



Managing boats on London's busy waterways

21 December 2021

In 2018 the Trust published the [London Mooring Strategy](#) setting out plans to improve the experience for boaters and boating in London and make the waterway a place that can be shared fairly and enjoyed by everyone. The strategy acknowledged that, with a finite amount of mooring space in London, we would need to consider further options for how boat numbers could be managed in these areas of high demand.

Since the London Mooring Strategy was published, boat numbers in London have remained high. The national boat count in 2020 and 2021 was affected by the Covid pandemic so a full annual boat count was not completed in these years, however the weekly boat sightings taken during 2021 indicate that boat numbers remain very high. They may have reached capacity in the busiest areas (largely due to there being no more space) but the busier areas are spreading further out from central London (See Appendix 1).

What is driving boat number growth?

The growth in boat numbers in London has been driven by boats without a home mooring ("continuously cruising boats") which now make up over 50% of all boats on the London waterways (was 20% in 2010)¹; most of these boats are used as permanent homes. There has clearly been a growth in the appeal of boat living (often reflected in TV and printed media coverage of living on boats) and an attraction of being part of a close-knit boating community. Boaters also regularly highlight being closer to nature as a key benefit of living on the water. Wider market factors have also contributed to the growth of residential boat numbers in London. As housing costs have risen within the capital the more affordable option of living on a boat has increased in popularity.

What further evidence is there that the London waterways are under pressure?

Most continuously cruising boats are lived on permanently which has changed the use of London waterways from largely leisure to significantly residential. Since 2010, while there has been an increase in the number of boats with moorings (approximately 11%), there has been huge increase (400%+) in continuously cruising boats. In London, a higher proportion

¹ In 2010 there were a total of 2101 boats sighted, of these 1607 boats with a permanent mooring 413 boats without a mooring, in 2020 there were a total of 4045 boats sighted, of these 1783 boats with a permanent mooring and 2146 boats without a mooring (National Boat Count)

of continuously cruising boats are lived on full time than elsewhere on the Trust's waterways. The 2021 boater survey indicates that nationally 23% of all boats are used as a permanent home; in London and the south east this figure increases to 51%². When looking only at continuously cruising boats in London and the southeast, 91% state that they use their boat as a permanent home, compared with 63% nationally.

Continuously cruising boats are required to move every 14 days and 'bona fide navigate'. This inevitably means these boats rely on the waterway infrastructure more than boats which have permanent moorings where they can, and usually are, moored without moving for long periods of time³. Understandably permanent liveaboard boaters need to have access to water and waste services more frequently than an occasional leisure boater. The growth in continuously cruising boats has led to increased pressure on the existing waterway infrastructure, mooring space and boater facilities.

What is the impact of the growth in liveaboard boating in London?

The growth in lived-on boats on what were once quiet parts of the London waterways has clearly had a positive impact in terms of helping create vibrant communities. Having more people on the water has increased natural surveillance which in turn has contributed to increasing perceptions that the waterways are safer places to visit. However, in some places, greater use of and pressure on the waterway infrastructure has also brought increased tensions between different communities including liveaboard boaters, other waterways users and those living alongside the waterways.

The waterways in London have constantly evolved and changed over time. As elsewhere, the capital's canals were originally built for freight use. After this declined leisure boating became the predominant use (although some commercial boat traffic remains in London), but with most leisure users having a permanent mooring. The London waterways were never designed to accommodate the level of people now living permanently on boats as their homes. As a result of the increased liveaboard population the existing water and waste facilities currently struggle to meet the level of demand being placed on them, with boaters often having to queue to use them and it is not uncommon for facilities to break down.

How does the Trust plan to address issues caused by the growth in boats?

The London Mooring Strategy includes many proposals intended to help address these issues. This includes increasing boater facilities, installing rings to help create additional towpath mooring (14 day) and a review of existing short-stay mooring sites.

² Since the creation of the London & South East region in 2019 it is no longer possible to separate the boater survey responses for the old London region. It is very likely that the % of boaters permanently living aboard their boat in the old London region is higher than 51%. The last time we held a boater survey just for the old London region was in 2018 and 64% of respondents said they used their boat as a permanent home.

³ Boats with a permanent mooring in London are on average sighted by the Trust out on the water (away from their mooring) around twice a year (with the maximum number of times we have sighted a boat away from its mooring being 12 times).

