

WATERWAY CODE OF CONDUCT

Making the canal safer for everyone



Photo: John Morton - Devon County Photography.

About the waterway

The Grand Western Canal was opened in 1814, with its main business being the transport of limestone from quarries near Westleigh. This trade continued on the Devon section of the canal until 1925.

In the late 1960s a campaign to save the canal from proposed development led to its acquisition by Devon County Council in 1971. The Canal was declared a Country Park and work commenced on repairing and dredging the canal so that it could be enjoyed by local people and visitors.

Nowadays the remaining eleven miles of canal is managed in partnership with Mid Devon District Council and in 2005 was declared a Local Nature Reserve. Boating and angling are permitted, but a permit must be bought beforehand (see website for more details).

Most of the canal was dredged between 2002 and 2007 with of current depth of between 1m and 1.5m in the central channel. The Canal Ranger Service is keen to hear if waterway users experience significantly shallower depths than this at any point so that future spot-dredging works can be arranged.

The Canal's water supply comes from springs in the bed of the canal between Whipcott Bridge and Lowdwells. There is a very slight flow of water from the northern end towards the Tiverton end because of this.

The springs may sometimes be seen as milky patches amongst the weed on the bed of the canal. The Canal's water quality is monitored by the Environment Agency on a monthly basis at two points along the canal.

Code of conduct for all waterway users

- **Please be considerate and polite** to all canal and towpath users.
- **Please act safely.** Do not enter the canal or walk on ice and keep children and pets under supervision. In the event of an emergency ring 999. The noticeboards along the towpath give location details.
- **Please protect the waterway environment** and take care not to harm or disturb wildlife.
- Please report birds or wildlife in distress to the RSPCA on 0300 1234 999. They will need a description of the situation and location details. Please note that wildfowl that eat weed often appear to have fishing line hanging from their beaks. Please ensure this is not just filamentous weed before contacting the RSPCA. Also note that swans frequently hook their legs up onto their backs at a rather bizarre-looking angle at times and this is not usually a matter for concern.
- Please report any pollution, fly-tipping or fish in distress to the Canal Ranger Service (01884 254072) or the Environment Agency (0800 807060).

Code of conduct for all boats and canoes

- **Permits:** All boats using the canal must have an appropriate and valid permit (based on the type and size of boat – see www.devon.gov.uk/gwboating for current prices and sales outlets).
- **Rules and regulations:** All boaters must comply with the boating rules and regulations listed on the reverse side of the boat permit.
- **The horsedrawn barge** has priority over all other boats and must be passed on the opposite side from the towpath. Never come between the horsedrawn barge and the towpath!
- **Mooring** is prohibited on the towpath side bank between the Canal Basin and East Manley Bridge during the horsedrawn barge operating season (usually between the start of April and the end of October – please contact the Tiverton Canal Company on 01884 253345 if you wish to check).
- Mooring is always prohibited in winding holes (turning points) and within 10m of bridges (with the exception of the horsedrawn barge). Please do not moor at the end of gardens on the offside and do not trespass into adjacent farmland.
- When mooring on the towpath side, do not tie lines across the towpath and ensure mooring pins are protected or easily visible.
- **The speed limit** on the Canal for all boats is 4mph (brisk walking pace) or lower if necessary to avoid creating a breaking wash.
- **Protecting wildlife:** Please minimise disturbance to wildlife by keeping to the central canal channel and slowing down when passing wildfowl – especially when they have young with them. Many birds nest in the reeds along the edge of the canal so please take particular care during the nesting season (spring and early summer). Please observe 'No Mooring' restrictions as and when indicated by signage.
- Please ensure you boat is free of weed when bringing it onto the canal (invasive plant species can be transferred from one watercourse to another on the hulls of boats).
- **Passing Anglers:** Most anglers prefer boaters to proceed past (in single file, if more than one boat) in the centre of the canal channel at a steady speed, unless they request otherwise. Please look out for anglers as they may sometimes be obscured by bankside vegetation. If you approach an angler who is playing a fish, please be considerate and wait until the fish is landed before passing.
- If a fishing match is underway and you wish to pass through, please proceed at a steady pace along the centre of the canal channel. If you were planning to turn around and return shortly after passing the match, please consider not

passing through as the anglers will be understandably annoyed!

