



BOAT SAFETY SCHEME
Go boating - Stay safe

BSS Annual Report 2024-25



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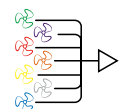
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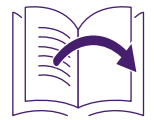
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Summary



Section 1



BSS General Manager's Foreword

Boat Safety Scheme Limited (BSS) is a public safety initiative delivering safer boating on Britain's inland waterways and supporting the legal duties of their navigation authorities.

This year marks a significant milestone for the Scheme, as it became a limited company.

After nearly 30 years, the Scheme has evolved, with new parties and stakeholders.

Following a review with the principal participating navigation & harbour authorities and AINA, the decision was made to incorporate a new company limited by guarantee, to clarify the relationships and formalise the existing decision-making structures resulting in greater transparency on decision-making.

Explanatory note on the governance arrangements from April 2024.

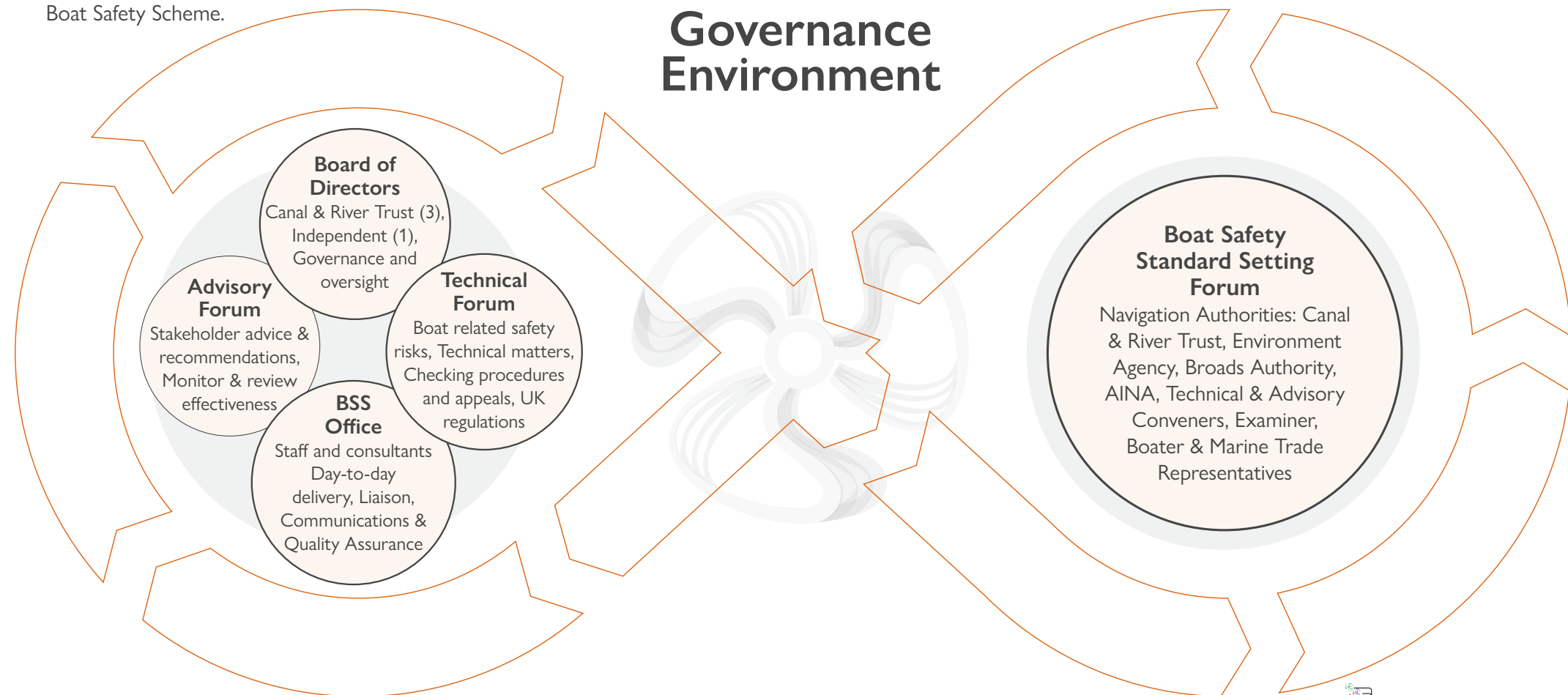
The Canal & River Trust, Environment Agency, Broads Authority, and the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities announced some governance changes to the Boat Safety Scheme that saw it become a public safety initiative run as a not-for-profit company from 1 April 2024. As a company limited by guarantee, Boat Safety Scheme Limited has been incorporated to take on the work of the original Boat Safety Scheme.

The Scheme's structure and intent remains unchanged, with all income returned into the running costs and continuing the safety improvements brought about by the Scheme since its inception in 1995.

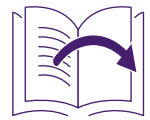
Boating customers of the various navigation and harbour authorities won't see any change to their existing BSS Certification or boat licence/registration processes because of these changes.