Facilities

The cost of additional facilities is high and the logistics of installing them in often very congested parts of London are complicated and sometimes prohibitive, which means implementing these plans will take several years. Some additional facilities have already been delivered⁴, but we continue to assess feasibility of the preferred locations which have been identified. Although the Covid pandemic has delayed progress, feasibility work including existing service searches (required before plans can be finalised) is underway with the intension of providing additional new facilities over the next two years. Installing new facilities in London is challenging, and physical infrastructure constraints can hinder plans. [Preferred locations have been identified](#) and we are undertaking feasibility before evaluating the options and finalising plans for additional new facilities.

In addition to the facilities planned in London we are also reviewing boater facilities nationally and will be engaging boaters in this wider review during 2022.

Towpath mooring (14 day)

The strategy also proposes to increase towpath mooring capacity by installing new mooring rings where possible. The following areas are planned, or site investigations are underway to have additional mooring rings installed into hard edge towpath.

GU - West Drayton (west of Colham Bridge 192) 200m
GU - West Drayton (east and west of Horton Bridge 193) 105m
GU - Norwood (Norwood Top Lock 90 - Wolf Bridge 203) 900m
Paddington Arm - Grand Junction Arms (Bridge 205A- 205B) 500m - VM only
Paddington Arm -West of Great Western Road Bridge 4C 200m
Regents - Mile End (Mile End Rd Bridge 57 - Johnsons Lock10) 27m
Regents - Mile End (Victory Bridge 59 - Salmon's Lane Lock 11) 54m
Limehouse cut tbc
Regents - Haggerston (west of Bridge 44 Kingsland Basin) 60m
Stort - Bishops Stortford (Railway Bridge 49B - Twyford Lock 2) tbc

Short-stay mooring (seven days or less)

There are number of existing short-stay visitor moorings in central London. A review of their length and stay times was proposed in the London Mooring Strategy: this has now been completed, and a number of changes are proposed.

Little Venice – create a short section of 48-hour short-stay moorings (approximately 57 metres closest to the customer service facilities) and a section of 7-day short-stay mooring (approximately 144 metres)

⁴ New/improved canal-side bin stores at: Feildes Weir; Stonebridge; Harlesden Steele Road. New/improved water points at: Atlip Road, Alperton; , Angel; Paddington; Slough Basin; Greenford. New Elsan points and Norwood. Re-opened the Elsan point at Hazelmere after successfully resolving long-standing problems with the pumps connecting to the mains.

Broadway Market – create a short section of 48-hour short-stay mooring (approximately 50 metres closest to bridge) and a section of 7-day short-stay mooring (approximately 55 metres)

Victoria Park – create a short section of 48-hour short-stay mooring (approximately 51 metres closest to the lock/customer service facilities) and a section of 7-day short-stay mooring (approximately 80 metres)

Stay times at short-stay visitor moorings in Paddington Basin, Camden, Kings Cross and Islington (eco-moorings) would remain at a maximum of seven days.

These changes to stay times will be piloted in line with the Trust's [short-stay mooring framework](#). The London Mooring Strategy also proposed some additional short-stay moorings on the Lee adjacent to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. This site is not currently available for boats to moor and requires work to improve the bank before it can be implemented: this work is being planned. In addition to changes to stay times an increase in the number of paid for pre-booked short-stay moorings in central London is proposed (see below and consultation survey for specific proposals).

What can the Trust do to manage the growth in boat numbers in London?

With over 4,000 boats now using the London waterways, as well as many others using the water for canoeing, kayaking, rowing, angling and simply enjoying the recreational benefits of being by water, it's important that we manage this precious resource fairly. The Trust has no powers to restrict the number of boats that can be licensed on the waterways provided they meet the required conditions. If boats have a valid Boat Safety Certificate and insurance, they can purchase a licence to navigate on the Trust's waterways. If someone only wishes to boat on the river waterways, then by statute they only pay 60% of the full licence fee. This has contributed to significant growth in boat numbers in east London on the Lee Navigation.

