

# City Docks Operational Moorings and Facilities Policy 2025 - 2030



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## 1. Introduction

This policy outlines the management of vessel mooring in the Floating Harbour, which extends from Cumberland Basin in the West to Netham Lock in the East.

## 2. Objectives of the Mooring Policy

### 2.1 Main Objectives

- **Define Criteria:** Establish clear criteria for the operation, management, and planning of Harbour moorings and related quayside uses, considering local needs and the policy of encouraging public use and enjoyment of the city docks.
- **Promote Recreation:** Continue promoting the Floating Harbour as the region's central hub for water-based recreation and leisure, ensuring safe and easy access for all, including those with accessibility challenges.
- **Maintain Water Quality:** Ensure the maintenance and improvement of water quality in the City Docks.

### 2.2 Implementation

The mooring policy will designate roles for different stretches of the Floating Harbour and set guidelines for permitted mooring types. The Harbour Management Team will administer the policy, which will also guide and coordinate the work of Property Services and Planning, Transport, and Development Services.

### 2.3 Compliance

This policy supplements all relevant legislation, harbour bylaws, general directions, and mooring licence agreement conditions. It does not interfere with the Harbour Master's authority to allocate or regulate moorings within the City Docks/Floating Harbour.

## 3. Purpose

### 3.1 Policy Scope

This policy sets out the Council's approach to moorings operation within the Statutory Harbour Authority's jurisdiction, as defined by section 57 of the Harbours Act of 1964. The Harbour Master's powers are exercisable within the docks.

### ***3.2 Discretion and Amendments***

This policy is not a legal document. The Council, as the Statutory Harbour Authority for the City Docks, reserves the right to make discretionary decisions and will provide reasons for any actions that deviate from the policy. The Council may amend the policy as needed.

### ***3.3 Fairness and Equity***

The Council aims to apply a consistent, fair, and equitable approach to new, existing, and potential berth holders in the Bristol City Docks/Floating Harbour and the Harbour Estate. The operational policy and associated conditions have been formulated with the intention of being recognised as fair, reasonable, and equitable.

### ***3.4 Decision Factors***

Decisions regarding mooring facilities will consider several factors, including:

- Safety and efficiency.
- Navigation requirements.
- Environmental conservation.
- Harbour financial viability.
- Berth availability.
- Other Harbour users.

### ***3.5 Overall Aim***

The Council's overall aim for managing the City Docks:

- To retain and enhance the character of Bristol City Docks/Floating Harbour while updating Harbour facilities to meet the requirements and expectations of residents and visitors.
- Through collection of fees, charges and leases across the City Docks estate and harbour area, move to become financially self-sufficient.

### ***3.6 Engagement***

An engagement exercise has been conducted involving the Harbour Committee and the Stakeholder Group in formulating this policy.

### ***3.7 Advisory Mechanism***

One of the primary aims of this policy is to provide a mechanism for advising interested parties on how the Council will discharge its various functions and responsibilities for moorings.

### **3.8 Interested Parties**

Those identified as having an interest in the mooring policy include current and future mooring tenants, visiting boaters, commercial boat operators, stakeholders, organisations, and individual community members who have an interest in the harbour or are directly affected by activities within the harbour and its environs.

## **4. General Provisions**

### ***4.1 Safe and Responsible Use***

A principal responsibility of the City Council is to ensure the safe, responsible, and proportionate use of its quaysides and riverbanks where mooring is permitted, in line with its statutory duties and responsibilities.

## **5. Review of Policy Aims**

### ***5.1 Policy Duration and Review***

This policy will remain in place for five years, after which it will be reviewed. However, if unforeseen or external circumstances necessitate fundamental changes, the policy will be reviewed before the anticipated end date of 2030.

### ***5.2 Sustainable Management***

The overall aim is to manage the City Council moorings sustainably, balancing the needs of boat owners and mooring users with the recreational and residential needs of others. The policy also considers the broader environmental needs of the locality, including protecting and enhancing the landscape, public amenities, nature conservation, and heritage interests. This policy serves as a broad guide to achieving the City Council's objectives for the harbour as a place of quality, distinction, variety, and vitality—a place all visitors can enjoy, be proud of, and wish to visit.

## **6. Stakeholder Engagement**

### ***6.1 Principal Stakeholder Groups***

The Council will continue to liaise with several principal stakeholder groups throughout this policy's five-year duration, including the Harbour Committee, Bristol Harbour Stakeholder Group, Harbourside Forum, and the Harbour User Group. The ongoing contributions of these organizations are considered beneficial for the successful management and development of the moorings and associated areas.

