

Hello and Welcome to the Upper Medway Navigation Newsletter!



Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of the Inside Navigation Newsletter

We are delighted to introduce this edition of the Inside Navigation newsletter. It's a chance for us to keep you informed of exciting new projects and an opportunity to showcase the marvelous Medway through the eyes of the navigation team. We plan to publish these annually and we would be delighted to hear your feedback.

Introduction from the Waterways Manager, Charlotte Amor

I am very proud of the Medway Navigation team's achievements this season. This newsletter provides information about how we are striving to deliver excellent customer service to river users on the Medway. I hope that the team's dedication and hard work has been evident to our customers. The support from our local community has been invaluable, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration to make the Medway navigation experience even better for everyone.



Community involvement has been a cornerstone of this season's success. The team has worked closely with stakeholders, local councils, community groups, and volunteers to promote river activities and maintain the waterways. Our collaborative efforts have not only improved the navigation experience, but also strengthened community ties. However, the team remains vigilant about potential threats such as anti-social behaviour and safety risks, as well as taking opportunities to maintain and invest in our assets. Addressing these issues is a priority to ensure continued success.

Strategic goals for the upcoming season focus on recruitment of new team members, improving infrastructure, enhancing communication, and promoting green initiatives. With these goals in mind, we aspire to continue our success and provide our customers with a great experience on the river Medway.



Let us know!

What do you think of the newsletter? If you have any suggestions, comments or information to share, please contact us via email:

allington.lock@environment-agency.gov.uk

Boat Registration

Have you renewed your boat registration?

It's time to renew your boat registration for 2025 to 2026. The quickest way to renew your registration is to call 03708 506 506. Renewals sent by post will take longer to process and for you to receive confirmation of your registration.

2024 Boat Registration Compliance

Boat registration charges play a crucial role in maintaining safe and open waterways for both recreational and commercial boaters. These charges also fund essential services that boaters rely on.

In June 2024, The Navigation Compliance team conducted comprehensive surveys of the entire navigation and all marinas through a combination of boat, foot and car patrols.

While there is still work to be done, we remain confident that we will achieve a compliance rate of 94%.



Customer satisfaction survey

We're introducing optional satisfaction surveys for calls to our Customer Contact Centre. Before connecting to an adviser, you'll hear a message asking if you'd like to complete a survey after your call. This helps us gather valuable feedback to improve our services. We encourage all boating customers to participate when renewing your registration this year.

Boat Registration in facts and figures

- **£46,249.73** The amount we have successfully recovered in registration fees. This includes payments from several serial multi-year offender who have settled backdated fees from 2021 onwards.
- **152** The amount of reminder letters and emails we have sent to the registered keepers of unregistered vessels, notifying them of their registration status.
- **22** The number of removal notices were issued to unknown or abandoned boats, giving.
- Owners 28 days to comply with registration requirements or remove their vessels. Failure to do so will result in the removal and disposal of the vessel by our team.
- **84.1%** We are currently achieving a compliance rate of 84.1%. We are working towards achieving 94% compliance.



Failure to register could result in your boat being seized and sold to recoup our costs.

A week in the life of a Navigation Duty Officer

In this edition of Inside Navigation we're introducing you to David Norey, who has been with the Environment Agency since 2019. David's previous career was in the Metropolitan Police. After retiring he joined the EA waterways team and now carries out the navigation duty officer role. This includes boat registration enforcement work, operating, maintaining and responding to our Locks and Sluices as part of a 24/7 duty rota.

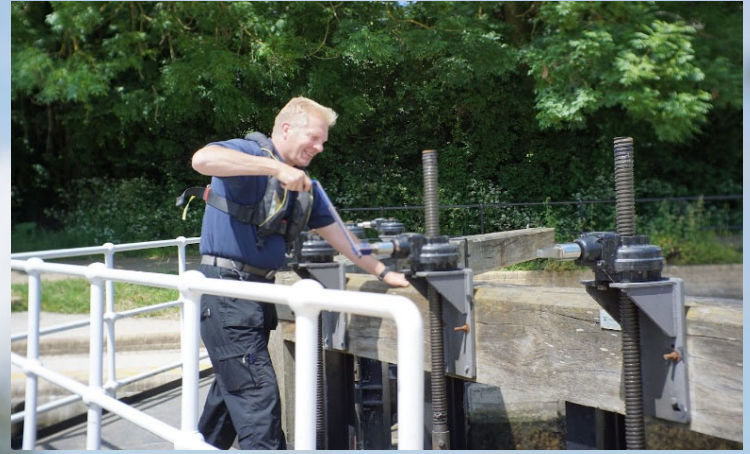


David, can you describe the difference between your previous career and now working for the Environment Agency?

