



16/05/21

Access at Halton Rapids, Lancaster

Dear users of Halton Rapids,

In December 2021, a number of clubs and interested parties met to discuss access at the Halton Rapids site, in order to clarify the British Canoeing position for users.

Although a follow up email to attendees was sent round post meeting, I now realise that this did not include key holders and any other local clubs who paddle at Halton Rapids.

I'd like to take this opportunity to update those who use the site and may still be unclear on the present situation.

The Position at Halton

For many years, access at Halton was negotiated through Pat Green with Luneside Fisheries. Paddling was restricted to outside of the fishing season, plus a handful of negotiated summer dates.

Following the launch of the Clear Access, Clear Waters Charter¹, British Canoeing revised and clarified its policy toward access on inland waters in England. At that point, British Canoeing ceased to recognise or negotiate new voluntary agreements that were based on the need for permission to paddle on rivers:

"British Canoeing will no longer enter into or renew restrictive agreements based on an assumption of the need for permission to navigate. However, British Canoeing will remain open to genuine agreements and environmental measures to protect wildlife, guided by the principle of taking the least restrictive option".

"We encourage paddlers to continue to foster good relations with other water users and, in the rare cases where activities are genuinely incompatible, to find fair and sustainable ways to share the space locally"

¹ <https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/uploads/documents/Clear-Access-Clear-Waters-Charter-Document.pdf>



Subsequently, we updated the Halton Rapids website to state:

*Between April 1st and October 31st, Halton Rapids is a very popular angling venue, managed by Luneside Fishery. **All users are encouraged to share the space respectfully and responsibly at all times.** Paddlers are respectfully requested to refrain from undue disturbance of angling, in the interests of ensuring all users can enjoy fair, shared, sustainable open access.*

Access at Halton

British Canoeing believes that paddling can happen all year round, as long as all users share the space with respect and care. Paddlers should be aware that Halton is a very popular fishery and the prime season for that is during summer months. While this should not prevent paddling activity all together, users of the site should be respectful and sensitive to all who enjoy the site.

In order to minimise the risk of conflict, we are recommending that paddlers do not gather in large groups or occupy pools that are being fished during the main fishing season. If you encounter an angler, alert them to your presence and ask which way they wish you to pass them.

Clearly as with any popular recreational site, it is almost impossible to manage numbers of users, especially participants who have no connection to British Canoeing or local clubs. We would simply ask paddlers to be mindful of the sensitivities during summer and take responsible decisions based on the conditions.

British Canoeing is also recommending that paddlers who choose to paddle during the summer, launch and land from the South bank.

Ultimately the decision of whether to paddle at Halton in summer is up to the individual or club to decide. Nationally, there remains uncertainty around the law relating to access to inland waters in England and we know this position is disputed. While we cannot mitigate those legal uncertainties, we can take steps to minimise the chance of conflict occurring through our own actions.

We firmly believe that if paddlers are able to use the site responsibly and sensitively during the fishing season, there is no reason the two cannot coexist all year round.



Should conflict occur

The law of Trespass is an extremely complicated subject. While these five key points are put together to provide some guidance to paddlers, it does not provide definitive legal advice.

- 1. Always remain polite and calm** – If you feel you are not trespassing, communicate that view in a friendly and positive manner.
- 2. #ShareTheSpace** – Ensure you always paddle with respect for all other users. Check with any anglers the best way to pass them for example.
- 3. Don't disclose your details** – You are under no obligation to pass on your details unless asked to do so by a police officer.
- 4. Seek a positive resolution** – To defuse the situation, simply continuing your journey is often the best option. Advice to those accused of trespass is usually to leave the land in question by the quickest and safest means possible. Usually for a boat on the river this would mean continuing downstream.
- 5. Let us know** – Whether it is a positive example we can share, or a negative issue we can help follow up, please inform us of any situations that occur by using our [incident reporting form](#).

Contacts:

For further information regarding access at Halton, please contact one of the team:

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