The current Boat Safety Standards will continue to apply in the same form - with current BSS Certificates remaining valid until their existing renewal date. Boat Safety Scheme Limited will also continue to regulate the training and accreditation of BSS Examiners in the same way as the original Scheme. The governance change brings greater transparency on decision-making and clarity to the relationships between the existing stakeholders, please see explanatory graphic below.

Governance Environment



Section 1



BSS General Manager's Year in Focus

As we reflect on the achievements of 2024-25, we extend our deepest gratitude to our dedicated community of 159 registered Examiners and the numerous stakeholders who contribute to the Scheme.

Together, they navigated the changes and challenges of our new status with professionalism and a shared commitment to safety.

Their hard work and commitment have ensured that just under 22,000 examinations were conducted across the UK's inland waterways this year, safeguarding our boating community and upholding the highest safety standards.

Each examination not only represents a step toward safer waterways but also reflects the tireless efforts of our team, who bring expertise, diligence, and a shared commitment to public safety.

We thank every Examiner for their invaluable role in maintaining these standards and supporting the ongoing evolution of the Boat Safety Scheme.

Inflation continued to challenge us into 2024-25, however prudent financial management and revised service agreements enabled us to adjust and rebalance costs while maintaining high service standards.

Our development of new safety communications such as those concerning the Morco Gas Water Heater safety alert and lithium-ion batteries has been bolstered by collaboration with London Fire Brigade, National Fire Chiefs Council, and Fire Industry Association.

These evolving risks underscore the importance of our consultative approach and the agility of BSS to adapt and respond.

As we look ahead, we do so with renewed purpose, strong foundations, and a dedicated team.

Again we extend our appreciation to all Examiners, staff, partners and navigation and harbour authorities for supporting the Scheme's mission of safer waterways for all.



In conclusion, our new structure enables us to further strengthen our partnerships, streamline our processes, and reinforce our commitment to continuous improvement and boater safety across the UK.



Section 2



BSS in 2024-25

Introduction

BSS, is a public safety initiative run as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee.

The company's objectives are to support navigation and harbour authorities, to help reduce the risk of boat fires, explosions, carbon monoxide or pollution from boats harming visitors to the inland waterways, the waterways' workforce, other waterways users and property on or alongside the waterways. These objectives are met through the following activities:

- Introduce, maintain, review and develop a set of Boat Safety Standards for adoption by the authorities, supported by a prescribed series of BSS Examination Checking Procedures to assess compliance with those Standards
- Actively facilitate and encourage all inland navigation and statutory harbour authorities to adopt the recommended Boat Safety Standards
- Educate boat owners and users about the Standards and promote additional safety and environmental risk management and improve safety behaviours
- Design, deliver and maintain a quality assured training, registration and authorising programme for the registration of BSS Examiners to carry out the BSS Examination Checking Procedures. The BSS Examiners undertake BSS Examinations and issue Certifications in a register when a boat is compliant
- Provide research and development programmes to support the BSS risk management and quality management processes that each fundamentally underpin the work of the Scheme.



Ongoing challenges

The attraction of owning a boat to use on inland waterways has not diminished.

Through our customer service process, we continue to encounter evidence of many novices with modest experience, little training, and limited boat-specific risk management knowledge.

Research continued into the risks that the emerging technologies of hydrogen powered equipment and lithium-ion batteries potential could present.

We engaged with key organisations in the marine and fire safety sectors.



As part of our ongoing commitment to boater safety, we at the BSS actively supported the promotion of the Morco water heater product recall.

We worked to raise awareness among the boating community and ensured all BSS Examiners were fully briefed on the issue.

During the course of routine examinations, five recalled Morco water heaters were identified, helping to mitigate potential risks and reinforce the importance of swift action.



Section 2



Boat Safety Scheme Advisory Forum (BSSAF)

Overview

The BSSAF provides advice and recommendations to the Directors on all matters concerned with the impact and operation of the Standards and the Examination Checking Procedures.

It comprises of stakeholder representatives from navigation authorities, BSS practitioner bodies, the marine industry, and boat user organisations.

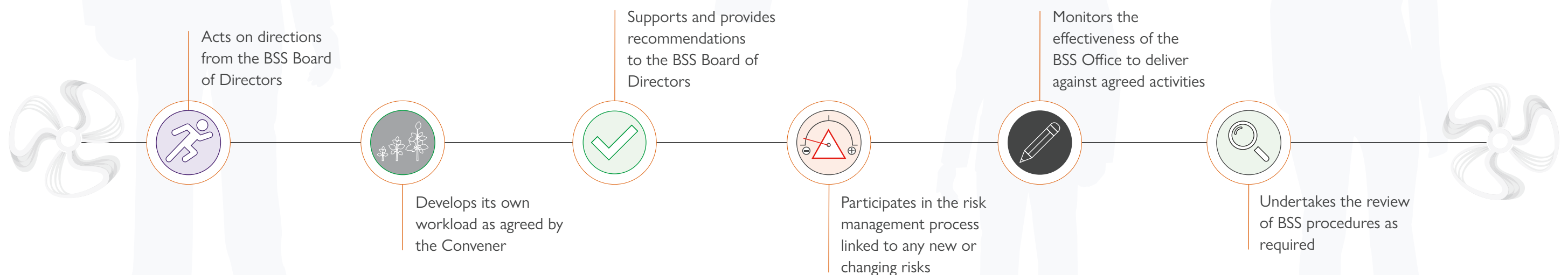
Its purpose is to ensure that key assessments and recommendations are effective and balance the responsibilities and needs of, and meet the expectations of stakeholders.