The stress levels are far lower. There are times when I have to respond to emergencies on the waterway, but there is always support and guidance available. The EA are a good employer when it comes to looking after staff wellbeing.

What've you learned since you started working as part of the waterways team?

Any new role requires a level of learning and the EA training regime is very comprehensive. I've acquired formal accreditation in such diverse skills as boat handling, grounds maintenance, chainsaw operation, and engineering processes. There is a huge amount of knowledge within the team.



What does a typical week look like for you?

It depends on the time of the year. In summer there are more boats using the waterway, so we respond to the needs of river users. This could be helping new boat owners to operate our locks or assisting at one of our three boater's facilities where we provide water and waste disposal services.

In the winter, our time is spent responding to incidents related to wind and rain, such as removing fallen trees from the waterway, clearing obstructions from our sluice gates, and regulating the levels and flows. On top of this there is an ongoing inspection and maintenance program for all our sites, and monitoring boat registration compliance duties.

What advice would you give someone interested in applying for the Navigation Duty Officer role?

We have a team of navigation officers who work closely together. There are times when the work can be arduous, cold, or wet, but we work hard to overcome whatever nature throws at us. There is great variety in the work, and great camaraderie within the team. No two days are ever the same. The week on call can be imposing on family and social life but there is a financial compensation for holding the duty role and good rates of overtime paid when required to work. There is always flexibility to accommodate individual circumstances. There is great opportunity to learn and develop.

Focus on 2024 navigation projects

During 2024, the team were kept busy with over 30 local projects. In this edition of Inside Navigation, we will focus on three of them



Riverbank Breach – Oak Weir Erosion Repair Project

During the summer a section of bank located just upstream from Oak Weir Lock, East Peckham, eroded. The river was flowing into an adjacent ditch which was causing a drop in river levels with of 5 inches. The team knew they had to take swift action to repair the damage.

Due to the remote location, all work and materials had to be delivered and carried out on the river. The repair involved the use of locally sourced chestnut stakes and willow rods to stabilise and bind the bank. This project was the result of a collaboration between the Waterways Asset Team and the Medway Navigation Team. By completing the work in-house, we were able to fix the issue quickly, preventing the loss of the bank and flooding of nearby land.

The Teston Sluice Refurbishment Project

The Teston Sluice Refurbishment project will restore the sluice gate which was built 1974. After decades of service, a refurbishment had become essential.

The project aims to enhance the natural, historic and built environment and provide safe access all year round to the lock site as well as protect the community from the risk of flooding.

Construction began in July 2024, and the project team is diligently working to complete the works by Spring 2025. During this time, we will focus on repairing the lock gates, canoe pass, and landing stages, as well as landscaping the area and removing the temporary access track.



Teston during heavy rain fall in January 2025



New bridge at Twyford constructed with low carbon materials

The new footbridge forms part of the Medway Valley Walk and provides passage over the river entrance of Twyford Marina and significantly improves boat access to the marina.

Jason Adams, Waterways Team Leader said “The bridge is both light and strong meaning we could install the structure in a difficult location. With its lighter weight we could also reduce the size of the supporting foundations required giving a lower carbon footprint.

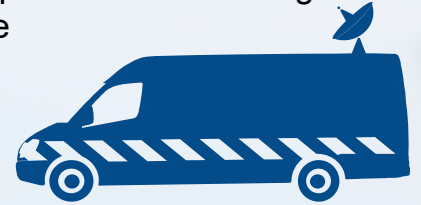
“Overall, it will require less maintenance compared to a bridge made of traditional materials and enables a substantial carbon saving, helping Medway Navigation to contribute to the government’s carbon net zero target.”

Tackling anti-social behaviour

Reducing anti-social behaviour has been one of our main focuses over the past year. Creating strong partnerships and taking a joined-up approach has been fundamental to our success.

