

Dinghy/Tender/Kayak congestion at Yealm Steps : The Brook : Noss Foreshore

The Authority published a briefing paper on the 11th of November addressing dinghy and kayak congestion in the river, with particular focus on our principal launching sites. The paper is posted on the RYHA web site and has been circulated widely to stakeholder groups. Feedback and engagement were encouraged and helpful input has been received. A link to the 11th November paper [is here](#). It addressed the issues caused by congestion and described a range of potential options that might be adopted as mitigations.

This communication provides stakeholders with an important update. Wherever possible the Authority has included the thoughtful responses and suggestions received in framing the phased approach the Authority intends to roll out. Please read, as certain actions may be directly relevant to you.

Yealm Steps Pontoons

Considerations

Lack of usage. It has been evident during 2025 that a significant proportion of the tenders moored on the pontoons are utilised very infrequently.

Metal tenders. The Authority has received several concerns about metal dinghies. These metal vessels have sharp corners and some of them are clearly over size. Metal dinghies increase the risk of damage to adjacent tenders and the pontoons.

Length of painters. Despite repeated HM notices and encouragements, painters are often too short and frequently tied on with extensive and complicated knots that are difficult to release under load.

Old Coastguards. The Authority has considered submissions from the owners of properties at 'Old Coastguards', whose principal access is across the water from the Yealm Steps.

Options considered. The Authority has considered various alternatives to manage the number of tenders and tackle the evident lack of use and absentee ownership behaviours of certain owners. The alternatives included the introduction of: an absolute limit on the number of tenders moored on the pontoons; or an annual mooring fee, or a combination of both these measures. Summarised below are the measures that the Authority has decided to adopt for 2026, to manage congestion at the Yealm Steps pontoons.

Measures to come into force from April 2026

1. Regulation 12 (*Craft kept at Yealm Steps pontoons must not exceed 11ft 2ins length overall and 4ft 10ins beam and must be capable of being carried by two persons*) to be strictly enforced.
2. Only wooden, GRP and inflatable craft may be moored on the pontoons. Metal dinghies will not be permitted, but may be moored on PM7 and PM8, subject to paying an annual mooring fee of

£45. For the reasons outlined above, the Authority considers that the use of metal tenders should be discouraged.

3. To be eligible to moor a tender at the Yealm Steps pontoons, the owner must meet the same residence criteria as are applied to A-D mooring licences, namely that the owner must be a permanent resident and fulfil the criteria that the Authority applies. This will not prevent temporary use of the Yealm Steps pontoons by non-residents for short stays (up to 10hrs), for example while awaiting the tide up Newton Creek.
4. Mooring painters must be a minimum length of 3 metres and tied on with a round turn and 2 half hitches. Bowlines and other knots that cannot be released easily under load should not be used.
5. An owner of a property at 'Old Coastguards' on the western side of the river may moor one tender on the pontoons that complies with Regulation No. 12. The owner will be required to advise the HM if they will not be using their tender for a period exceeding 48 hours and the HM will use his discretion to moor the tender elsewhere in the river to free up mooring space on the pontoons.

Practical Implementation of 2026 Yealm Steps Pontoons Measures

- Permanent residents who wish to moor a tender on the Yealm Steps pontoons will be issued with licence discs clearly identifying them as permanent residents. Licence discs issued to second homeowners, who can still secure their tenders elsewhere in the harbour will be marked differently to provide easy identification for Harbour Staff.
- Measures to take full effect from April 2026 to provide a grace period for owners unable to meet the stipulations listed above to remove their tenders from the pontoons.
- Owners of metal tenders should contact the harbour master regarding mooring availability on PM7 and PM8.
- From April onwards, non-compliant tenders will be removed and secured elsewhere on the river. A 'release' fee of £25 will be charged.
- N.B. in late 2026 the Authority will review the impact of measures 1-5 above and consider if they have achieved the desired outcomes, or whether further measures need to be introduced. These may include an absolute limit on tender numbers, and/or the introduction of an annual Yealm Steps mooring fee.
- During 2026, tender owners are encouraged to consider whether it might be feasible for them to share a tender with another resident. Also, the Authority understands the electric water taxi intends to operate around the harbour from 1st April unto at least the end of September charging favourable rates to mooring holders, so it may represent an alternative to retaining a tender on the pontoons. Operating times and dates will be :
 - core hours from 10:00 am to 16:00, 7 days a week
 - extended hours 09:00 am to 17:00 at weekends from 1st June through to 30th September
 - extended hours 09:00 am to 17:00 during bank holidays
 - extended hours 09:00 am to 21:00 during the school summer holidays.
 - Other times maybe possible by arrangement and with appropriate notice."