## **6.2 Other Stakeholders**

Several other organizations have stakeholder interests and influence, including rowing organizations, angling associations, resident associations, and commercial interests. The Council will seek to develop a more effective dialogue with these representative organizations to explore opportunities for improving access and the river experience for a range of activities.

# **7. Functions of the Floating Harbour**

## **7.1 Overview**

The following paragraphs confirm the Harbour's complex range of roles and underline the need for a clear mooring policy as a foundation for its proper management.

## **7.2 Commercial Port and Haven**

The only port-related commercial operations remaining in the Harbour are ferry companies running scheduled services, charter companies offering tours, and several boat building and maintenance organisations focused on repair and restoration. Other commercial activities do not involve the regular movement of vessels.

The City Council, as Harbour Authority, is legally obliged to maintain the Harbour as navigable water, a requirement that can only be changed by an Act of Parliament. Retaining navigation rights allows for courtesy visits, including large seagoing vessels for recreational and promotional events, consistent with the leisure role of the docks promoted by the Council.

## **7.3 Water Sports**

The use of the harbour for water sports recreation has increased, particularly for paddleboarding, dinghy sailing, canoeing, rowing, swimming, and angling. These activities do not always require mooring space but constrain the positioning of moorings and other activities in the water. Slipways and water facilities are located at Baltic Wharf and Bristol Marina.

## **7.4 Inland Waterway Terminus and Marinas**

Inland waterway cruisers have long used the Floating Harbour, with the Kennet and Avon Canal providing a potential link to the Thames. The marina industry and leisure boating in the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary continue to grow, creating a demand for moorings for sea-going leisure craft.

This demand has led to the establishment of managed serviced marinas at the Albion Dockyard, Avon Quay (primarily a yacht brokerage), and marina-style moorings on St Augustine's Reach, The Grove, Bathurst Basin, and Redcliffe Backs. Further moorings are being provided as part of significant developments at Harbourside, Welsh Back, Temple Quay, Capricorn Quay, and Redcliffe Wharf.

## **7.5 Events Arena**

The City Council promotes the use of the Floating Harbour for several prestigious national and local waterborne events. Some of these events may require the removal of all moored vessels west of Redcliffe Bridge. This requirement, which includes providing alternative serviced berths elsewhere in the docks for some user categories, significantly impacts mooring policy.

## **7.6 Visitor Attraction**

In addition to prestigious water-based events, the harbour area significantly contributes to the city's tourist economy and serves as a valuable recreational resource for locals. The City Council has been developing and promoting the "Historical Harbour" through various visitor facilities with a maritime heritage theme for many years. As part of this promotion, the mooring of vessels of historic interest will continue to be encouraged.

## **7.7 Residential Resource**

There are several residential moorings that require adequately serviced berths available year-round. These vessels contribute to the harbour's vitality and interest. A new Live Aboard mooring licence is now available, and no additional residential licences will be granted.

# **8. The Four Reaches of the Harbour**

The Floating Harbour can be divided into distinct areas, each with a particular character and function. These areas are:

## ***8.1 Cumberland Basin***

Cumberland Basin is part of the entrance system at the western end of the dock complex. It is kept clear of all moored craft for operational reasons and is periodically scoured at low tide to remove silt.

## ***8.2 Water Activity Harbour***

This area stretches from the Underfall Yard to the Graving Dock (Albion Dockyard). It is intended for water sports and active recreation. To minimize hazards to users and maximize accessible water areas, only very limited mooring is allowed here. This is also utilised as temporary moorings for vessels relocated from the Harbour Arena for events.

## ***8.3 The Harbour Arena***

The Harbour Arena stretches from the SS Great Britain to Redcliffe Bridge, including St Augustine's Reach. Its role as the hub of activity and interest in the harbour will be consolidated. Most major public events will continue to be centred here. Consequently, vessels moored in this area may be subject to occasional relocation. There can be no guarantee of relocation to a serviced berth for the

duration of the event. Similar constraints may apply to vessels moored immediately east of Prince Street Bridge.

## **8.4 The Upper Reaches**

This area of the harbour stretches from Redcliffe Bridge to Netham Lock and accommodates a mix of leisure, residential, and commercial moorings. Commercial moorings are generally located between SS Great Britain and Bristol Bridge. However, they can also be accommodated above Bristol Bridge, subject to navigational restrictions imposed by the height of its central arch.

