



9 February 2016

NR 001.16

BSS response to its consultation on proposed changes to hire boats requirements

Following the public consultation in Autumn 2015 on proposed changes to the Boat Safety Scheme for holiday and day hire boats, the BSS has published the agreed outcomes, and actions.

Most of the proposed changes had maintained stakeholder support through the consultation and so they will be implemented as set out in the consultation, with the main exception that in taking account of the weight and extent of the comments received, it has been decided to implement the revised BSS hire boat requirements from April 2017, twelve months later than proposed in the consultation.

Graham Watts, the BSS Manager said

‘We want to thank all the contributors to the consultation and to the earlier Hirer Safety Review. Your comments and views have been immensely valuable in refining and improving the existing out-dated BSS Standards’

‘Although the navigation authorities are reasonably pushing back the implementation date, because risks have been exposed by the review, hire operators are urged to adopt the new requirements as soon as practical in the time leading up to the implementation date. The BSS will publish the detailed checks as soon as we can to support this recommendation. ‘

Existing 2002 non-private BSS certificates on hire boats will continue to be recognised until they expire, but this is in the expectation that all hire craft will meet the new revised requirements from April 2017.

Other items that raised comments in the consultation were for a) crew area and limitation labels; b) for the slip resistant surfaces on those outside crew areas and c) for signs or indicators of the area where there is a risk of being knocked overboard by an uncontrolled swing of a narrowboat’s tiller arm.

Regarding crew areas and labels the BSS wanted to clarify that ‘crew areas’ would be defined by the hire boat operator and that any signage is there to support the handover process by acting as a reminder of the instructions given while the boat is out on hire. The role of the BSS Examiner will be to assess the condition of the sign to ensure it remains in place and legible.

Concerns were raised regarding the extent of the slip-resistant surface and the need for an objective assessment of the provision and the surface treatment condition. The extent of the slip-resistant surface will be established by the hire operator when determining the crew area. Detailed information on the checking procedures will be published as soon as possible and the BSS remains confident that any finalised check will allow for both, consistent application at BSS examination and for operators to easily self-assess their boats for compliance.

The BSS accepted that there needed to be clarification that the requirement regarding tiller arm swing warning would only apply to narrowboats and would not apply to yachts. The BSS will also ensure the alternative compliance option for a warning sign in sight of the helm position is clearly promoted as it appears that the choice may have been overlooked by many respondents.

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Critically, the application of both proposed requirements on crew area labels and slip resistant surfaces will depend on the outcomes from a forthcoming consultation by the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) / British Marine (BM) / Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) on their proposals regarding the review and implementation of their *Hire Boat Code*, it is expected later this year and with the outcomes made available soon afterwards.

The BSS will be publishing the new and amended checks in detail in April 2016 on its website. It will be asking navigation authorities and trade associations to help make the hire boat operators they are in contact with aware of the new information.

These are the details in brief. A full response to the comments made can be seen on this link <http://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/about-us/hirer-safety-review/hire-boat-requirements-consultation/>

The BSS can be contacted for technical support by any hire boat operator seeking information to help move their fleet to full compliance www.boatsafetyscheme.org/contact-us/ where questions, photos, diagrams and supporting documents can be uploaded to the BSS website

- ENDS -

NOTES

The current BSS requirements for non-private boats can be viewed here <http://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/boat-examination/non-private-boats/>

The proposals affect all hire boats operating on waterways that have adopted the BSS. For the purposes of the consultation, hire boat means, any hired powered boat such as weekly and day hire craft:

- let or hired under an arrangement, whether or not on a pre-contract basis;
- the subject of a bare boat charter arrangement;
- the subject of any form of third-party managed shared-use arrangement (including timeshare or shared ownership).

The term 'hire boat' does not include:

- privately owned or managed boats for leisure, pleasure and residential owner-occupation;
- boats operating commercially with a skipper or crew, and which carry passengers;
- workboats;
- emergency service boats and rescue boats.
- hotel boats,
- boats let as residences or longer term accommodation

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 certification have a life span of four years. Navigation authorities using the Scheme usually require valid BSS certification at the time of licensing, registration, toll renewal or similar. The certification 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.