

WELCOME TO THE CRINAN CANAL

Our Canal guide introduces everything you need to know about boating on the Crinan Canal from booking your licence to safety advice and tips on how to transit the canal, you'll find details here.

The average duration of passage is 6 hours, subject to no delays or traffic.

The canal was constructed during 1793-1801 with further improvements made in 1816 and again between 1930 and 1932 when new larger sea locks were constructed. One of the most picturesque waterways and a real treasure, the canal is known to sailors the world over for its friendly lock keepers and spectacular surrounding countryside.

Scottish Canals is committed to customer care and should you require any help or advice during your stay with us please do not hesitate to contact the Canal Office or any member of staff. We also welcome comments on our service, or suggestions for improvements to make passage or lockings more enjoyable.

PLACES OF INTEREST

This part of Scotland has been inhabited for at least 5,000 years, since the first hunter-gatherers followed the retreating ice northwards, and settled in this fertile area. Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, pre-Christian, Medieval, and later eras are represented by monuments and buildings, and the Canal itself is a listed Monument.

Kilmartin House Museum
Kilmartin, 6 miles north of Cairnbaan on the A816.

The concentration and diversity of ancient monuments in Kilmartin Glen distinguish the area as Scotland's richest prehistoric landscape. This independent museum displays local artefacts and interactive exhibits. Audio-visual experience, bookshop, unique wildfood café. Open every day.
01546 510278. www.kilmartin.org

Dunadd – Ancient Capital of Dalriada
Hill Fort, 2 miles north of Cairnbaan on the A816.

The curious carvings near the summit are popularly associated with the inauguration of Scotland's first kings. The Scotti migrated here from Ireland around 500AD, establishing the ancient kingdom of Dalriada, this stronghold, and the Scottish royal succession.

Moine Mhor Nature Reserve
The Great Moss, north of the Crinan Canal, between Dunardry & Crinan.
One of the last expanses of raised mire in Scotland, this estuarine environment supports a rich and varied ecosystem, including some rare plants and animals.

Achnabreck Cup & Ring Marked Rocks
1 mile east of the canal at Cairnbaan, sign-posted off the A816.
These outcrops of bedrock together represent the largest expanse of prehistoric rock-art in Scotland. Hollow cup-marks are often surrounded by rings, and some have a gutter extending from the centre. There are other motifs, including spirals, petals and stars.

Cairnbaan – Marked Rocks, Dun Chuain & Carn Ban
0.75 mile north of the canal, sign-posted at Cairnbaan Hotel.
Further examples of prehistoric rock carvings here include a double cup surrounded by a single ring, and irregular grooving. The remains of a small fortified structure or dun can be seen 250 yards to the east.

Cairn, on the south bank of the canal at Lock 5
This Bronze Age burial monument exhibits a cup mark and an unusual abstract design on its capstone. A decorated slab from this site is preserved in the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Ardrishaig Water Waster
Eastern canal bank at Ardrishaig, between Lock 4 and Oakfield Bridge.
Completed in 1895, this unique system maintains a safe water level in the canal. Excess water fills a bucket on one end of a rocker mechanism, the weight of which unseats a plug attached to the other end, discharging water into the sea.

Forest Walks and Cycle Trails
The forest and woodland walks at Crinan, Dunardry, Cairnbaan and Achnabreck are indicated on the canal map. There are also cycle trails in the forest south of the canal, and Barnluasgan Interpretation Centre (1 mile S of Bellanoch on the Tayvallich road) offers information on the forest, and the history and wildlife of Knapdale. Forest Enterprise publish useful leaflets on all these walks and trails, which are usually available from the Crinan Canal offices.

Cycle Hire
Crinan Cycles, Lochgilphead T 01546 603511 www.crinancycles.co.uk

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

BASIC EQUIPMENT YOU WILL NEED
You will require good ropes for the bow and stern, of sufficient length (12m) to reach the bottom of the lock chamber. Please ensure these are not damaged or frayed as they may be under considerable strain while locking up, particularly on the bow.

Ensure you have adequate fenders to protect your topsides. A good tip is to lace a canvas sheet between the hull and the fender to avoid scuff marks.

LIFE JACKETS FOR ALL CREW ARE ADVISED.
Water points are located at Ardrishaig Basin, Oakfield, Cairnbaan, Dunardry, and Crinan. You will require a hose pipe for connecting to these.

INSURANCE
All users of the canal must hold insurance for £1m third party liability.

FUEL
Diesel may be purchased from Crinan Boatyard Ltd and petrol or diesel in small volumes from garages in Lochgilphead.

PUMP OUT
Unfortunately pump out facilities are not available.

