



Gairloch Boat Club



Safety Briefing – Watercraft Order and Colregs

New legislation has been being introduced to crack down on the dangerous misuse of watercraft, with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency being granted more powers to prosecute perpetrators of accidents.

The new law came into force on 31 March 2023 and enables watercraft users to be prosecuted and bound by the same laws that apply to ships in order to help to prevent accidents. The RYA have published advice about the new law here:

<https://www.rya.org.uk/knowledge/regulations/merchant-shipping>

Personal and recreational watercraft will now be bound by the ‘Highway Code of the sea’ – international regulations which require users to act safely by maintaining a lookout, driving at safe speeds and outlining their responsibilities to other vessels. These regulations (sometimes referred to as ‘Colregs’) are available online:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281965/msn1781.pdf

This affects Gairloch Boat Club as the safety boats we use come under the new legislation. It also means the club is now legally responsible for the safe operation of our safety boats, and can be prosecuted if they are operated in an unsafe manner.

A safety briefing informing club members of their responsibilities has been carried out, and the main points are:

Maintaining a lookout: *Rule 5*

Driving at safe speeds *Rule 6*

Responsibilities to other vessels *Rule 7*

Action to avoid collision *Rule 8*

There are more rules covering other situations such as overtaking, vessels in narrow channels, head-on situations etc.

The trustees urge all club members, whether safety boat drivers or not, to familiarise themselves with the ‘Colregs’ as a starting point.