# **9. Moorings**

## **9.1 Mooring Classifications**

The classification for moorings in the Floating Harbour is as follows:

- Leisure moorings.
- Live-aboard moorings (annual).
- Legacy residential moorings (licence).
- Commercial moorings.
- Winter moorings.
- Courtesy and historic vessels.
- Operational moorings.

Each type is discussed in detail below. The distribution of moorings in the harbour is shown in the plan contained in Appendix 2.

## **9.2 Leisure Moorings**

The provision of moorings for leisure crafts (mostly smaller crafts used by private individuals for leisure and recreation use) is a vital part of the recreational use of the Floating Harbour. Leisure moorings are provided in various locations to allow operational and managerial flexibility, catering to varying demands throughout the year.

## **9.3 Central Grouped Moorings**

Central grouped moorings are located at Bathurst Basin, Old Junction Lock, Redcliffe Backs, the Grove, and St Augustine's Reach. Marina-style moorings are also provided at Harbourside, Redcliffe Wharf, Temple Back, Capricorn Quay, and Temple Quay. Licences are granted to individual leisure craft as follows:

## **9.4 Short-Term Licences (Visitors)**

This licence is intended to accommodate most leisure crafts that visit the harbour. Craft will be licensed to stay for up to 14 days, renewable at the discretion of the Harbour Authority. Short

stay/overnight moorings are provided at the Arnolfini pontoons, the Harbour Inlet and Lloyds Amphitheatre. Additional services, such as waste pump-out, are also provided.

### ***9.5 Annual Leisure Licences***

These licences allow owners to moor their vessels in the harbour for the period of the licence, which is invoiced annually. Licences are not for a specific location and are subject to the terms and conditions of the licence.

The number of service points (water, electricity, etc.) for leisure craft has been expanded. Self-operated pump-out systems are provided at The Harbour Inlet, Mud Dock, and Temple Backs, allowing boaters to empty their holding tanks. All craft must use these facilities to prevent pollution of the harbour. A pump out facility is also available at Bristol Marina.

As the City Council actively promotes the harbour for leisure craft use, providing additional service facilities remains a priority. These facilities may be provided by the Council, or in partnership with developers of adjacent quaysides.

### ***9.6 Live-Aboard Moorings***

Introduced in 2024, live-aboard mooring licences permit the use of vessels as a main residence. The number of licences is currently limited to seventy, but this will be reviewed based on popularity and the provision of supporting facilities across the dock's estate.

Vessel owners pay an increased fee over leisure mooring costs to reflect the sanctioned use of their vessels as a residence 365 days a year.

The allocation and renewal of live-aboard craft licences will be subject to current policy statements. Pump-out facilities are provided at the Mud Dock, Harbour Inlet, Temple Backs, and Bristol Marina.

All live-aboard vessels moored in the Harbour Arena area must be able to be moved to create space for events. Suitable serviced short-stay berths are made available for these occasions.

No car parking spaces will be allocated on the quayside for any live-aboard mooring. Occasional vehicle access for servicing vessels is possible in most locations, with short-term access passes issued.

### ***9.7 Legacy Residential Moorings***

There are a small number of vessels in the harbour with licences providing residential mooring. Residential Mooring licences have a term of up to 25 years.

As these licences expire, unless otherwise stipulated in the contract, licence holders will be offered annual live-aboard licences allowing continued use as residences.

## ***9.8 Commercial Moorings***

There is a recognised demand in the Floating Harbour for permanent, dedicated commercial moorings connected to the quayside for primary services. Currently, commercial vessels have dedicated moorings managed by the Harbour Office. While capacity is currently met, further moorings will be provided as part of development opportunities.

Commercial moorings are subject to the following controls:

- All vessels seeking dedicated commercial mooring require planning consent and a mooring agreement drawn up by Legal Services (Property Team). Planning consent ensures control over the appearance of vessels, their arrangements for servicing and effluent disposal, and compatibility with existing or proposed requirements.
- Any commercial vessel trading in strategic locations of the Harbour affected by events must be able to move to allow for occasional relocation.