Although we cannot limit the number of licensed boats, we are diligent in ensuring that boats on our waters are licensed and complying with the Boat Licence Terms and Conditions. Alongside the increased number of boats in London there has been a significant increase in licence enforcement action with more cases than in any other region. As of November 2021, we had over 1,000 live enforcement cases in the London and South East Region, these included 771 licence evasion cases, and 424 continuous cruiser insufficient movement cases. In addition, there were 138 unidentified boat cases. We have also seen an increase in the number of boaters requiring extra support, for example there are 182 equalities cases where ongoing additional support or reasonable adjustments are made to help boaters with disabilities or other equalities related characteristics.

What options has the Trust considered to manage boat numbers in the areas of high demand?

In autumn 2020 we started a conversation on how we should manage boats on London's busy waterways. The initial engagement asked people for suggestions on how they

thought the Trust could manage busy areas. A range of suggestions were made; in no specific order these were:

- A London Licence for those who want to boat predominantly in London
- A congestion charge for boating in busy areas of London
- A limit to the time you could stay in central London
- Firmer penalty charges for those who overstay at short-stay moorings
- Increase the number of pre-book visitor mooring locations
- Shorten visitor mooring stay times
- Ban triple mooring in busy areas
- Limit the number of wide beam boats on London's waterways
- Pro-actively move boats that moor for longer than 14 days

We have considered the suggestions we received and have set out what effect these measures might have in helping manage areas of high demand.

A London Licence for those who want boat predominantly in London

Creating a London only licence would not help, as the Trust does not have the power to limit the number of boats that could request such a licence, so it would not help in managing the overall number of boats in busy areas.

A congestion charge for boating in busy areas

Applying charges to enter busy parts of the London canals may help reduce pressure on some busy areas, however on some river sections there is a very complex statutory framework (including multiple historic Acts of Parliament going back hundreds of years), so applying a congestion charge on these is likely to be complicated. Applying a charge in one part of the waterway but not another could simply result in moving the problem and make another area busier.

Limit the time boats can moor for any one period in central London

There are already limits on the length of time boaters can moor for any one period in central London. With both short-stay and 14-day limits, and the existing enforcement processes, we can address boats that spend too long in one area. Most boats do not exceed these stay times, but the high volume of boats in London means that mooring spaces are always full which can give the impression that boats do not move.

Firmer penalty charges for those boats who overstay on short-stay moorings

We can already apply extended stay charges more rigorously for those who exceed short stay mooring stay times. However, to do this we need to undertake more frequent (daily) checks of boats moored at these sites, which requires significant additional resources, both in terms of monitoring and enforcement.

Increase the number of pre-booked visitor mooring locations

There are already several (charged for) pre-booked visitor moorings. Increasing the number of these would provide more space for those who want the certainty of finding a mooring space in busy parts of London. The London Mooring Strategy sets out a number of additional locations for pre-booked moorings, but we are proposing additional pre-booked visitor moorings. A booking charge for use of these moorings would be applied to ensure that there are additional resources to effectively manage them.

Shorten visitor mooring stay times

The times at short-stay visitor moorings were reviewed as part of the London Mooring Strategy with plans in place to reduce some sections at visitor moorings to 48hr mooring (see above). To better manage the existing stay times and ensure that they are adhered to will require additional resources.

Ban triple mooring in busy areas

There is an improper mooring process in place to prevent boats from mooring abreast where it impedes on the safe navigation of other craft. However, a clearer ban on triple mooring in busy areas of London is proposed.

Limit the number of wide-beam boats on London' waterways

The Trust does not have powers to refuse a licence for a wide-beam boats in London, but to help ensure that the waterway remains safe for navigation, we can apply certain measures under our Boat Licence Terms and Conditions to control movement and mooring, where this is causing an obstruction or hindrance to navigation.

Pro-actively move boats that moor for longer than 14 days

Whilst the Trust does occasionally move boats in certain circumstances (e.g. where the boat is causing an obstruction to navigation), it tends to be a last resort, as it can lead to conflict and tension with boaters, particularly where the boat (or its contents) are fragile and the boat is someone's home.

Options for consultation

We will be running a consultation between December 2021 and April 2022* on several specific proposals, which subject to the consultation findings, would be introduced from summer 2022. We are also consulting on a wider in-principal options about additional permanent mooring, which could be introduced over the medium to long term.