The BSSAF considers risk review and assessment papers presented to it from the BSS Technical Forum (BSSTF) concerning any boat-related risks.

Additionally, the BSSAF analyses BSSTF reviews of individual Examinations that may raise wider issues for the application of the Standards or Examination Checking Procedures from the perspective of stakeholder groups.

Moreover, it reviews BSS operations and looks to identify future trends impacting on the Scheme's risk management processes.

In 2024-25 the BSSAF started with an Extraordinary Meeting update on the Scheme, its Membership and succession planning, during which the Terms of Reference and Members Code were reviewed and accepted.



Following a nationwide recruitment campaign, a new Forum Convener was appointed in mid-March 2025 when they attended their first meeting as BSSAF Convener designate. We welcome him to the BSS in his new role, to act as a facilitator and provide effective leadership of the BSSAF.



Section 3



BSS 2024-25 financial summary

The Scheme operates on a non-profit basis with any surplus or deficit being addressed.

Income is generated by Examiner subscription fees, the sale of Certifications and training fees which cover the costs of the Scheme’s administration and crucial technical professional

support. The fees for training are based on the costs of running the programmes.

The summary for the financial year 2024-25 as per management accounts appear in the table below.

For further information the full audited company accounts should be consulted.

Financial summary as per management accounts

Accounts	Plan	Actual
External Income	913,130.00	939,969.33
Payroll Costs	(359,766.38)	(359,791.77)
Staff Related Costs	(26,794.41)	(28,530.42)
Operational Costs	(10,412.00)	(6,828.79)
Premises Costs*	(1,556.07)	(1,520.94)
Office Costs**	(42,285.25)	(39,757.86)
Professional Fees	(338,531.78)	(350,851.17)
Non-Operational Costs	(121,661.77)	(121,069.07)
Overall Expenditure	(901,007.66)	(908,331.22)
Total	12,122.34	31,638.11
Corporation tax payable		(8306.00)
End of year balance		23,602.11

* Premises costs includes mobile telephones and other utilities.
** Office costs includes meeting costs, printing, postage, subscriptions, computer costs.

The 2024-25 business plan was created from certificate sales history and the consequences of the four-year cyclic event of the pandemic.

Certification sales were 4.78% higher than planned. The net result was an operating surplus of £23,602.11.



The 2024-25 Business Plan was delivered successfully. Sales were in line with Examination-led expectations and controllable costs were in line with the predicted and planned activity of the Scheme.

Section 4

BSS in Figures

The BSS is proud to support the majority of the UK's navigation and harbour authorities.

As a result, we operate on over three quarters of UK waterways by length.

A valid BSS Certification allows a boat to be registered with navigation authorities across Britain.

Whether it's cruising the inland waterways around Lowestoft, the most eastern point of the UK to the canals of mid Wales, or from Inverness down to the waterways of Devon and Somerset, boaters, other visitors, and the surrounding environment of these navigations are protected by the BSS.

Approximately 90,000 boats are subject to a BSS Certification.

The types of craft include narrowboats, broad beam, glass reinforced plastic both for private use and hire, and other commercial and community boats such as workboats, small passenger boats, floating retailers, offices, marshalling and safety boats, galleries, and theatres.

During 2024-25 there were **159** registered Examiners.

In an average year there are:



