact on the fishery. This will involve consultation with the owner or lessee of the angling rights.

6. Design of Structures

If the establishment of a mooring at the location requires bank improvement works, dredging or the construction of a supporting structure such as landing stage or mooring platform to facilitate access to the boat from the land, we will consider the suitability of your proposed design. No construction work or dredging may be carried out without our express written consent and we reserve the right to remove any unauthorised installation.

Where it is proposed to moor craft against an existing soft bank, it is likely that trench sheeting (or other approved system) will need to be installed to form a hard edge capable of withstanding any imposed loading and to protect the bank from erosion. (A guide price of £150 per sq. m. should be allowed for trench sheeting).

The depth of water at the proposed mooring is very important and you should ensure that there is sufficient to prevent scour when boats start to move from their mooring. The depth should ideally be a minimum of 1.3 metres. The removal of debris from the bed of the canal (or spot dredging) is only to be carried out by experienced contractors and with BW consent. (A guide price of £2,000 should be allowed for spot dredging to accommodate a single pontoon (not exceeding 500mm).

The following companies can provide advice and costs associated with the installation of fixed (or floating) pontoons. (Their inclusion here does not constitute a recommendation from BW)

Intermarine Ltd. <http://www.intermarine.co.uk/>

Land and Water Services Ltd. enquiries@land-water.co.uk

GJP Marina Developments Ltd. enquiries@gjpmarinas.co.uk

Greenford Ltd. <http://www.greenford.ltd.uk/services.htm>

Where fingers are proposed to form moorings, the clear width between finger pontoons, allowing for adequate fendering, should be no less than 4.75m (narrow beam craft).

- The optimum freeboard should be 500mm.
- Cleats, bollards or mooring rings should be supplied and sited in positions in order that craft may be secured safely.

Materials

The most common material for the structural frame of walkways and landing stages is steel (galvanised to current British Standard) with a timber superstructure. The structural frame must be capable of supporting live loading and the design and choice of material should take full account of the site conditions, wind loadings, berthing forces and fatigue loading to minimise risk of damage to the structures and the boats moored. The desired service life for the structural frame is 60 years.

Future maintenance cost and life expectancy are major factors in choice of materials used in the superstructure. The most common materials used for decking comprise:-

- Tropical hardwood
- Tanalised softwood
- Recycled plastics

Timber should have a minimum stress grade C16. The desired service life for structural timbers is 15 years and shall comply with BS8417, Class 4 ('In contact with ground or fresh water, permanently exposed to wetting').

When specifying the working surface, consideration should be given to:-

- Hard wearing for commercial and public use
- "User friendly" for leisure users
- Dust and grit free
- Easily cleaned and well drained
- Slip resistance
- Easily replaced if damaged
- Resistant to ultra violet light
- Local environment conditions

Download expression of interest form

[Single mooring against a residential property](#)

New mooring against other private offside land (pasted below this version)

[Creating a new marina or mooring basin](#)

**APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CREATE A LONG
TERM MOORING AGAINST PRIVATE LAND:
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM**

Use this form if you have identified a potential site and would like our initial assessment before you undertake any investigations.

Note there is a different [application form](#) for a permit to moor at the end of your own residential property.

Please send **two copies** of your completed form along with **photographs of the site taken from the towpath, a map to show the location of the site, sketch plan** outlining the proposed scheme.

There is a non-refundable fee of £75 **plus VAT** towards our administration and initial assessment costs. If a site visit or further investigation is needed before we can reach a decision, additional costs will be payable and it may take longer than 6 weeks to process your application. We will let you know the likely size of delay and extra cost before proceeding with the full assessment.

Your details:

Name: _____ Company (if applicable): _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____

Telephone (day-time): _____ (mobile) _____

Email: _____

Please describe your legal interest in the land at the proposed mooring site (e.g. land owner/tenant/licensee)

Site name, nearest road, post code: _____

Grid reference eg SE 123456 _____

Name of Canal: _____

Which of the following mooring arrangements best describes your plan?

		
		Please go to www.britishwaterways.co.uk/marinadevelopment and download the right expression of interest form.

How many boats are you hoping to accommodate at the mooring?

Private pleasure boats	
Residential boats	

Signed _____ Date _____

Return the form in duplicate with the relevant information including the **location map** and **sketch**, and **cheque** payable to British Waterways for £90 to the address below. We will acknowledge with a VAT receipt.)

Mooring Sales Administrator, British Waterways, 64 Clarendon Road, Watford, WD17 1DA