

Boat Test Area Review
Report by Head of Safety Management

Summary: This report sets out the background to the introduction of the Boat Test Areas and the findings and proposals from the recent review.
Members' views are sought on the proposals as set out in Section 6.

1 Background

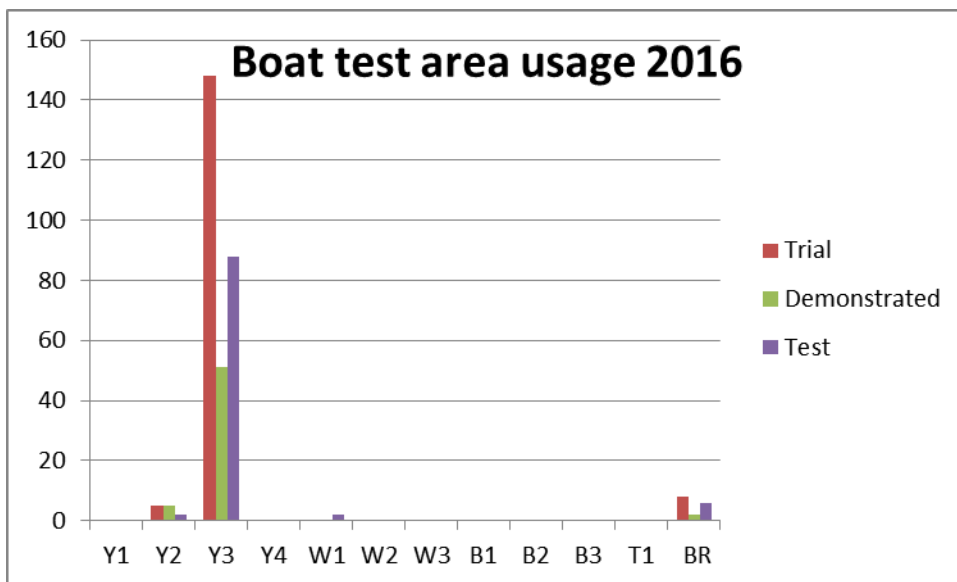
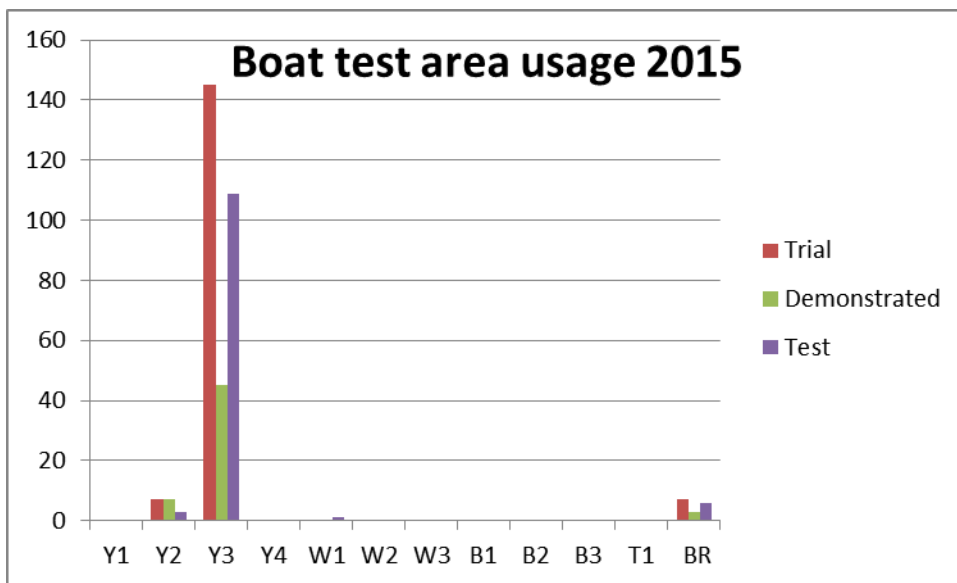
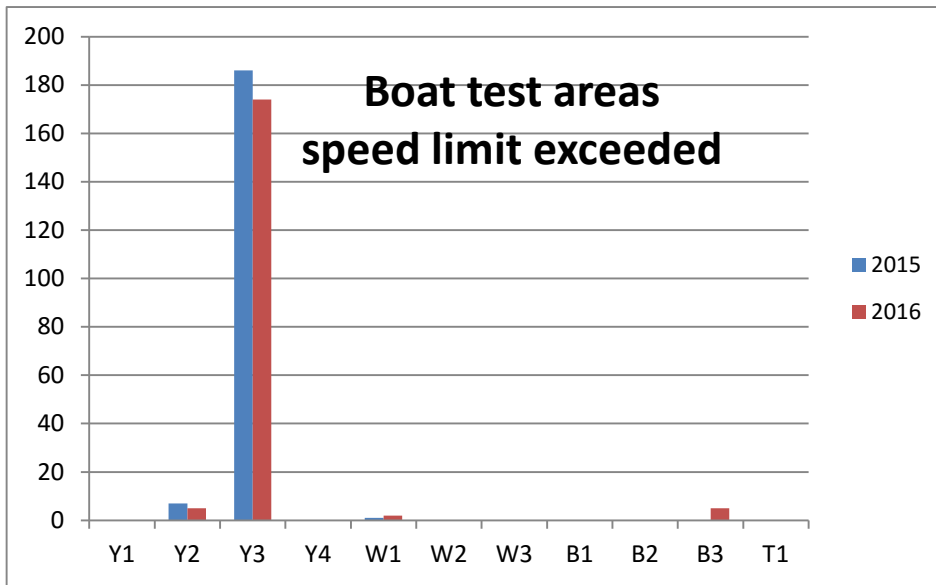
- 1.1 Boat testing at speeds in excess of the speed limit has existed formally on the Broads for over 36 years and informally for much longer. By virtue of the Great Yarmouth Port and Haven Commissioners "Norfolk Broads Speed Limit" Byelaws 1978, areas within the Broads river network were formally set aside for the testing, demonstrating and trial of vessels by bona fide boatyard businesses at speeds exceeding the defined speed limit.
- 1.2 The Great Yarmouth Port and Haven Commissioners "Great Yarmouth Port and Haven (River Speed Limits)(Vessels) Byelaws 1989 further added conditions to the 1978 byelaws including times when the areas could be used for the activity, additionally requirements for log books and display of registration marks were included.
- 1.3 The Broads Authority Speed Limit Byelaws 1992 repealed the above byelaws and generally replicated the requirements of the 1989 byelaws. The 1992 Byelaws sets out an exemption to the speed limits under byelaw 5 (2) b which enables boatyard vessels to use certain areas at certain times for the purposes of trial, demonstration or testing after repair.
- 1.4 These designated areas and times are set out in Schedule 3 of the Byelaws which in summary details 4 areas on the river Yare, 3 Areas on the river Waveney, 3 areas on the river Bure and 1 area on the river Thurne where this activity is permitted. See Appendix A.
- 1.5 In accordance with the requirements of the Speed Limit Byelaws boatyard operators are issued with registration marks and toll plaques on application known as "Trade Plates". A further requirement of this issue is that the boatyard must complete a log book supplied by the Authority on each occasion the trade plates are used.
- 1.6 The Port Marine Safety Code Hazard Review Action Plan 2011 identified that a review was to be completed following the assessment of hazard no. 002 "Powered Craft speeding".

