

P-06-1213 Ban leisure use of Seadoo/jet ski in Cymru. Except in strictly controlled designated areas.

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Reference: SR21/1044-13

Petition Number: P-06-1213

Petition title: Ban leisure use of Seadoo/jet ski in Cymru. Except in strictly controlled designated areas.

Text of petition: Our wildlife and their habitats are already under savage attack from creeping civilisation, resource exploitation, pollution and climate change. To allow the uncontrolled use of these noisy, dangerous, polluting leisure vehicles, to add to that damage is irresponsible! They offer no other service to mankind other than a fleeting spasm of excitement. This is both wasteful and irresponsible.

There are daily recorded and unrecorded occurrences of disturbance, aggression and harm to both other sea users and wildlife. Many instances of physical harm and even death to both animals and humans. The recreational use of these dangerous high powered vehicle is almost completely uncontrolled. They must be banned from all areas excepting possible specific small areas set aside for these selfish people to damage themselves alone. This may prove too difficult. In that case ban them completely from Cymru.



1. Background

There is no national system of regulation – either at a Wales or UK level – governing the ownership and use of jet skis or ‘personal watercraft’ (PWC) in inshore waters. However, the common law right of navigation in tidal waters can currently be restricted through bye-laws introduced by harbour authorities and local authorities.

Local authority powers include the:

- *Public Health Act 1936* powers to ban vessels from bathing waters;
- *Public Health Act 1961* powers to regulate seaside pleasure boats; and
- *Local Government Act 1972* powers to address nuisance.

Harbour authority powers include the power to make directions under the *Marine Navigation Act 2013*.

The Personal Watercraft Partnership notes that many local authorities already use available powers to regulate use of jet skis – for example through a requirement for permits. It has published a guide to managing jet skis for local and harbour authorities, as well as advice and training for recreational users.

Skomer, Wales’ only Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), has specific byelaws to limit the speed of vessels within the MCZ to reduce disturbance to marine wildlife. It also has a voluntary code of conduct which states that “water-skiing, jet-skiing and similar activities are not acceptable within the MCZ”

In terms of safety, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents notes that “most [jet ski] accidents occur through collisions with other PWCs or watercraft, crashing into jetties, piers or rocks and failing to avoid more vulnerable water users”.

Environmental organisations are also concerned about the impact of jet skis. For example, the RSPB published a policy briefing in 2015 stating that “jet skis can cause a high degree of disturbance to birds and can even cause injury or death in extreme circumstances”. The RSPB is not calling for a ban on jet skis:

While we don't want to see a ban on jet skiing, we do want to see it well-managed around sensitive areas for seabirds, including in protected areas.

Media reports in Wales indicate that an increasing number of complaints are being received in Wales, and two deaths were reported locally in the summer of 2020.

The UK Government consulted on proposals for strengthening enforcement of the dangerous use of recreational and personal watercraft between 6 September and 1 November 2021. The consultation document indicated that the proposed Merchant Shipping (Watercraft) Order would apply UK wide, including Wales, since “maritime safety, including watercraft” is not devolved.

The press release accompanying the consultation says the proposals would “bring recreational and personal watercraft, such as jet-skis and speedboats, under the same laws as those who operate ships, meaning tougher sentences for those caught driving dangerously”. It also says:

Although many [local authorities] have introduced speed limits, signage and ID tags to prevent accidents, there remains a number of unmanaged waters around the UK and, since the beginning of 2020, there have been 4 fatalities related to dangerous driving on jet skis, which these laws will help to prevent.

Bringing recreational and personal watercraft in line with laws in place for boats will ensure tougher sentences for reckless driving across all waters.

2. Welsh Government action

The letter from the Minister for Climate Change to the Chair of the Petitions Committee expresses concern about the issue, and draws the Committee’s attention to the local authority powers and UK Government consultation referenced above.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The issue does not appear to have been considered in the Senedd prior to this petition.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that

these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.