BSS Examinations

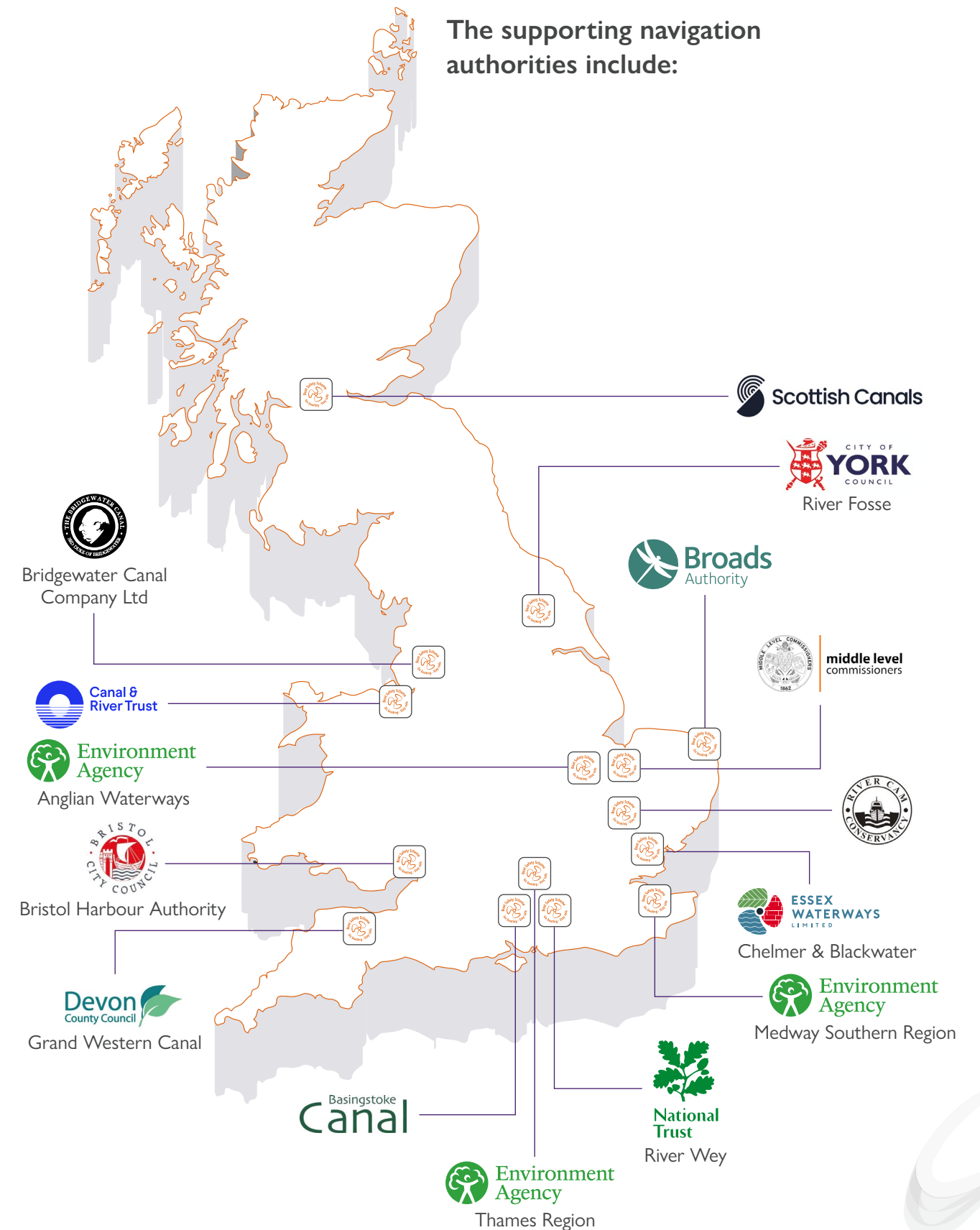


BSS Certifications



of BSS Examinations between March-June

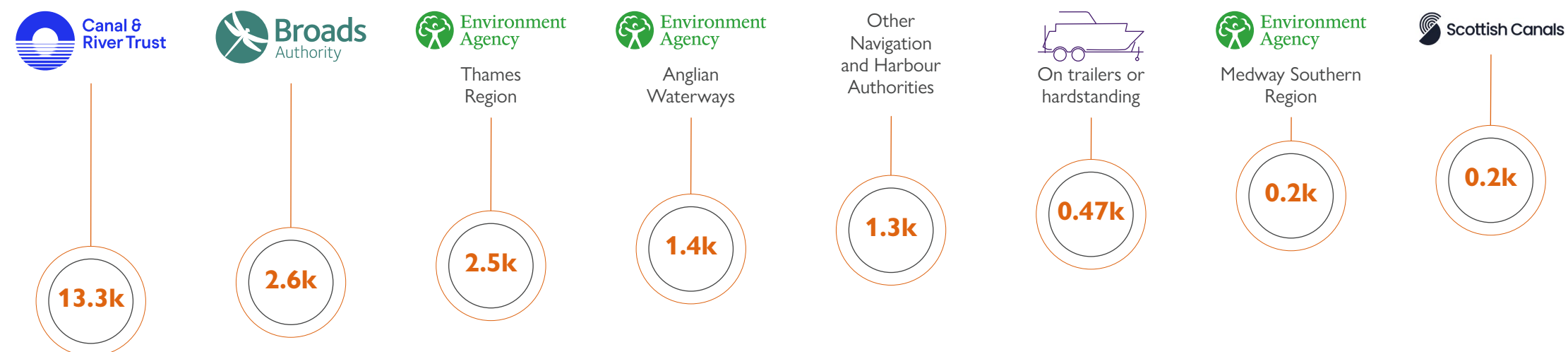
The supporting navigation authorities include:



Section 4

BSS in Figures

Numbers of BSS Examinations undertaken with navigation authorities during 2024-25.



In 2024-25:

- Overall, just under 22,000 Examinations were carried out
- 14,989 Certifications were issued, of these:
 - 92.8% were privately-owned boats
 - 4.7% hire boats
 - 2.5% non-private boats (for example, work boats, ferries, small passenger boats etc)
- The advice check for under ventilation (linked to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning) was not complied with on 2,302 boats at the point of BSS Certification
- Examiners made 41,715 comments against non-compliant checks
- Over 248 boats were missing the vital protection of all electrical circuits passing through an AC consumer unit
- 382 boats did not meet the check for 'means of escape' meaning that boat crews could struggle or be trapped in an emergency
- 41.7k comments to boat owners were recorded in 6.9k non-compliant result Examinations
- The most common mandatory non-compliance was: Are batteries secure against excessive movement in any direction? 2,331 boats had loose batteries and risked catching fire
- The second most common non-compliance was: Are battery terminals correctly insulated or protected? 1,516 had an issue with sub-standard wiring
- The third most common check not complied with was: Are the correct number of suitable portable fire extinguishers provided, and do they have the correct combined fire ratings? 1,387 boats were found to be lacking in this area.



