

The safe management of jet skis in Poole Harbour has been ongoing since the 1970's when they were first introduced to the market. Becoming more popular in the mid 1980's and increasing in popularity ever since. As part of the Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan a designated area within Poole Harbour was introduced, to the North of Brownsea Island, that permits jet skis to exceed the speed limit and to provide a safe space for training.

Annual permits sold have increased from 100 to 400 over the past 10 years with daily permits reaching almost 500 in year 22/23. Since 1st April 2023 there have been 293 annual permits and 128 daily permits sold.

Following the end of COVID-19 lockdown measures, introduced by Government, there was a significant increase in the number of jet skis and associated reports of byelaw infringements. This resulted in the Board approving additional mitigation measures which included:

1. Improved signage at all relevant launch locations.
2. Replacement facility at Baiter Slipway (awaiting BCP approval).
3. CCTV at Baiter Slipway – covering slipway and harbour only (awaiting BCP approval).
4. PHC PW - change of livery to make more visible.
5. Drone Surveillance – resourced and operated by SIFCA.
6. Volunteer task force - Trained with body cams and “uniform”.
7. Additional seasonal Patrol Officer.
8. Code of Conduct leaflet.
9. Zero Tolerance press and social media release.

A further social media release was published recently regarding the Watercraft Act 2023.

The new facility at Baiter slipway will be a major mitigation measure going forward. Unfortunately, it has been a lengthy process with BCP Council regarding approvals; however, we are confident this facility will be completed (including CCTV) before spring 2024.

All water sport activities must be managed with safety at the forefront and where necessary, be regulated. Byelaws and the newly published Watercraft Act 2023 are in place giving Poole Harbour Commissioners the powers to regulate jet skis with an Enforcement & Prosecution Policy (updated 2022) to provide guidance on appropriate action.

There are still instances where jet skis are in breach of local legislation; however, there has only been one formal report to Harbour Control received since 1st April 2023. In comparison, by end of June last year there were 24 speeding or dangerous navigation incidents reported.

All reports are investigated, and evidence gathered, where there are sufficient details to progress the matter. It is important that any misbehaviour on the water is reported to Harbour Control on 01202 440230 or by completing an incident report form that can be found on our website www.phc.co.uk , giving as much detail as possible, including photographs and /or video.

This QR code will take you directly to the report form.



The general opinion of PHC employees, including Pilots, Patrol Officers, Marine Services team and Harbour Control Officers is that the behaviour in the harbour from all water sport activities, including jet skis, is greatly improved when compared to the previous two years. The Maritime Volunteer Service have confirmed the same.

Additional Mitigation Measures

Despite the above, we have not been complacent and have continued to be proactive by increasing patrol hours including evening joint patrols (18:00 to 23:59) with Dorset Police Marine Section. There has been increased focus at Baiter Slipway and the route to the Designated Area. We have received two emails of commendation this month regarding the professional action of our patrol staff when dealing with jet skiers.

We will also be employing the services of another Patrol Officer (Police retired) during July and August. This will provide additional patrol hours and another asset on the water.

We are also seeking to procure an additional patrol vessel that will come into service next year to supplement our current patrol resources.

We have two jet ski patrol assets with one coming to the end of service due to cost of maintenance and lack of spares. It is intended to replace this with a new jet ski.

We have been working closely with Dorset Police to continue multi-agency task force days to educate jet ski operators regarding local and national legislation and bird disturbance.

The Zero Tolerance Policy, introduced last year, remains in force.

Summary

All users are entitled to operate Personal Watercraft, including jet skis, in Poole Harbour in a safe manner and in compliance with local and National legislation with a Policy in place to enforce where deemed necessary. All leisure and commercial activities must be managed in a safe and balanced way to minimise any conflict between the different user groups.

It is clear from our records that jet skis are more likely to breach our speeding and dangerous navigation byelaws which is why the Commissioners have invested in additional resources as shown above.

Our Patrol Officers have been reminded that the Zero Tolerance Policy is still in force, meaning that jet ski operators will be prosecuted where there is sufficient evidence.

We continue to remind harbour users to report incidents to Harbour Control as they are happening and, if safe to do so, obtain as much information as possible including photographs and/or videos.

The Patrol Team are fully aware of the areas in Poole Harbour that are more likely to have infringements and they follow the Patrol Officers Instructions Manual and PHC Policy mentioned above. Current resources will be supplemented with the additional measures identified above, including, Baiter Slipway facility, CCTV, additional patrol vessel, replacement jet ski and additional patrol officer.

It is worth noting that most other Statutory Harbour Authorities do not prosecute or rarely prosecute. This is mainly due to a lack of resource, limited local legislation or difficulty in obtaining sufficient evidence. Poole Harbour Commissioners have prosecuted 64 times since the current Harbour Master has been in post, with majority relating to jet ski operator behaviour.

**CAPTAIN BRIAN MURPHY
HARBOUR MASTER**