Here are some of the steps we have taken:

- Installed CCTV at Allington, East Farleigh, Yalding Depot, Hampstead and Tonbridge
- Joint patrols with Environment Agency fisheries and Kent Police
- Border Force Patrols completed along the Allington Pen
- Increased presence of Navigation Officer Patrols
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service summer water safety campaign
- Anti-Social Behaviour Forum with key partners
- Regular reporting and action updates at the Medway River User Association meetings
- Use of anti-climb paint to discourage unauthorised entry
- Closure of Dragons Slipway working with Maidstone Borough Council.



Medway Navigation Team Celebrates Successful Environmental Outcome Days

The Medway Navigation Team is thrilled to announce the success of our Environmental Outcome Days held throughout 2024. With a total of six event days and a weeklong Canoe Litter Pick in collaboration with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, every event was fully booked. We were delighted to welcome around 300 participants, including staff, volunteers, and community group members. Thank you to everyone who took part and contributed to making the river look even better! Stay tuned for more environmental initiatives in the coming year.

Educational opportunities for schools and groups

As well as participating in many different events over the course of this year, our volunteers have now created an educational pack.

The educational pack is now available at Allington, and we invite schools and other groups, such as Scouts or Brownies, to come and tour the Allington Lock Site.

Our Educational Pack is a great way to learn about:

- The history of Allington Lock
- how the lock operates
- understand the duties and responsibilities of our Lock Keepers and Navigation Duty Officers
- Lock sites along the River Medway
- The depths, flows and heights of the river
- General water safety

Interested in volunteering or in our Educational Pack?

Email us at allington.lock@environment-agency.gov.uk and we'll be happy to help.

Medway Navigation Blueprint: Shaping a Stronger Future

Medway Navigation Design Handbook



The Environment Agency has recently been undertaking a revision of two of its in-house navigation documents; the Medway Navigation Design Handbook and the Medway Navigation Heritage Audit. These two documents were last updated in 2007 and provided a snapshot of the Navigation's approach to landscape design, structures and historic buildings. The 2024 revision updates existing information, current national policies, local heritage legislation and advances in digital communication techniques.

The documents will guide the Environment Agency and its partners to protect and enhance the Medway Navigation, by promoting a strong identity through good practical design, planning, implementation and best practice. The principle target audience is the Environment Agency's staff; its local authority partners, stakeholders, design consultants, contractors and user groups.

The documents will act as an introduction to the typical features and direct the reader to more specific and detailed information.

The documents will assist in defining the essential characteristics of the river – its 'local distinctiveness,' which contribute to a diverse range of enhancements and recreational opportunities.

This guide will be available to the general public on our website to further promote the development of safe and appropriate design.

The handbook will be available online shortly – please check our website for updates.
therivermedway.co.uk

Medway Valley Countryside Partnership 2024 Highlights - A Year of Achievements

In 2024, the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership proudly collaborated with the Environment Agency to enhance our cherished River Medway.

Medway Valley
COUNTRYSIDE
protect / explore / enjoy



Litter Picking Events Four large-scale litter picking events focusing on Tonbridge and the stretch of the River Medway from East Farleigh to Watringbury. Over 180 volunteers participated, collecting 150 bags of litter and removing 34 shopping trolleys and other obstructions from the river.

Wildflower Meadow Creation In April and May, MVCP's dedicated volunteers, along with EA staff, worked on scarifying and sowing a wildflower meadow at Hampstead Lock, Yalding. This initiative aims to transform the area into a vibrant, colorful wildflower meadow.

Otter Holt Construction In October, MVCP and EA volunteers constructed an artificial otter holt from recycled plastic and installed it near Porters Lock, Tonbridge.

Invasive Plant Control In August, MVCP along with the EA and Maidstone Canoe Club manually removed Floating Pennywort around Hampstead Marina. Additionally, with EA funding, MVCP successfully treated over 9,000 Giant Hogweed plants from May to July, with at least 4,300 located along the main River Medway and the remainder along surrounding tributaries.

MVCP is grateful for the ongoing support from the EA and looks forward to further partnership projects in 2025. If you are interested in volunteering or have any questions, please contact MVCP at: **Email:** medwayvalley@kent.gov.uk **Phone:** 03000 41 82 88 **Facebook:** @medwayvalley

Get in touch!

- Visit our website: therivermedway.co.uk
- Email us on: allington.lock@environment-agency.gov.uk
- Call us on: 03708 506 506



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