

# Press release: New help for small businesses launched

A new online tax forum and dedicated webchat service for small businesses and the self-employed has been launched today by HMRC.

The Small Business Online Forum is a quick and easy way for small businesses to get answers to their tax questions, as well as help with:

- starting a business
- support for growing a business – including taking on employees and expanding
- buying and selling abroad
- completing tax returns
- tax credits

Linked to the forum, HMRC's new dedicated webchat service offers direct support to businesses and the self-employed.

[Mel Stride](#), Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Paymaster General, said:

The UK's 5.4 million small businesses play a vital role in our economy. We want to help businesses get off the ground and support them as they grow.

That is why we are launching a new forum and webchat service which will give these companies useful hints and tips – including how to complete tax returns, grow a business and trade outside the UK – so that they can continue to flourish.

1. The Small Business Online Forum forms part of the government's business tax roadmap announced at Budget 2016.
  2. A pilot was launched in March 2017 and since then the forum has grown to have more than a 1,000 registered users.
  3. The forum does not deal with questions about taxpayers' individual circumstances. Any comments which include personal information will be deleted.
  4. While no personal or case-specific information is posted on the forum, customers may be offered help through HMRC's webchat service and their personal case handled by an adviser.
  5. Follow HMRC Press Office on [Twitter](#).
  6. HMRC's Flickr channel can be found [here](#)
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## **Map: River Thames investment programme 2017 to 2018 map**

*Updated:* Updated with issue 4

Map of the River Thames 2017 to 2018 investment programme to help you plan your cruising over the winter.

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## **Notice: River Thames investment programme 2017 to 2018**

*Updated:* Updated to issue 4

The locks will be closed from the first date listed and re-open the day after the final date.

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## **Press release: How to watch marine wildlife responsibly**

As large numbers of visitors begin to flock to the Cornish coast, the Cornwall Marine and Coastal Code Group is sending out a timely reminder on how to responsibly enjoy watching marine wildlife such as dolphins and basking sharks.

The species most often affected are seabirds and seals as they come on to land to rest, but dolphins and basking sharks close to shore will quickly attract a lot of attention, making them vulnerable to overcrowding or being chased and can lead to accidents.

The Cornwall Marine and Coastal Code group includes Cornwall Wildlife Trust, the RSPB, Cornwall Seal Group, National Trust, Marine Stranding Network and the British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR), Cornwall Council, Devon and Cornwall Police Marine & Coastal Policing Team, the Marine Management Organisation and Natural England.

Full guidelines can be found on the [Cornwall Wildlife Trust's website](#). These recommendations include:

- keep your distance from resting animals such as seals and seabirds on land
- remain calm and quiet so resting animals are not disturbed and scared off
- move slowly and avoid sudden changes in direction and speed if animals are nearby
- stay side on to the animals while watching them rather than approaching directly
- if there are other boats/kayaks etc nearby then ensure the animals have plenty of space and an obvious escape route should they choose to leave, and to not pursue them when they do

One such incident off Padstow in 2013 resulted in the death of a bottlenose dolphin calf from a local inshore pod, threatening the long-term survival of the group. [The people responsible were successfully prosecuted.](#)

Dan Jarvis from BDMLR said:

The South West has an amazing range of marine species that are a big part of why lots of people love to visit the region, but sometimes people's encounters with our wildlife do not go well for the animals involved.

We are incredibly fortunate that we have these animals here in the first place and it is a privilege that we're able to see them, so we want to help people get the best out of these encounters by following some simple guidelines that will avoid causing distress and harm.

By encouraging people to use these guidelines, we hope that they in turn will share them with others, so that many more people are aware of how their actions, and those of others, can affect the behaviour of animals that need to use these habitats too. We are all out on the coast to enjoy the amazing environment we have here and we need to make sure the animals that live there are still able to enjoy it too, otherwise they could abandon the area and we all lose out.

## **Guidance for recreational boaters**

The Green Blue, the joint environment campaign run by the Royal Yachting Association and British Marine, has worked with other organisations including the MMO to produce The Green Wildlife Guide for Boaters. This advises boaters on how to get the best experience out of their wildlife encounters by acting responsibly and cautiously to minimize the risk of disturbance while keeping participants and their boats safe.

The guide is [available online](#) or a hard copy can be obtained by emailing [info@thegreenblue.org.uk](mailto:info@thegreenblue.org.uk).

Campaign Manager for The Green Blue, Kate Fortnam, said:

It is perfectly safe and lawful to view marine wildlife by adopting a few simple measures – acting responsibly and cautiously to minimise the risk of disturbance is always the safest course of action.

Visit [thegreenblue.org.uk](http://thegreenblue.org.uk) for your copy of The Green Wildlife Guide for Boaters, or drop us a line for a hard copy.

## **Reporting incidents of marine wildlife disturbance**

If you see marine species such as dolphins, porpoise or whales being disturbed, please contact your [nearest MMO office](#) or local police force wildlife crime officer on 101.

Incidents of disturbance in Cornwall can be reported to the Cornwall Wildlife Trust's disturbance hotline on 0345 201 2626, which has seen a steady increase in the number of calls over the last few weeks with the warmer weather.

## **Laws protecting marine wildlife**

Details of the laws protecting marine species can be found on [the Government's website](#). They have also been [previously explained by the MMO](#).

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