2 Current Position

- 2.1 Following a review in 2014 a number of management options were developed. Late in 2014 new log books were developed which allow for the recording of a data which would assist further reviews. This new log book required the boatyard to additionally indicate which boat test area they had used, for what purpose and whether the speed limits were exceeded. The base data of who was at the helm, the owner, boat name date and time etc. were preserved.
- 2.2 These new log books were distributed in March 2015 to boatyards ready for the new season. The boatyards were also required to log in with Broads Control when they were intending to use the test areas for high speed testing or demonstrating.
- 2.3 During November and December 2015 and 2016 Broads Authority rangers visited boatyards to collect logbooks and / or the data therein to assist this review.
- 2.4 There were 72 trade plates and logbooks issued to boatyards by the Authority in 2015/16 and 65 issued in 2016/17 toll year. Not all of the boatyards would have intended to use the facility of testing/ demonstrating etc. at high speed as the trade plates have historically been used for moving boats around the system and to deliver boats to other areas.

3 Usage data

- 3.1 There were 194 occasions over the 2015 period where the zones were used for high speed activity and 186 occasions in 2016. Most of this activity was centred on the Yare 3 zone.
- 3.2 Breydon water was used on 10 occasions for boat testing in 2015 and on 12 occasions in 2016 however the data does not appear in the figure below as there is no speed limit set for Breydon water and the speed limit could not therefore have been exceeded.



4 Complaints

4.1 There have been no complaints registered by Broads Control relating to the activity of boat testing, trial or demonstration during the two year period.

5. Bank Erosion

5.1 Whilst bank erosion is not routinely monitored Ranger observations have confirmed that there has been no issue with bank erosion over the years in the Yare 3 zone where the majority of the boat testing activity takes place.

5.2 However there are vulnerable areas on the north bank of Yare 3 where large trees are establishing themselves and blocking out the light which reduces the stand of reed. This lack of wash absorbing reed may makes these areas more susceptible to bank erosion from wash generated by boat testing and routine boating activities.

5.3 Rangers, the RSPB and a local sailing club are working together to remove these large trees so that the reed is given a chance to re-establish in this area.

6 Future Management Proposals

6.1 It is clear that this facility is essential for the boating industry and whilst there is potential for conflict with other users of the river and adjacent land this needs to be balanced with the potential impact on the local economy if these test areas were to disappear.

6.2 It is therefore proposed not to change the current management and for the Rangers to continue to monitor both the use of the areas and the completion of log books via spot checks.

7 Consultation

7.1 The Boat Safety Management Group was consulted on the proposals at its recent meeting on the 18th September 2017 and the Group was content with the current management arrangements in place.

Background papers: None

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Broads Plan Objectives: 4.3 Implement, promote and monitor measures to maintain and improve safety and security for the navigation and boats

Appendices: APPENDIX A – Maps of the Boat Test areas

