

Devon and Severn IFCA News

Exeter Port Authority Issue Advice for Mariners

Covid -19: Recreational use of the river and canal is not essential and should be avoided.



On the 27th March 2020, Grahame Forshaw MBE MNI, the Harbour Master of the Exeter Port Authority, issued the following advice:

Dear River and Canal Users,

Following on from my Local Notice to Mariners (03/20) issued on Thursday the 26th of March we have had a number of questions asked to the ports staff and I wanted to clarify my views.

Yesterday, Parliament passed new legislation which can be accessed at the link below.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/129/contents/made>

My interpretation of the current situation and the new Act is as follows;

The Home Secretary has new powers to request port closure but currently the Government is keen to keep ports open for freight and other limited commercial activity only. We will be informed and in turn advise you if this changes.

As far as recreational use of the River or Canal is concerned e.g. (use of leisure vessels, kite surfing, paddle boarding etc), **it is not essential** and those who break the new laws could be fined for doing so. Use of the River and Canal at this time for recreational purposes could put the ports staff and emergency services at unnecessary risk. The guidance I have received is that exercise should be done from home. The inference being that the exercise period should be short and not involve driving to another location.

The public should monitor [gov.uk communications](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-advice-for-businesses) as there could be more detailed advice to follow. It is understood that harbour staff and those commercial employees who conduct essential activities will be allowed to continue travelling to and from work to carry out work that cannot be done from home.

Guidance on the need for the public to attend to their own craft to ensure that they do not become the cause of an incident (sinking, oil spill or other pollution) is less clear. My interpretation of the law is that owners should contact Exeter Port Authority if they have a concern about the safety of their vessel. Owners should only consider visiting their vessels for safety critical checks, once consulting with the Exeter Port Authority by email: epa@exeter.gov.uk or phone: 07864 958658.

Exeter Port Authority manage the Exe estuary, and the position from the Harbour Master is clear. There should be **no** activity on the water except for commercial or safety related instances. Ultimately those seen to be breaking the law will be responsible for their actions. If

you do make the decision to go out on the water, please take a good look at the detail in the [new legislation](#) as you remain responsible for your own actions.

Please remember that there are far fewer people out on the water including those who normally monitor the River and Canal, report incidents and get involved in rescuing those in distress.

So, if your activity is essential please wear life jackets/buoyancy aids and consider doing it when there are people around.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/129/contents/made>

Stay home. Protect the NHS. Save Lives.

Grahame Forshaw MBE MNI

Harbour Master
Exeter Port Authority