In conclusion, our commitment to safety saw just under 22,000 Examinations.

These resulted in 41.7k comments against non-compliant checks.

Section 5



BSS Quality Assurance and Training

Examiner Development Programme Quality Assurance

The Scheme has four Quality Assurance Assessors, and in 2024-25 they achieved **40** active assessments.

BSS Quality Assurance Assessments are a supportive two-way review process for BSS Examiners, which have two formats.

 Desktop Assessment (DtA) where the Assessor reviews a minimum of three Examinations undertaken by an Examiner over the previous 12 months, including all notes, records, and reports, and is designed to help Examiners evaluate their Examination recording and reporting activities.

In 2024-25 there were **40** Examiners quality assessed in the DtA support programme.

 Field Assessments are intended to be an on-boat review of practises and processes, helping Examiners to ensure their observations, Examination methods and interpretation of BSS Checks are consistent with the published BSS Examination Checking Procedures. This programme is in development to be rolled out during the next financial year.

The assessments are a positive process giving Examiners valuable opportunities to have constructive discussions with the Assessor including feedback, raising queries, and making suggestions.

Personal Improvement Plans (PIPs) can be assigned to Examiners as part of Quality Assurance Assessments. PIPs are used to set performance improvement activities for Examiners.



The Quality Assurance Programme in 2024-25 highlights the Scheme's commitment to supporting Examiners with useful feedback, fair monitoring, and clear improvement plans where needed.

Year on year there was a 48% increase of DtA's completed.

The continued success of the DtA programme is helping to improve both the consistency and quality of Examinations.

We are designing a Field Assessment programme to replicate the DtA's success.



Section 6



Principal Projects 2024-25

Training/onboarding representatives of nominating bodies for the Standard Setting Forum

Provision of training to navigation and harbour authority nominated representatives on boat safety standards and the application of the associated Examination checking procedures.

Field App

To drive efficiency, we are developing a mobile first Examination app to enable paperless Examinations for the first time in the history of the Scheme.

The app will be designed for use both online and offline, it will allow Examiners to enter data directly whilst in the field, streamlining the examination process and improving overall accuracy.

Additionally, it is envisaged to improve performance, security, and data management, laying a strong foundation for future developments.

Pre-development work on the app, including technical scoping and user journey planning, is now complete, with the app set for release towards the end of 2025.

LPG Training and Assessment Programme 2025

As part of the BSS Continuing Professional Development, all Examiners must be reassessed every five years on their LPG testing competency.

In 2025, we will deliver an updated City & Guilds Assured LPG Training and Assessment Programme to support Examiners in meeting this requirement.

A new suite of online learning material will be available which will be updated in line with the latest processes and procedures. Assessments and training will then take place at the Energy Training Centre at Evesham College.



Training navigation authority workforce on incident investigation

The BSS provided circa 24 Environment Agency staff on the investigation of boat-related incidents and investigation training.

Non-Private Boat Requirements

Work to update the checking Requirements for Non-Private Boats has continued this year. This ongoing project aims to deliver a more modern and fit-for-purpose set of requirements.

Outcomes from the Marine Accident Investigation Branch MAIB report into a fatal incident on a hire boat on the Broads

Following the MAIB report into a tragic fatal incident on a hire boat on the Norfolk Broads, the BSS has been working to better understand and address the risks associated with dual-helm station control systems. This year we visited three major hire operators and surveyed ten operators in total, identifying four types of helm systems currently in use: fully electronic, semi-electronic, bespoke electromechanical, and fully mechanical. Encouragingly, most operators surveyed had already started making modifications in line with MAIB recommendations and provided timelines for full compliance.

Next, we will work closely with AINA and British Marine on proposals to strengthen the Hire Boat Code, ensuring it reflects the MAIB's safety recommendations. This will include developing updated ECP checks and contributing to planned revisions of the Code.

The British Marine working group acting on the MAIB recommendations kept the BSS informed about any working outcomes from the group

BSS representatives visited hire boat companies in Norfolk researching the various solutions that are being utilised by operators in the region.

The MAIB were updated on our progress to date.

Quality Management System Review

This year we began a full review of the BSS Quality Management System (QMS), marking the first step towards our longer-term aim of working towards ISO 9001 certification, the recognised standard for good quality management.

We took a close look at all our current processes and procedures.

The review also highlighted areas where we can make improvements and helped us start preparing our systems for future audits. This work has been an important part of our commitment to improving how we operate and continuing to provide a consistent, reliable service.

Section 6

BSS Priorities

App next steps - the future

The planning and development of our dedicated BSS app for Examiners has progressed significantly, with a delivery team now appointed to lead its production.