* Consultation extended due to a brief technical issue with the online form

Specific proposals

1. Increase the number of paid for pre-booked short-stay visitor moorings with income enabling better manage of these sites with increased towpath rangers

To make it easier for boats visiting and navigating through London to guarantee finding a mooring space, without affecting the majority of mooring space, we are proposing:

Increasing the number of paid-for pre-book visitor mooring locations in inner London and in one further out location on the Grand Union (with some being pre-bookable in summer

period only). This would involve changing existing short-stay moorings to paid for pre-book short stay moorings at the following locations

Location	Current	Proposed	Length of mooring / berths
Cowley North*	14 day free	7-day / £Low	50m
Kensal Green visitor mooring*	14 day free	7-day / £Low	300m
Little Venice visitor mooring	7-day free	7-day + 48hr / £High	120m
Rembrandt Garden pre-book	7 day / £10 night	7-day / £High	50m
Paddington visitor mooring	7-day free	7-day / £High	100m
Paddington pre-book	7 day / £12 night	7-day / £High	6 berth
Camden visitor mooring	7 day free	7-day / £Med	150m
Kings Cross Treaty Street visitor mooring	7 day free	7-day / £Med	65m
Kings Cross North visitor mooring	7 day free	7-day / £Med	25m
Kings Cross Goods Way visitor mooring	2 day free	7-day / £Med	50m
Kings Cross Goods Way pre book #	7 day free	7-day / £Med	50m
Islington visitor mooring (eco mooring)	7 day free	7-day / £Med	150m
Victoria Park visitor mooring*	14 day free	7-day + 48hr / £Low	131m
Broadway Market visitor mooring*	7 day free	7-day + 48hr / £Low	105m

This site is privately owned land and it's use as a visitor mooring is by agreement with the landowners. Part of this site is to be used by the landowner as a mooring for a floating classroom

*Proposed as charged pre-bookable 1 April to 31 October only

No pre-booking or charges are proposed at other short-stay visitor mooring sites in London. There are no changes proposed to the remaining 14-day towpath moorings that make up over 90% of mooring space in inner London.

- The introduction of charging at these sites would fund extra towpath rangers to undertake daily sightings at short-stay moorings and ensuring better experience for visiting boaters through improved management of mooring in busy areas.
- Introduce variable price bands on the pre-booked short-stay visitor moorings to reflect their location and popularity, and in some locations seasonal demand.
- To ensure that many people have an opportunity to stay in the most popular places, a limit to the number of times a boat could stay in London on paid for pre-booked short-stay visitor moorings.

2. Better management all moorings in busier areas

To help better manage all other mooring space in busy areas

- Introduce daily sightings during the busier summer months
- A limit to the number of times a boat could stay on paid for pre-booked visitor moorings in London
- Increase the daily overstay charge (currently set at £25 for each extra day) on paid for pre-booked visitor moorings and free to use short-stay visitor moorings.

- Extend the overstay charge to boats that moor for prolonged periods and/or overnight at lock landings or customer service facilities

3. Reduce risk of obstruction to the navigation

Ban Triple mooring of all boats and double mooring against wide beam boats in central London

- Ban Triple mooring and double moorings against wide beam boats on the Regents Canal, Hertford Union and Limehouse Cut

In principle option

4. Create additional permanent online moorings

The demand for mooring space in London is high and there are few viable off-line locations where new permanent moorings could be created. Although not generally supported by the Trust's mooring policy, as part of a local strategy, some additional permanent online linear mooring spaces could be created to help increase mooring provision and generate additional income to support better management and maintenance of the waterways.

There are three areas where we think some limited additional on-line permanent mooring space could be considered.

- Upper Grand Union (from Batchworth to Slough Arm junction)
- The Slough Arm
- Upper Lee Navigation from Bridge 40 (M25 bridge) to Hertford and the River Stort

These parts of the London waterway are quieter (see Appendix 2) and were identified within the London Mooring Strategy as potential areas for additional permanent moorings. The Upper Grand Union and Slough Arm (LMS 1.1) potential for 415m (136ft) of offside long-term mooring. Upper Lee Navigation from M25 to Hertford and the River Stort (LMS 8.1) potential for 310m (1017ft) of offside long-term mooring.