Commercial moorings can be categorized as follows:

## ***9.9 Pub, Restaurant, and Entertainment Vessels***

These types of uses are encouraged in appropriate locations to provide the Floating Harbour area with facilities that complement the Council's leisure policy. Care must be taken when selecting locations to ensure that the amenities of nearby residential properties are not detrimentally affected. This includes managing noise, smells, and disturbances from traffic and parking. Such uses of vessels are subject to the usual public entertainment and alcohol licensing requirements.

## ***9.10 Light Industrial***

Specific light industrial uses are acceptable in designated locations. Uses such as craft workshops can complement the Maritime Heritage theme of the harbour and provide working examples of traditional skills for visitors to enjoy.

Noise may be a factor in the vessel's proposed use; therefore, locations must not detrimentally affect nearby residential amenities.

## ***9.11 Floating Hotels***

There are a few opportunities for floating hotels on a relatively small scale in the Floating Harbour. Constraints include the need for the vessel to have a suitable appearance and for satisfactory vehicle access and associated car parking. Car parking will not be permitted alongside the vessel on the quayside.

### ***9.12 Water Passenger Transport Services***

Additional development opportunities for water passenger transport services may require “depot berths.” Therefore, shore-based facilities may be necessary, subject to planning and, most likely, landlord control.

When considering proposals for the commercial use of a vessel, the City Council looks for proposals involving vessels with intrinsic interest in terms of their age, type, or historical connections with the city, or conversions sympathetic to their original form and function.

No car parking rights will be conferred with commercial mooring, although service access is usually possible. If planning policy requires parking connected with the use of a vessel, it must be provided in an acceptable form and location as part of the planning consent, including agreement with the City Council whenever the Council’s landholding is involved.

All refuse and waste generated by the use will, wherever possible, be stored on board the vessel unless it is connected to a mains sewer. Bins must be kept aboard and stored satisfactorily to avoid prejudicing the appearance of the vessels. Vessels must comply with the Harbour Master’s requirements for refuse and waste disposal, which may vary depending on the disposal regime in operation.

### ***9.13 Winter Moorings***

Winter moorings are available to suitable vessels and will be situated at Narrow Quay and The Harbour Inlet. They will be operated under a pro-rata contract with the same terms and conditions as live-aboard moorings.

These moorings are usually offered from October 1st until April 1st each year, but these dates may be adjusted depending on the main Easter break. Any winter moorings still occupied after the licence date will be charged at full visitor rates.

No concessions to fees will be made if adverse weather or any other circumstances beyond the control of the Harbour Authority prevents departure at the end of the winter mooring period. Vessels taking up these moorings should be aware of the possibility of these charges.

### ***9.14 Courtesy and Historic Vessel Moorings***

The City Centre Local Plan recognises the value of courtesy and historic craft in adding variety and character to the Harbour. Courtesy moorings will continue to be provided for Naval and other major seagoing vessels visiting the city, usually for short-term periods. Serviced areas within the Harbour Arena will be reserved for this purpose.

The following criteria will be applied in considering the provision of courtesy and historic mooring:

- Courtesy and historic vessels visiting the Harbour on a short-term basis will be licensed in the usual manner, and services will be provided.
- Some historic vessels may be moored in the Harbour on a long-term basis, serving as floating museums or having a commercial function.
- Limited operational car parking may be considered for courtesy or historic mooring.

### ***9.15 Operational Moorings/Facilities***

Operational moorings are essential to the running and maintenance of the City Docks. Quayside space in the docks is reserved for operational purposes. For example, Cumberland Basin is required as a holding area for vessels entering and leaving the docks, and Mardyke Wharf is often used by vessels awaiting entry to the Graving Dock. There are also operational moorings at Underfall Yard.

### ***9.16 Prohibited Mooring Locations***

There are several areas where mooring is expressly prohibited to ensure safe and effective river navigation.