The app will equip Examiners with the digital tools they need to work effectively, even in offline environments, enabling them to deliver services to their customers more efficiently. For the BSS, the primary benefit will be improved quality assurance, which will enhance the accuracy and efficiency of our Examination process.

Lithium-ion Batteries (LiB)

In 2024-25 the BSS presented its first Risk Review and Assessment Paper (RRAP) on LiB safety on boats.

The 44-page document assessed risks linked to the use on boats of small portable devices including but not limited to mobile phones, torches, vapes etc; large portable items including e-bikes, e-scooters, power tools, e-foils and rechargeable watertoys; installed LiBs powering propulsion and domestic/boat systems.

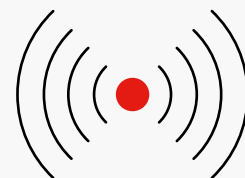
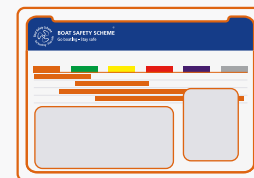
The RRAP noted the risk profile concerning the use of LiB in boats will change over time, especially as the sector's knowledge, experience and understanding grows. Also, the development to ever higher energy densities, will affect any risk appreciation.

The 2024-25 RRAP set out future tasks for the BSS concerning LiB and lithium powered rechargeable equipment which the BSS will be prioritising in 2025-26.

Smoke alarm requirements

Building the evidence to support the proposals for mandatory smoke alarms on boats of all classes, including data from National Fire Chiefs Council statistics and fire-safety industry information will be used to support a consultation process.

Following the governance changes being implemented in April 2024, the BSS will be seeking navigation and harbour authority support for a consultation, run by the BSS on behalf of the authorities' Boat Safety Standards Setting Forum.



Customer Service

We continue to prioritise the response times to conclude customer requests and queries by over ninety percent since 2021.

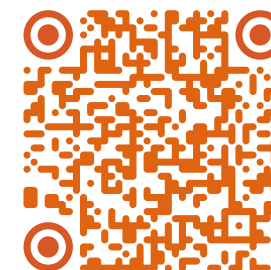
BSS Cases: During 2024-25, 1,478 new cases were opened, 1307 of these cases closed. There were 434 certificate queries and 452 technical (i.e. about our requirements and checks) cases.

Since the introduction of a Customer Service Officer in December 2021 their inputs and contributions have continued to result in a reduction of the time to close a case from 100 days to less than 19 in 2022-23 and further reducing to 6.3 in 2023-24. This has increased to 9.9 in 2024-25 due to staff vacancies for over half the year, although the average of certificate queries and technical cases is 6.5.

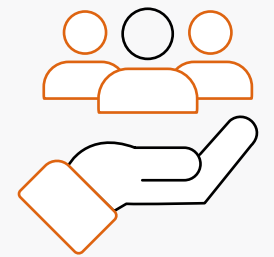
The BSS Office successfully recruited two technical team members to replace most of those who had left and retired. By utilising these staff members, technical consultants and the deployment of a contract telephone answering and outbound calling, we are continuing to improve our customer service provision to ensure accuracy, proficiency and consistency by the implementation of further robust processes.

BSS Risk Management Process (RMP)

The draft RMP was reviewed by the stakeholder forums and the board of directors who approved it in January 2025.



For more information please click, scan or type the following URL into your browser:
www.boatsafetyscheme.org/risk-management-process



Section 6

 Boat Safety Scheme Technical Forum (BSSTF)

BSSTF is the specialist stakeholder forum making recommendations to the BSSAF concerning issues of a technical nature.

The BSSTF has representatives from boat owners, BSS Examiners, trade groups, marine surveyors and the navigation authorities.

During 2024-25 the BSSTF has continued its routine workload of reviewing minor changes to the BSS Examination Checking Procedures, risk assessments and Examination appeals.

In addition, significant activities for the BSSTF included:

-  The Lithium-ion battery safety on boats Risk Review and Assessment (which has fed into new BSS Safety awareness initiatives for boaters), and
-  A review of the feasibility of the BSS introducing new Requirements for hire boats concerning dual helm controls (following the MAIB report on the Diamond Emblem incident).

Additional Forum activities in 2024-25 included:

-  Reviewing minor changes to the BSS Core Examination Checking Procedures
-  Fundamental Review of the BSS 2002 Standards/Examination Checking Procedures for non-private boats
-  Fundamental Review of the BSS Core Examination Checking Procedures Parts 3 and 4 (electrical systems and propulsion)
-  Higher voltage DC systems
-  Review of the BSS Risk Management Process
-  BSS Position Statement concerning how the BSS sits with the UK's gas safety regime
-  Portable petrol tanks with capacities over 30-litres.