OPERATING HOURS
The Crinan Canal operates on a seasonal basis. We are open 7 days per week in peak season, Monday to Saturday during Spring and Autumn, and Monday to Friday during Winter. Please check the website or contact the canal office for details of exact operating dates and times.
The minimum time you should allow for passage is about 1 day, but why rush? Relax and enjoy the superb scenery and hospitality. It is fairly common to require an overnight stop to complete a transit.

CANAL LICENCES
All craft must hold a valid and current licence. Various terms are available, from passage through to annual. Short-term licences include all lockings, passages and berthing, provided these are made within normal operating hours. Long term berth holders will also require a mooring permit.
The licence fee is calculated on a charge per metre basis depending on the length of term purchased. A price list is available at the canal office or www.scottishcanals.co.uk

In order to keep our charges as low as possible by reducing administration costs, we would ask that all licence fees are paid on entry to the canal.

USE OF PILOTS

Scottish Canals do not endorse the use of pilots, nor do we accredit, insure or approve pilots. Lock keepers will assist you through the locks. You should however have adequate crew on board to handle ropes and skipper the boat. Extra hands on board that can help with locks will speed up your passage.

Should you still insist on using a pilot, it is your responsibility to ensure that your chosen individual is competent and covered by your insurance.

Anyone piloting a vessel must follow instructions given by a Scottish Canal lock keeper. Should your pilot not cooperate, our lock keepers are instructed to withdraw report to their supervisor.

LEGISLATION

INTERNATIONAL CATERING WASTE
Customers from outside EU waters transiting or staying in the Crinan Canal, who wish to dispose of meat or animal by-products which were purchased outwith the EU, must bag the waste and inform the Crinan Canal Office.

BOAT SAFETY
All craft berthing within the canal system in excess of 30 days must obtain a Boat Safety Certificate. Owners using the canal for less than 30 days may be subject to spot checks to ensure their craft meet the minimum standards of safety required under the scheme. Checks will cover the gas and electrical systems, and will be visual, or in the case of the gas test, carried out by use of a leak detector.



WHILE YOU ARE IN THE CANAL

RADAR
Please ensure radar scanners are switched off while craft are within or approaching locks.

LAST LOCKING TIMES
Last locking times. We operate on a "last boat movement at 5:00 pm" principle. This is to ensure that our water controllers can start stabilising water levels and perform nightly shut-down. We do not permit boats to enter locks or move between locks after 5PM.

LITTER
Refuse should be disposed of in the Eurobins located at Ardrishaig, Cairnbaan, and a skip at Crinan. Please help us to keep the Crinan Canal tidy by disposing of rubbish in a thoughtful manner. Please only use the dry recycle bins for waste as described on the lid and avoid putting domestic waste into these bins. Remember, plastic bags thrown overboard could block your water intake, or foul the prop of your craft.

PETS
While pets are welcome, it would be much appreciated if owners could take care to prevent animal fouling on the banks. Animal waste bins are located along the canal for disposal. Particular care should be taken at main lock flights and mown areas as these have heavy foot traffic.

SWIMMING
The canal may look inviting, but please do not swim in it. This is very dangerous as there may be an underwater obstruction or sudden current, and the banks are very steep.

SHORE POWER
Limited shore power is available at key points along the canal, mainly for use by long term customers. Please make contact with the lock staff regarding availability and charges for power. Payment for Shore Power can be made at a sea lock office or from our online booking system. Power may be available at pontoons in Ardrishaig Basin, above Lock 4, Oakfield, Cairnbaan or Crinan.

SMART BOLLARDS
Smart Bollards will be in operation at Seaport Marina Inverness from early March 2026. To access power at this location, you must sign up for an account on the following page: <https://portal.meter-macs.com/sign-in>

SHOWERS
Toilets and showers are available free of charge to licence holders, at various locations (see map). Further information can be obtained from the sea lock staff.

Please help us to maintain a pleasant environment by making use of shore facilities and not using sea toilets whilst your vessel is in the canal.

LARGE CRAFT
Certain sections of the canal are narrow, in particular towards Crinan, and for this reason we may require to traffic manage vessels with a wide beam. Therefore, owners should expect a slight delay while Scottish Canals staff ensure the reach is either clear of other vessels or a large craft transits the section. Your patience to ensure a trouble free passage is much appreciated.

RAFTING
Rafting of boats is normal on the Crinan Canal, in particular during events or busy periods.

Please assist us by following staff instructions to ensure that we can make best use of the space available.