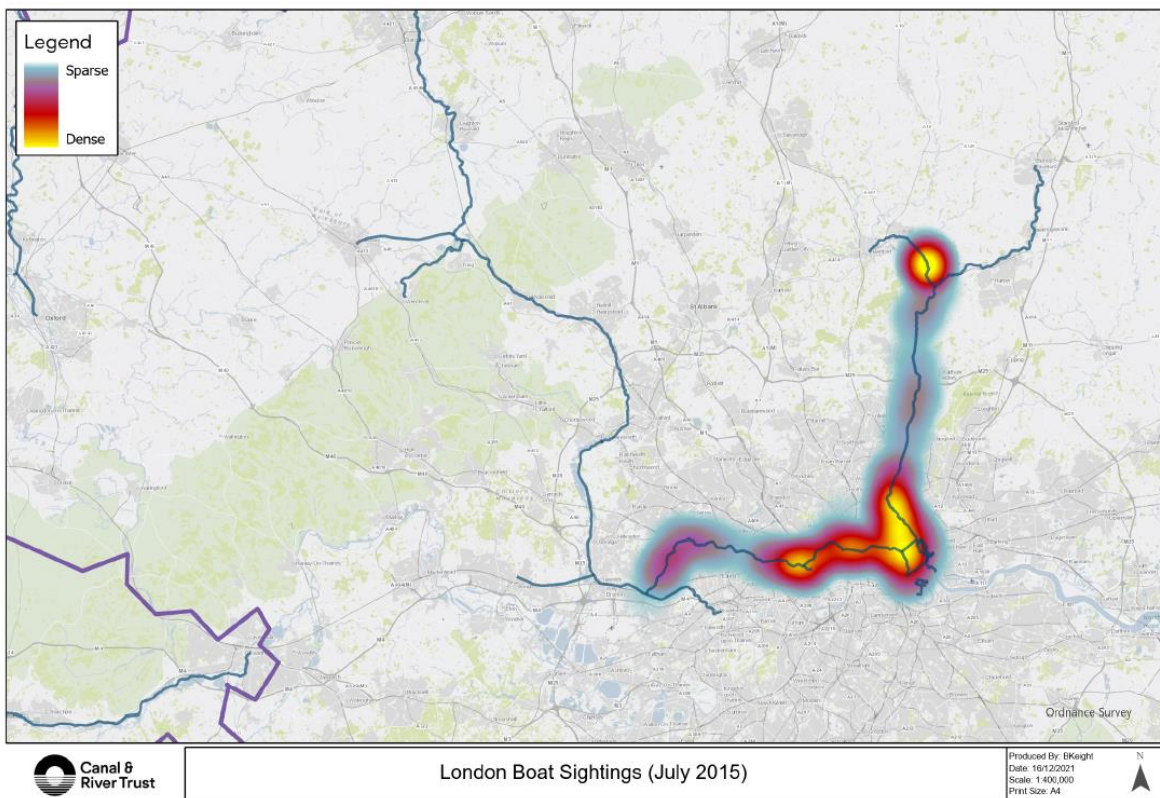
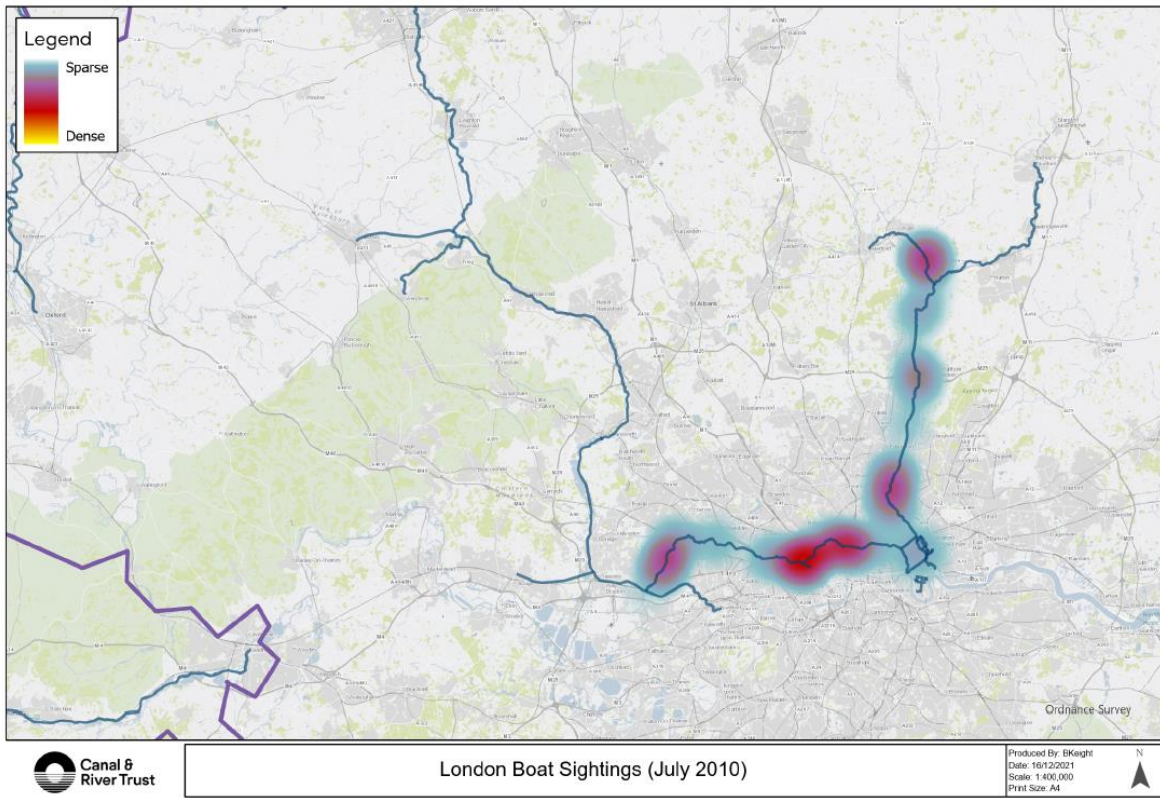
The creation of additional permanent on-line moorings would require investment in terms of dredging and bank improvements, but these would be offset by the additional income that permanent moorings would generate. Any permanent mooring proposals would also have to consider any relevant environmental, heritage and planning constraints, and any specific proposals would be subject to further consultation with local stakeholders.