### ***9.17 Mooring Location Maps***

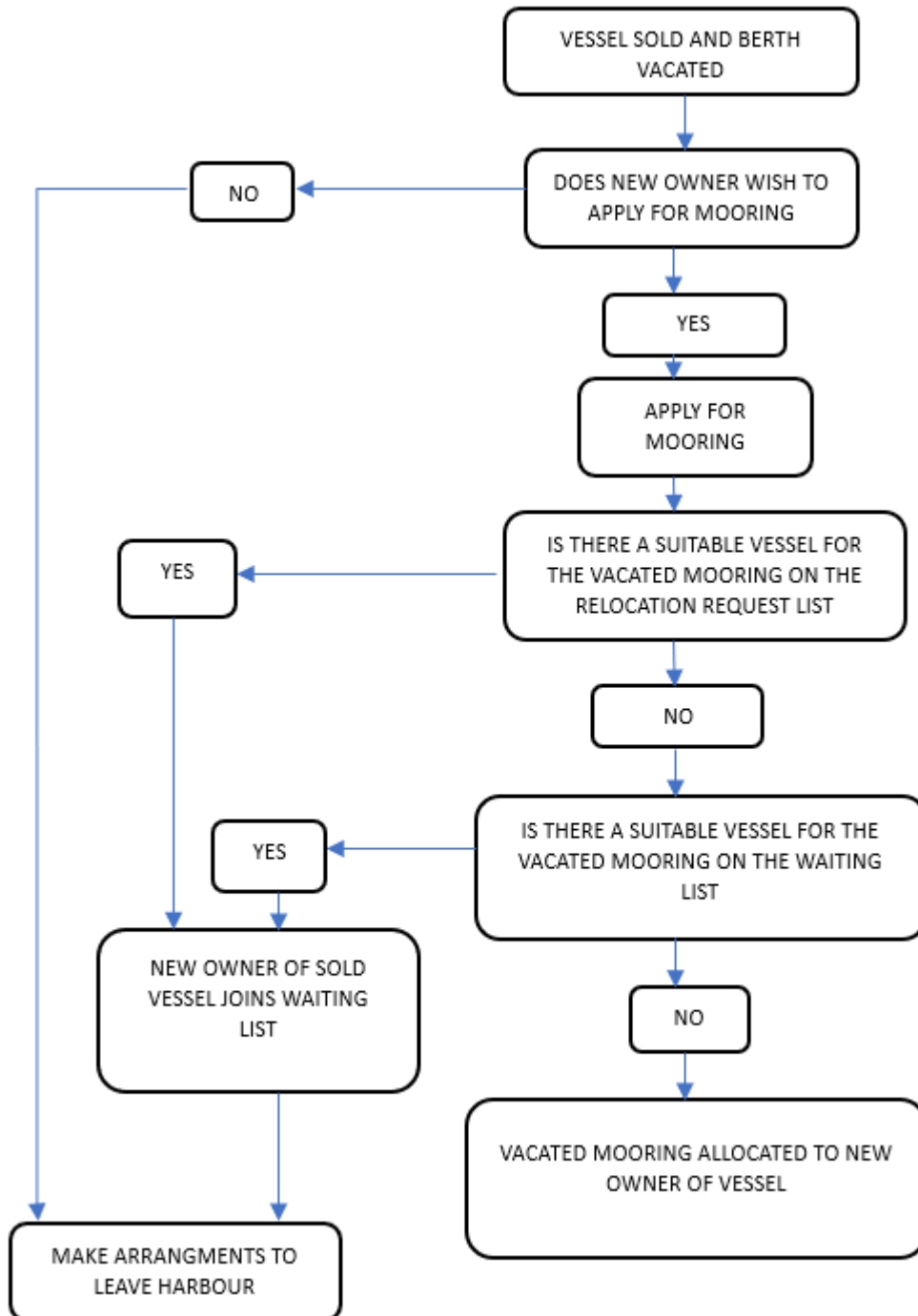
Illustrative location maps are provided as an appendix to this policy document.

### ***9.18 Licensing Details***

Most moorings currently operated by the Council are reserved for boats with a 12-month Live-Aboard or Leisure mooring licence provided by the Council. The licence grants a right to moor for a specific vessel owner and cannot be transferred to another owner, for example, if the boat is sold. The licence does not confer a right to moor in any specific location and includes provisions that require boats to be moved when necessary to permit Harbour maintenance or facilitate Harbour-based events. There is no guaranteed right of renewal for any existing licence holder.

The Harbour Authority policy no longer allows the transfer of moorings. Any sale of craft will require its subsequent removal from the Harbour.

9.19 Flow Chart Showing Sale of Vessel Outcomes.



## 10. Berth Changes

Occasionally, the number of berths in a particular area or of a specific type may change to compensate for an improvement in facilities elsewhere, if there is a net gain to the environment. This policy will be constantly reviewed.

The Council currently has:

- Up to four Short-Term Large Vessel emergency visitor moorings (Princes Wharf, Bush Corner, Amphitheatre, and Mardyke Wharf).
- Approximately 50 Visitor Moorings.
- 7 Commercial Moorings.
- 12 Residential Moorings (legacy agreements) at Welsh Back and Wapping Wharf.
- Leisure Moorings available at all locations as indicated on the Mooring Location Map.
- 70 Live-Aboard Moorings.