- **Safety:** It is strongly recommended that boaters wear lifejackets or buoyancy aides, especially children, non-swimmers and those boating alone.

Code of conduct for boats with engines

(in addition to the points above)

- **Insurance:** All motorised boats must have 3rd party insurance to a value of £1m.
- **Boat Safety Scheme:** Boats must have a valid Boat Safety Certificate if they are subject to the scheme (most boats will need a certificate if they have an internal fuel, gas or electricity system. See www.boatsafety.com for more information). Insurance details and Boat Safety Scheme details must be provided when purchasing a boat permit.
- **Steam powered boats** must have a valid test or exemption certificate available for inspection by the Canal Rangers.
- **Speed, wash and noise:** Please slow down whilst passing moored boats. Please avoid creating a breaking wash and don't run your propeller while moored. Please refrain from running your engine or generators when moored, between the hours of 8pm and 8am.
- **Overtaking:** Do not attempt to overtake the horsedrawn barge unless invited to do so by the helmsman. Do not overtake other boats near bridges, bends in the canal or moored boats.
- **Avoid causing pollution** by ensuring that your engine is running efficiently and does not cause fuel or oil to leak into the canal. Any oil, fuel or chemical spillages into the canal must be reported to the Canal Ranger Service immediately. Please use biodegradable detergents.

Code of conduct for model boaters

- Model boating is permitted on the canal, but must not interfere with wildlife or other users (particularly anglers). The speed limit for model boats is 4mph, so high powered and noisy model boats are not permitted.
- Please choose areas where interference with other users and wildlife is minimal and the boats cannot be snagged in emergent vegetation.
- Model boats must not allow oil or fuel to leak into the water.
- Steam powered model boats must have a valid test or exemption certificate available for inspection by the Canal Rangers.

Please Note: Swimming is not allowed in the canal. Bathing and swimming are prohibited within the Country Park Byelaws.



Code of conduct for sculls and 'Ox-bridge-style' rowing boats and sculls

- Due to the narrow, winding nature of the canal, these boats are generally not permitted to use the canal. However the Sea Cadets and the Tiverton Rowing Club have permission to use the canal for the training of beginners, subject to various conditions.
- The speed limit for these boats is 4mph and rowers must be accompanied from the towpath by a coach who will look ahead for other waterway users.

Code of conduct for anglers

- **Permits and licences:** Angling rights on the Canal are leased to the Tiverton and District Angling Club. In addition to an EA rod licence, anglers must purchase a permit from the fishing club (see www.devon.gov.uk/gwcfishing for prices and sales outlets). Club rules (printed on the permit) must be observed and the permit must be available for inspection by Club bailiffs or Canal Rangers.
- **Boats:** Please look out for approaching boats and withdraw angling poles to allow boats to pass. Be aware that approaching boats may not see you if you are hidden by bankside vegetation.
- Please move back from the waters edge to allow the horsedrawn barge to pass. Do not allow yourself to come between the horse and the barge and remove any equipment which the rope towing the barge may snag on.
- Boaters are instructed to proceed along the centre of the canal past anglers, unless requested otherwise. Please politely request them to pass on the near or far side if that is what you would prefer. Please note that larger boats have to remain in the centre of the channel.
- Whilst anglers are welcome to fish off the boat landing stages at East Manley Bridge, Minnows Touring Park and The Globe Inn, they are primarily for the use of boaters and anglers are obliged to make way should a boat arrive.
- **Prohibitions:** Fishing is not permitted from the offside bank; from boats (unless moored on the towpath side) or during the hours of darkness.
- **Care for the environment:** Please take care not to snag tackle on overhanging trees and avoid casting when other waterway and towpath users are passing.
- Please do not dig the banks and ensure you take your litter home with you.
- **Safety:** Please watch out for overhead power lines – there are many that cross the canal. Do not fish within 30m of these as electricity can arc a considerable distance.

Canal Ranger Service contact details:

Grand Western Canal Country Park & LNR,
The Moorings, Canal Hill, Tiverton, Devon,
EX16 4HX

Tel: 01884 254072

Email: gwcanal@devon.gov.uk

Web: www.devon.gov.uk/grandwesterncanal