The Brook

Considerations

Addressing the tangle of tenders, kayaks and mooring lines around and adjacent to the launch slipway at the Brook requires some urgent and imaginative steps to be taken. Specific feedback on the 17th of November paper has only served to reinforce the recurring complaints received from residents over the past 2-3 years describing hassle, risk of injury and lack of consideration by vessel owners. Therefore, during 2026 the Authority will seek to implement the following improvements at the Brook.

Early-stage initiatives

- Lay chains and trots of small mooring buoys either side of the slipway , so that tenders can be moored ‘bows to the shore’ and transoms attached via stern lines to the mooring buoys. These will be designed to ensure tenders are moored perpendicular to the shore.
- Explore options to provide dedicated mooring space for regatta boats, which stakeholders will appreciate are synonymous with the regatta and the harbour’s rowing heritage.

Longer term initiatives

- Establish a clear delineated slipway channel that will restrict encroachment by moored tenders and kayaks into the channel.
- Explore the feasibility of establishing racking for kayak storage. To achieve this, the Authority may require certain permissions.
- Once kayak racking has been established, the Authority will not permit kayaks to be left on the foreshore at the Brook overnight.

Noss Hard and the Launching Sites and Surroundings at Bridgend Quay

Considerations

Congestion is less severe at Noss Hard and at Bridgend. However, certain measures could be taken that should help more orderly mooring of vessels at both locations. The 2 slipways at Bridgend often suffer from congestion and measures are needed to help to keep these clear so they can be used more easily for launch and recovery.

Early-stage initiatives during 2026.

- Lay chains and trots of small mooring buoys at Noss Hard and in the proximity of Bridgend Quay, so that tenders may be moored ‘bows to the shore’ and transoms attached via stern lines to the mooring buoys. These will be designed to ensure tenders are moored perpendicular to the shore.
- Explore options to provide dedicated mooring space for regatta boats, which stakeholders will appreciate are synonymous with the regatta and the harbour’s rowing heritage.

Longer term initiatives

- Assess the feasibility of additional racking for kayak storage at Noss Hard and at Bridgend Quay. To achieve this, the Authority may require certain permissions.
- Once kayak racking has been created, the Authority will no longer permit kayaks to be stored on the foreshore at Noss Hard, or in the vicinity of Bridgend Quay overnight.

Outhauls

Regulation 3.7 states that the maximum permissible boat length of a vessel secured on an outhaul is 16 feet, including overhangs/protrusions i.e. motor on the stern, bumpkins etc. To adhere to this regulation, the Authority has recently declined certain requests to secure a vessel longer than 16 feet on an outhaul and has also required a vessel owner to remove a vessel from their outhaul.

Notwithstanding these interventions, it is apparent a few outhaul owners have been placing vessels exceeding 16 feet on their outhauls.

For 2026 and beyond, Regulation 3.7 must be adhered to consistently by all outhaul owners. Non-compliant vessels are to be removed. Impacted owners should contact the harbour staff, who will work with them to help find an alternative suitable mooring in the harbour, for which they will need to pay appropriate mooring rates.

Tender ‘size-creep’

Context

In recent times there has been a steady increase in the size of many tenders and dinghies kept in the harbour. This trend has added to the negative impacts of congestion at launch and recovery locations. Without the Authority taking a firm position and providing clear direction for the future, there is little expectation that dinghy and tender owners will chose to self-regulate the size and configuration of tenders they kept in the harbour. Therefore:-

- **The Brook** – In 2027, the Authority intends to introduce a maximum size restriction for craft moored at the Brook, thereby aligning this launching site with Regulation 12 currently in force at Yealm Steps (*maximum 11ft 2ins length overall and 4ft 10ins beam and must be capable of being carried by two persons*). This is to ensure all can use the finite space and facilities available, craft must be capable of being carried by two persons. Owners with craft larger than this limit must ask permission from the Harbour Staff, who may grant permission for short periods of time in exceptional circumstances.
- **Noss Creek and other congested landing areas.** Similar size restrictions may well need to be introduced elsewhere in the harbour in the future.
- **‘Downsize’ encouragement.** At the end of the 2026 season, the Authority will consider the introduction of a reduced rate of harbour dues for 2027 to incentivise the use of craft less than 11ft 2in (3.4m).

The Authority understands that these changes may impact certain individuals and give rise to the need to re-locate craft. However, the Authority believes the measures are needed and should contribute to safer, more manageable launch and recovery sites and reduced vessel and pontoon damage.

Dominic Crawley

Chair

18th December 2025