LONGER TERM BERTHING
Reserved Berths are located in Bellanoch Bay, and at Crinan and Ardrishaig in the disused Sea Locks. The pontoons and moorings in Bellanoch Bay are all reserved and should only be used by the berth holder. Should you wish to take advantage of these facilities please contact the Canal Office for advice, or visit www.scottishcanals.co.uk.



Find out more at
scottishcanals.co.uk



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Crinan Canal
Pier Square, Ardrishaig, Argyll PA30 8DZ
T: 01546 603210
F: 01546 603941

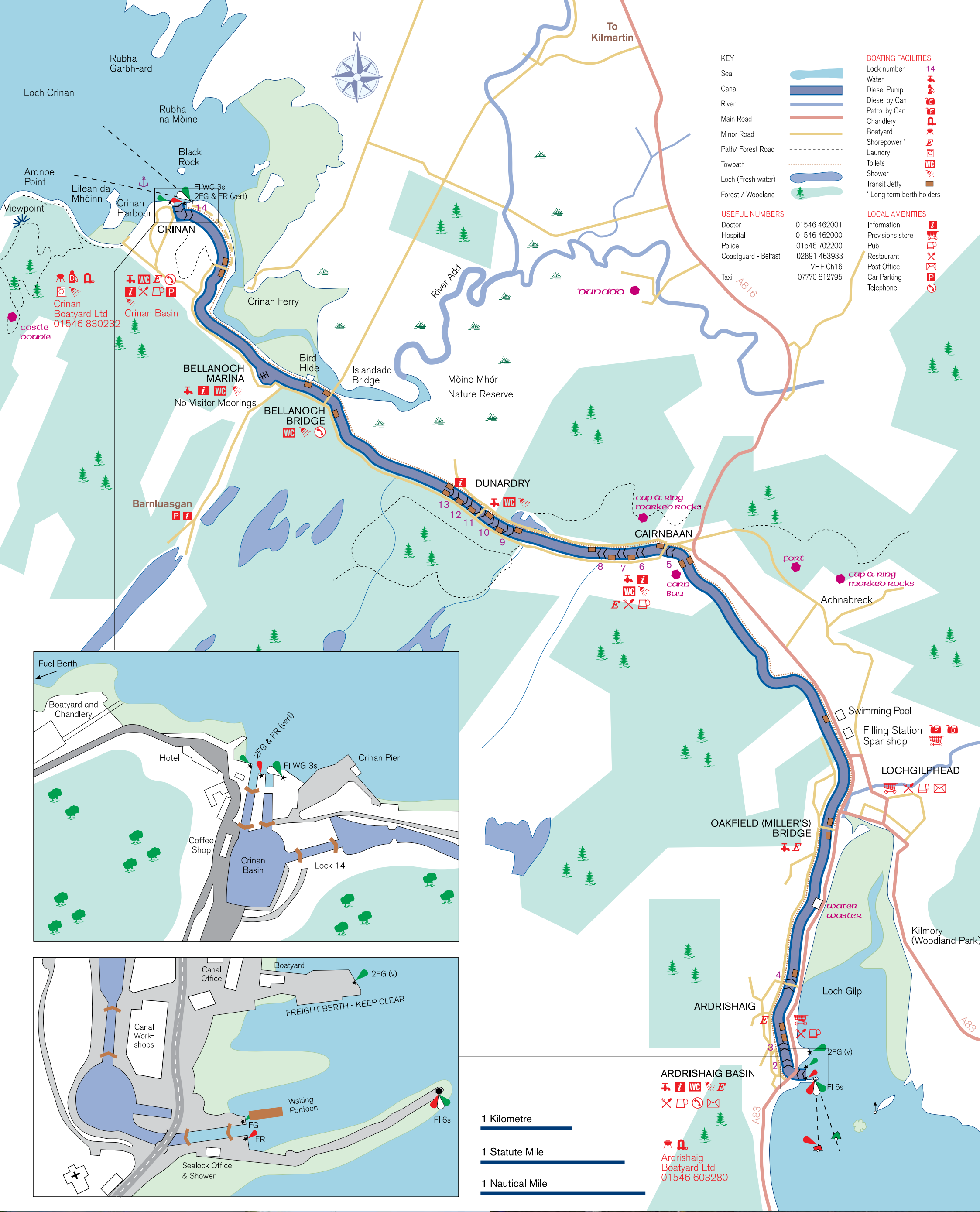
Crinan Sea Lock
T: 01546 830285

Ardrishaig Sea Lock
T: 01546 602458

Scottish Canals
Canal House, Applecross Street
Glasgow G4 9SP
T: 0141 332 6936
F: 0141 331 1688



Find out more at
scottishcanals.co.uk



NAVIGATION

MAXIMUM CHANNEL DIMENSIONS

Length	26.82m (88ft)	Width	6.09m (20ft)
Air Draft	28.95m (95ft)		

*Please add 10cms (4in) to your normal draft as craft sit lower in the fresh water of the canal than they do in salt water.