Technical Forum

Organisations	Sector
 BOAT SAFETY SCHEME Convener	Independent
 British Marine (1)	Marine Trade
 British Marine (2)	Marine Trade
Boat Safety Scheme Examiners	Practitioners
Surveyors Group Representative	Practitioners
 RYA Royal Yachting Association (RYA)	User Organisations
 AWCC Association of Waterway Cruising Clubs (AWCC)	User Organisations
 NABO National Association of Boat Owners (NABO)	User Organisations
 INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION Inland Waterways Association (IWA)	User Organisations
 ASSOCIATION OF INLAND NAVIGATION AUTHORITIES Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA)	Navigation Authorities

Contributors

Contributors	Category
 BOAT SAFETY SCHEME BSS General Manager	Non voting
 BOAT SAFETY SCHEME BSS Technical & Quality Manager	Non voting
 BOAT SAFETY SCHEME BSS Support Executive	Non voting
 BOAT SAFETY SCHEME BSS Lead Quality Control Assessor (Consultant)	Non voting
 BOAT SAFETY SCHEME BSS Quality Control Assessor (Consultant)	Non voting

Section 7

 BSS Incident and Risk Database

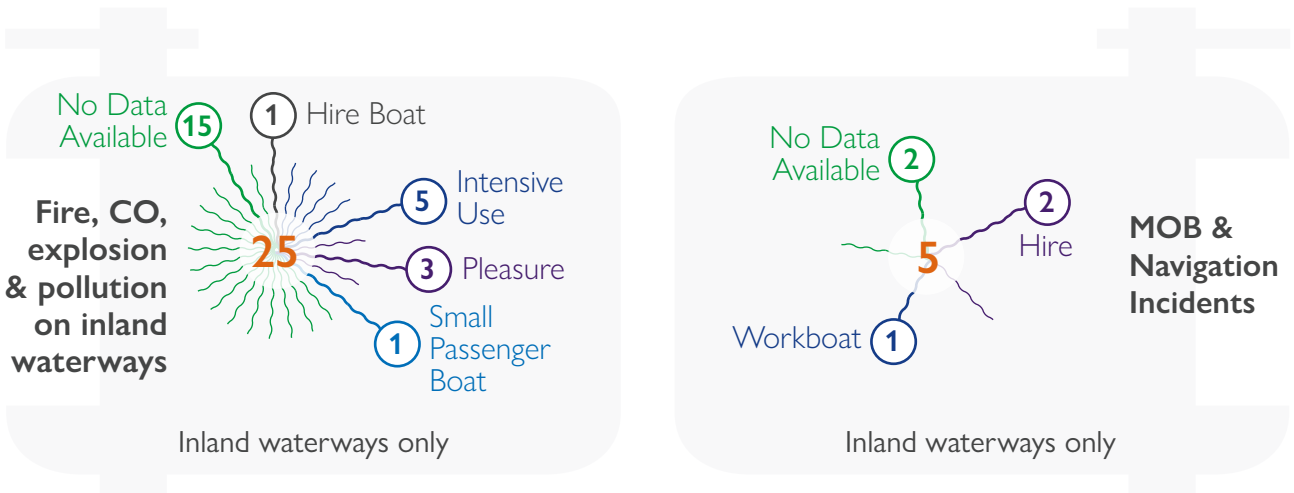
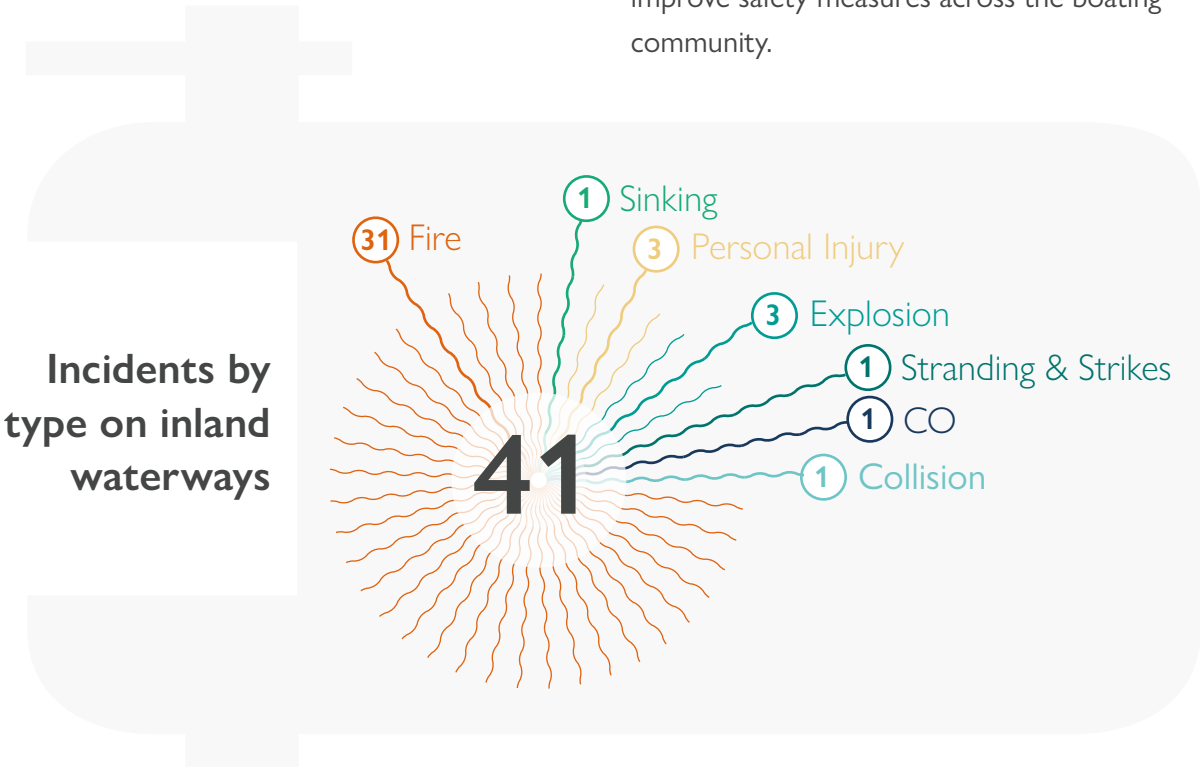
Small Craft Incident Data recorded by the BSS between January 2024 and March 2025