## 11. Applying for a Live-Aboard or Leisure Licence

### 11.1 Application Requirements

Applicants for a live-aboard or leisure mooring must provide:

- An original insurance certification detailing third-party liability to a minimum sum of £3,000,000.
- A recent photograph of their vessel taken within the last calendar month with their application.
- A valid Boat Safety Scheme certification.
- Two of the following: copies of utility bill, bank statement, driving licence, council tax bill (not required for live-aboard licence).

Once a mooring is offered and accepted, the applicant must sign the appropriate Mooring Licence Agreement.

### 11.2. Renewal of Annual Leisure or Live-Aboard Berth Licence

Existing holders of mooring licences will be granted a licence renewal at the end of their current licence period, provided they have adhered to the terms and conditions of the licence throughout the preceding period.

Annual licensing starts on the 1st of May each year. To renew an annual leisure or live aboard licence, applicants must:

- Provide evidence that their vessel meets the Boat Safety Scheme requirements.
- Provide copies of two of the following: utility bill, bank statement, driving licence, council tax bill (not required for live aboard licence).
- Supply a recent photograph of their boat (taken within the last month).
- Insure their craft against third-party risks and passenger liability to a minimum of £3,000,000 for any one claim.
- Have paid in full the previous year's mooring fees and any other fees charged.

The Council shall have the right to allocate a change of berth at any time to optimise overall berth usage and space management. If a berth has been assigned that is either too large or too small, a more appropriate alternative will be offered at a new location more suitable for the size of the vessel.

Any vessel moored in the City Docks/Floating Harbour must be the named vessel stated in the Council's standard mooring licence, and no other vessel shall be authorised to use the same berth.

The Council's standard mooring licences only relate to ONE BOAT ONLY and do not enable the licence holder to put another "smaller" vessel or "tender" into the water. Any tenders should be kept upon the mother craft if the vessel was designed to have a tender, or they will be removed from the City Docks/Floating Harbour.

The Council reserves the right to refuse and reject any future applications made by a licensee who has a previous history of breaching the terms of the licence.

The Council's mooring allocations will occur annually, generally in January and February, ready for the following financial year (starting in April).

### ***11.3 Waiting List***

Where a suitable berth is unavailable, the mooring application will be kept on file. This will operate for both live aboard and leisure applications.

To ensure the effective management of the moorings the Harbour Authority reserves the right not to offer available berths for occupation.

### ***11.4 Allocation Process***

When a berth becomes available vessel owners requesting a relocation are considered in the first instance. If there are no suitable vessels on the relocation list the berth will be allocated to the first suitable vessel on the waiting list.

### ***11.5 Registration Fee***

An application fee of £50 (non-refundable or transferable) is required when applying for a mooring. If there is not a suitable mooring available, your application will be placed on a waiting list. The list will be closed if oversubscribed.

### ***11.6 Mooring Offers***

An offer of mooring can only be made to the original applicant. Only one mooring offer will be made, and any subsequent offer can only be made in exceptional circumstances.

### ***11.7 Entry Date***

The waiting list entry will be dated the same day the fee is received.

### ***11.8 Payment and Placement***

When a Berth is offered and accepted, and no boat is immediately available, the applicant must pay the full fee for the size of the berth applied for. The applicant has twelve months to place their craft on the berth.

### ***11.9 Berth Size***

Berth sizes vary and will not be suitable for every vessel.

The length of vessel entered on the application cannot be changed. Any changes may result in the offer of a berth being revoked.

### ***11.10 Confirmation***

Occasionally, applicants will be asked to provide written confirmation of their wish to stay on the waiting list. Unless written confirmation is provided, the applicant's details will be deleted from our records.

### ***11.11 Applicant Responsibility***

It is the applicant's responsibility to keep the Harbour Authority advised of any change in their contact details.

### ***11.12 Terms and Conditions***

The terms and conditions of use of any Berth are contained within the mooring licence agreement.

## **12. Partnerships**

Partnerships must be registered with the Harbour Authority when the berth was first allocated. Any subsequent ownership or partnership buy-out changes will not be recognised.

The Harbour Authority will only recognise shared ownership up to one-third, i.e., a maximum of three partners, including the applicant. All partners must be over the age of eighteen.

