

# PRESS RELEASE

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## NATIONAL BOAT COUNT 2024

The Canal & River Trust's National Boat Count, conducted in the spring each year, has seen a 1.4% drop in boat numbers on its network across England and Wales. It also saw a 1.2% increase in unlicensed boats, meaning licence compliance now stands at 91.8%.

Nationally, 32,602 boats were recorded on the Trust's enforceable waters, down by 479\*. This is the first reduction recorded since the formation of the Trust with the drop in boat numbers most significant in the London & South East region, with 512 fewer boats than last year.

Similarly, the increase in unlicensed boats was most prominent in London & South East, where the caseload and backlog in the legal system has been exacerbated by vacancies in the local team.

Across the network, the total number of boats with a home mooring has decreased by 3.7% while the total number of continuously cruising boats has increased by 4.9%.

Matthew Symonds, head of customer service support at Canal & River Trust, said: "Boating remains popular but our national count paints a picture of the challenges facing many on the water. The overall drop in licence compliance continues the post-pandemic trend, with the cost-of-living increases being a challenge for many in society.

"The reduction in home moorers and increase in continuous cruisers may also point towards the wider economic environment.

"We do everything we can to support boaters who are struggling to stay on the water, and our boat licence customer support team and dedicated boater welfare team work with boaters to find solutions, including accessing available benefits for those living afloat on low incomes. We urge boaters who are struggling to talk to us as soon as possible.

"The income from licence fees represents about 11% of the income we have each year to invest in keeping the canal network open and navigable. I'd like to thank boaters for their continued

Canal & River Trust, National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port, South Pier Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire

**E:** [press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk) **W:** [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk) **Twitter:** [@CanalRiverTrust](https://twitter.com/CanalRiverTrust)

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support as we face up to the challenges of an ageing canal network exposed to ever more damaging effects of extreme weather brought about by climate change.”

Despite the boat licence customer support team’s best efforts to resolve matters, on occasion, when all other avenues have been exhausted, the Trust takes action to remove boats. In the last financial year, 106 unlicensed, including many abandoned, boats were removed from the network.

\* The National Boat Count is a physical sighting of boats carried out by the Trust’s towpath teams during March. Where boat numbers have changed nationally, it means that these boats are no longer on the Trust’s waters. Where boat numbers have changed in a region, it could also mean that a boat has cruised out of one region into another.

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**For further media requests please contact:**

Fran Read, Canal & River Trust

m 07796 610 427 e [fran.read@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:fran.read@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

#### Notes to Editors

Area	Compliance 2024	2023 boat numbers where CRT licences are required	2024 boat numbers where CRT licences are required	Year-on-year % change in boat numbers	2024 all boat numbers (inc private marinas etc)
East Midlands	94.5%	5197	5321	2.4%	6275
London & South East	82.1%	7239	6727	-7.1%	6770
North West	93.9%	5981	5979	0.0%	6091
Wales & South West	94.5%	3664	3680	0.4%	4438
West Midlands	95.6%	7724	7531	-2.5%	8258
Yorkshire & NE	91.9%	3276	3364	2.7%	3391
	91.8%	33081	32602	-1.4%	35223