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A consultation on proposed changes to the BSS requirements for hire boats opens

A consultation on proposals to modernise the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) requirements for hire boats, opens today 4 September and will run to 13 November 2015.

The suggested changes result from a risk review on behalf of the UK's inland waterway navigation authorities that involved hire operators, navigation authorities, trade and boating representatives, including people from the boat hire sector. As a part of its work, the Review considered the current BSS Standards (Parts 2-10) for hire boats that were originally published in 2002.

There are two elements to the proposals; the introduction of six new BSS hire boat requirements; and, the adoption of the BSS private boats requirements as the basis of BSS requirements for hire boats, including:

- the formal adoption for hire boats of the 23 BSS private boat requirements introduced in recent years that are additional or wider in scope than the 2002 checks. Note, the policy continues such that any checks considered as advice only for private boats, will be required passes when applied to hire boats;
- and the adoption of five clarifications or improvements of some existing BSS hire boat standards

It is expected the revised hire boat requirements will be published early next year and that most of the changes will take effect on 1 April 2016 by which time, BSS examiners will have completed familiarisation training exercises. The balance of suggested changes will be introduced if and when navigation authorities adopt the Association of Inland navigation Authorities (AINA) / British Marine (BM) / Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) *Hire Boat Code*, potentially in 2017.

The BSS is encouraging hire craft operators, people who hire boats and members of the marine trade to consider the Scheme's proposals and comment.

The final versions will be posted on the BSS website later this year as pdf files and will be available to be saved to computers or printed out.

Comments can be made in the next ten weeks using the consultation form on the BSS website, the deadline is 13 November 2015. For more information on the proposals and make comments, go to

www.boatsafetyscheme.org/hireboatregsconsultation2015

– Ends –

The BSS is a public safety project owned jointly by the Canal & River Trust, registered as a charity with the charity number 1146792, and the Environment Agency. At least 14 other navigation and harbour authorities have also adopted it. The navigation authorities' purposes for the Scheme are to help reduce the risks of fire, explosion and pollution on small craft. The BSS promotes fire safety and pollution avoidance advice to help boat owners keep themselves and their crews' safe as well as regular examination of fuel systems, gas systems, electrical systems and appliances.

The BSS examination and certificate BSS certificates have a life span of four years. Navigation authorities using the Scheme usually require a valid BSS certificate at the time of licensing, registration, toll renewal or similar. The certificate is issued to boat that is found to be compliant with all the BSS requirements relevant for that boat. These can be found at www.boatsafetyscheme.org. The compliance check is carried out by an authorized, independent practitioner known as a BSS examiner.