## **13. Berth Allocation**

Berths are allocated as they become available throughout the year.

Mooring facilities left unused for more than one year will be reallocated. The Harbour Authority reserves the right to use any empty berth for mooring boats at any time, having notified the berth holder.

The Harbour Authority retains the right to move vessels and maintains absolute control of berth allocation. Licence holders are not entitled to the exclusive use of any berth but shall use such berths as allocated by the Harbour Authority.

### ***13.1 Boat Clubs***

Clubs will manage their own moorings, with the agreement that they will not be permitted to accept applications for live aboard moorings and will abide by the leisure licence conditions. Should this not be followed, the Harbour Authority reserves the right to terminate this agreement and manage the moorings themselves.

Live aboard licences will only be offered by the Harbour Authority.

## **14. Inheritance**

Should a family member wish to continue using the berth after the death or incapacity of the listed holder, they must apply to the Harbour Authority.

Harbour berths cannot be inherited other than by a legitimate “partner” who meets the requirements of a partnership arrangement as set out in section 12.

## 15. Disabled Access

The Harbour Authority provides a range of moorings and other facilities, each with various forms of access, and will provide disabled access to facilities wherever this is reasonably practicable.

The Harbour Authority will make reasonable adjustments where possible.

Harbour Authority staff can provide advice to anyone uncertain about which berth would be the most appropriate.

## 16. Laying Up and Repairing Vessels

No vessel shall be permitted to lay up on its mooring for more than two years. Laying up on the foreshore is only permitted with the Council's written permission. No substantial or significant work of repair or maintenance to a vessel berthed against the mooring shall take place without the prior consent of the Harbour Master.

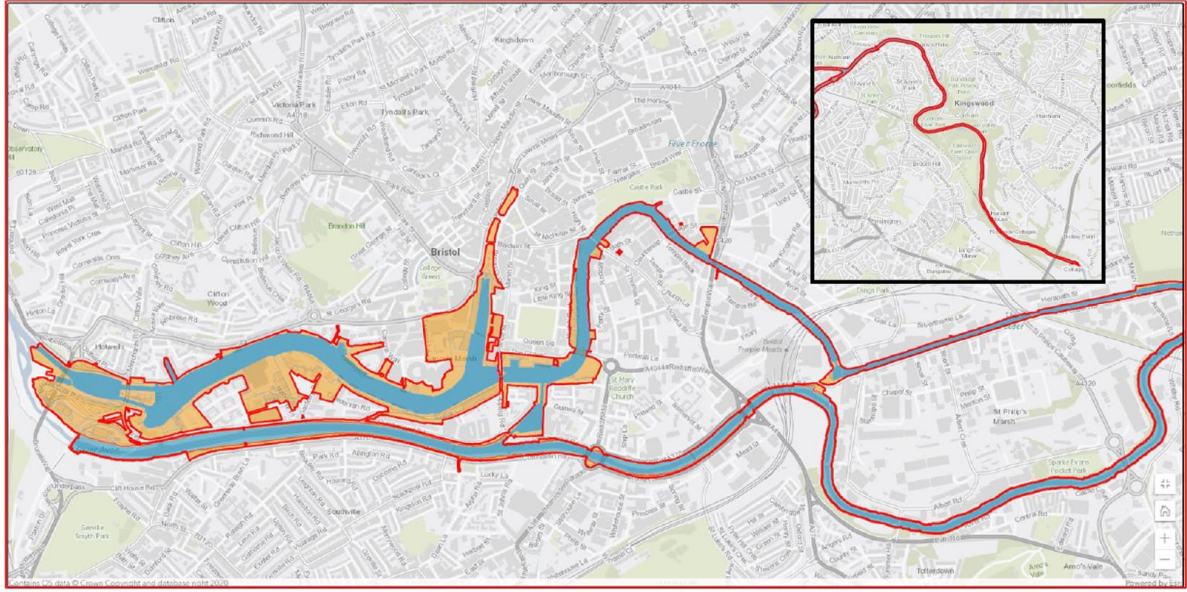
## 17. Appendices

1. Extent of Bristol Harbour Authority jurisdiction.
2. Mooring areas in Bristol Floating Harbour.

## 18. Document Control

Version	Date	Owner	Summary of Changes
1	June 2025	Head of Service, Bristol Harbour Authority.	First Publication





**Appendix 2**



Leisure, Live aboard, and Commercial Moorings.



Visitor Moorings.