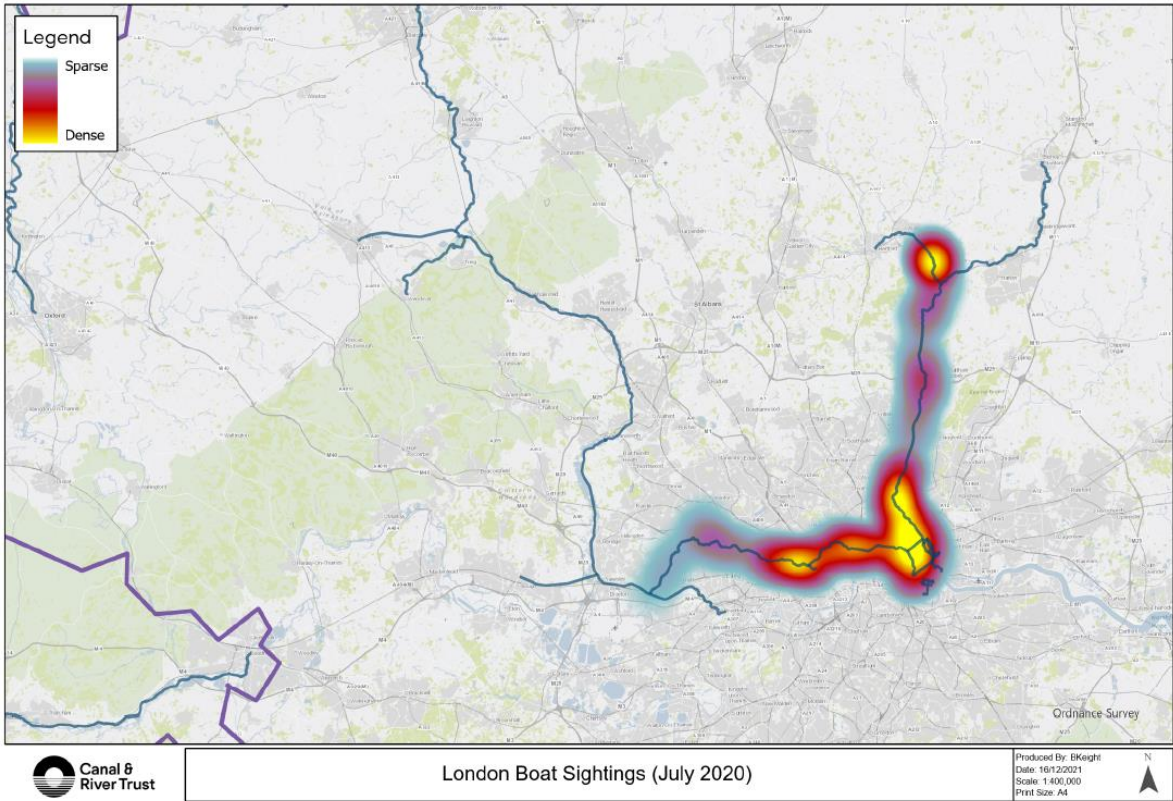
Consultation period

The formal consultation on both the specific proposals and in principle options between Tuesday 21 December 2021 and Monday 4 April 2022. A response to the consultation along with final plans will be published in spring 2022.

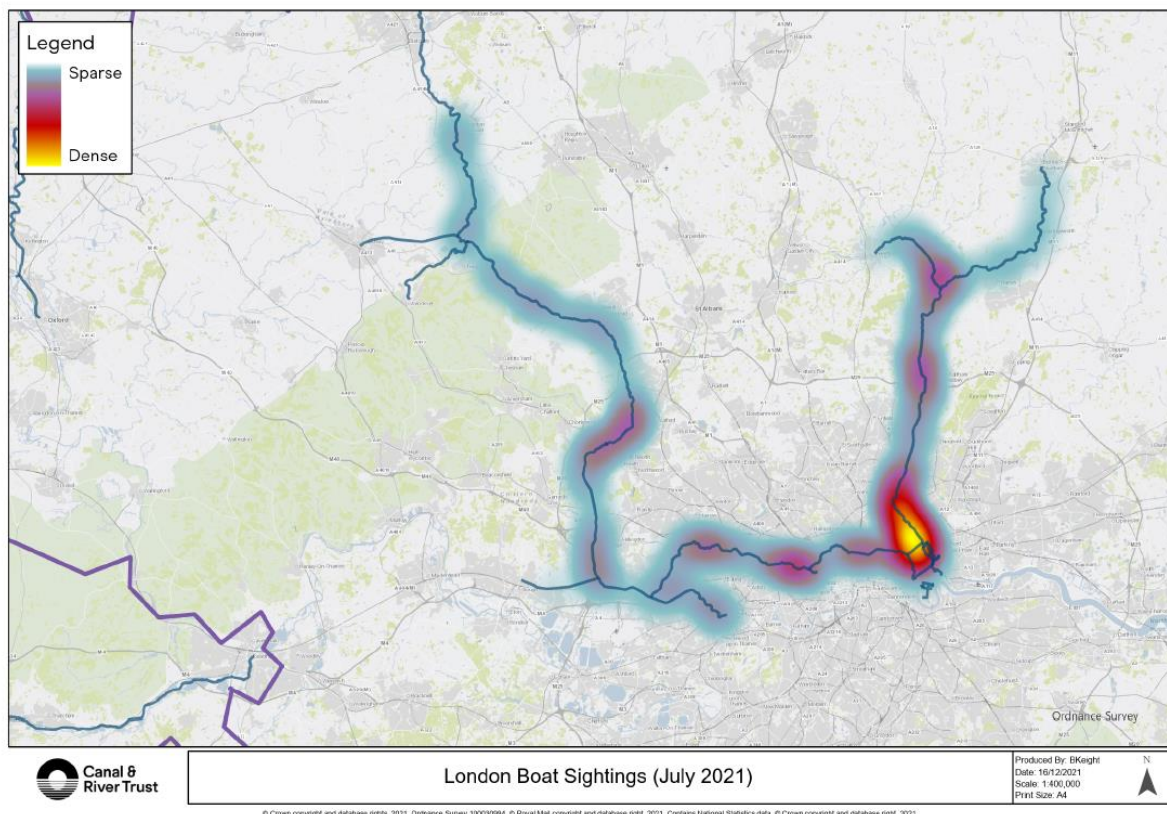
The consultation can be [completed online](#). Anyone unable to complete the consultation online contact rachel.hayward@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Appendix 1: Heat maps showing change in density of boat numbers across London between 2010-2020ⁱ





Appendix 2: Summary of boat density July 2021



ⁱ Heat maps created using Kernel Density mapping <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/spatial-analyst/kernel-density.htm> which look at the density of points using a defined cell radius.