The BSS records incidents involving fires, explosions, and carbon monoxide poisoning on boats on all UK and Irish inland and coastal waters.

We analyse these incidents to identify lessons learned and risk factors, which are then used to assist our committees and navigation authorities in reviewing BSS Requirements.

This ensures we can provide the most reliable advice and guidance to boat owners, helping them protect both themselves and their crews.

In addition, with a focus on Hire Boat and Non-Private Boat Requirements, we record incidents such as groundings, collisions, sinkings, man overboard (MOB) events, and personal injury accidents related to boat design and fittings. This data supports our efforts to continuously improve safety measures across the boating community.



Fire, Explosion, CO or Pollution on all Inland Waterways

Cause - Equipment

Inboard Engine	Outboard Engine	Rechargeable Device	Solid Fuel Stove	No Data Available	No Equipment (fire spread & deliberate)
1	1	1	3	11	8

Record of boats involved

Fire, Explosion, CO or Pollution on all Inland Waterways

Cause and actions linked to Equipment

Operating Error	No Date Available	Flammable Vapours	Exhaust/Flue/Chimney Heat	Exhaust Fumes	Electrical	Deliberate	Conflagration
1	9	2	2	1	2	1	7

Record of boats involved

Cause Equipment: ■Inboard Engine ■Lithium Battery ■N/A ■No Data Available ■Outboard Engine ■Solid Fuel Stove

 **Looking forward:** The BSS will make increasing effort to recover incident information from navigation authorities and other organisations that hold records. All the anonymised data is used to feed the risk management process and aid our advice and guidance communications so that we can help people stay safe.

Section 8

Summary

The BSS delivered another year of high-quality programmes

In March 2024 we launched Boat Safety Scheme Limited that serves a navigation authority led Standard Setting forum.

In a year of change, our team, with several new members, and our newly constituted stakeholder groups have been finding their feet and plotting a route forward

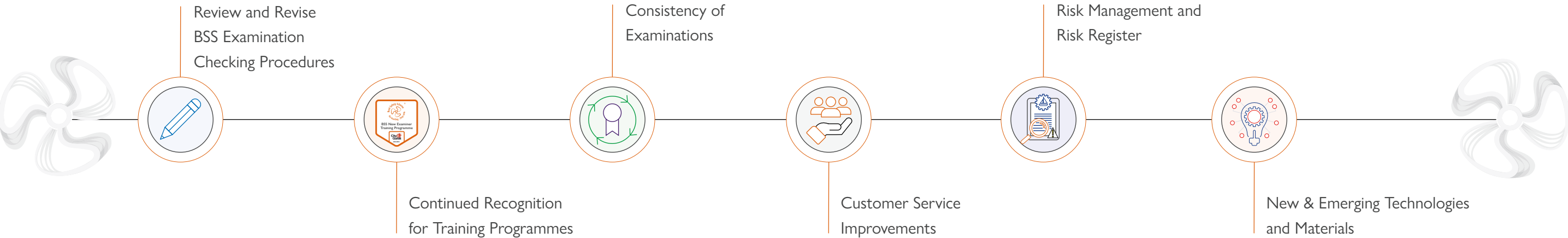
Our daily operations, from training courses to Examiner consistency, customer service, and information delivery, are all guided by a commitment to continuous improvement.

The BSS approach to risk management is rooted in maintaining a dynamic risk register and having a continual review and assessment process.

It is this that guides and supports decisions to introduce, amend or withdraw Requirements and Checks.

The pace of change and emerging technologies, fuels, materials and research, bring new challenges and promotes a dynamic risk management process.

We look forward to embracing this ever-changing environment and being proactive in reducing risks to navigation authority staff, nearby communities, and visitors to these unique and treasured waterways.



 In conclusion we enjoyed an extremely successful year and welcomed new members to the team. Our key achievements included:

-  Overseeing the conducting of 22,000 Examinations
-  Successfully delivering our 2024-25 Business Plan with income and costs in line with our expected predictions
-  Improving customer service

-  Building on our key future priorities
-  Maintaining safety records and analysis
-  Launching as a limited company



BOAT SAFETY SCHEME[®]

Go boating - Stay safe



Boat Safety Scheme Contact Details

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w: boatsafetyscheme.org/contact-us

The Boat Safety Scheme Limited is a public safety initiative, run as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 15501423. Registered office address % National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port South Pier Road Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH65 4FW.