Draft: 2.3m, with 2.5m available by request and 48 hour's notice. Note that for operational issues, the draft may be restricted from time-to-time. Restrictions will be published on the Scottish Canals website under the Disruptions section.

NAVIGATION INFORMATION

Admiralty charts: Loch Fyne 2381; Lochs and Harbours in the Sound of Jura and Approaches 2476; Loch Crinan to the Forth of Lorne 2326.

Imray charts: Firth of Clyde C63; Upper Clyde & Loch Fyne 2900; Belfast Lough to Crinan C64; Crinan to Mallaig and Barra C65.

Pilots: Admiralty West Coast of Scotland Pilot; Clyde Cruising Club Sailing Directions – Firth of Clyde; Kintyre to Ardnamurchan; Imray Pilot: Clyde to Colonsay.

LOCKS AND BRIDGES

There are 15 locks and 7 bridges on the Crinan Canal. The Sea Lock, Lock 14 and all bridges are mechanised and operated for you by Scottish Canals staff.

Inland locks are all manually operated on a self-service basis which involves pushing lock gates and winding sluices. We recommend you employ an experienced Private Pilot if you are shorthanded with crew, in a rush to transit or have never transited the canal before. Customers are advised to contact either of the Sea Locks in advance for contact details. Please note that Scottish Canals are not liable for private pilots.

Customers are advised to contact the Canal Office for the up to date situation prior to arrival .

Please note that to maintain access for emergency vehicles we are unable to rotate Ardishaig Sea Lock Bridge and Lock 4 Bridge at the same time and must also comply with slight restrictions during school term time, both of which may cause unavoidable short delays. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

SPEED LIMITS

Please observe the 4 knot speed limit on the canal to avoid bank erosion through excessive wash, and please slow down when passing moored craft. The final approach to Crinan between Crinan Bridge and Lock 14 is narrow, with moored craft lying above Lock 14. Please exercise caution while transiting this section of the canal.

USE OF LOCKS AFTER CLOSEDOWN

Do not use the canal locks after closedown. This is when water levels are adjusted for the following day and any unauthorised locking may cause flooding or water loss.

CILL MARKERS

To avoid possible contact with the lock cill please ensure your vessel does not pass the cill marker on the lock wall and remains clear of lock gangways (area AB on diagram) during lock operations. If you are in any doubt please ask lock staff for advice.

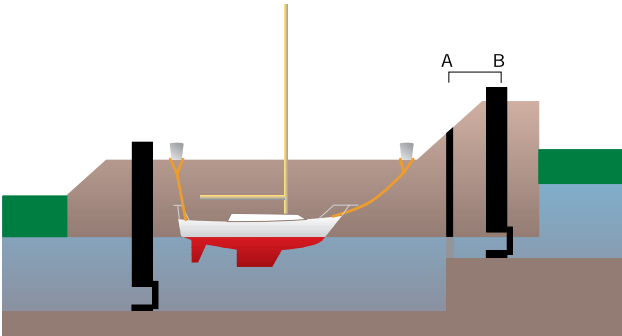
VHF

The sea locks work on Channel 74. Please note when staff members are performing locking or maintenance duty they will be unable to respond to calls. If you do not get an immediate response either try later or approach the lock if open to the sea; it is likely that the Lock Keeper has spotted you.

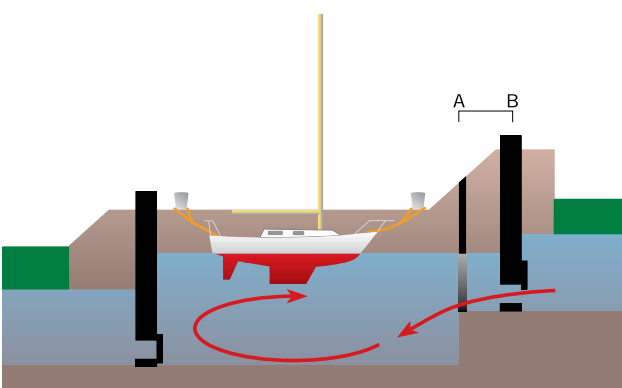
Emergency Out of Hours Contact: 0800 072 9900

LOCKING UPWARDS

1. Make sure that the top gates and sluices are closed.
2. If the lock is full, empty it by raising the bottom sluices, first checking to see if a boat is approaching the lock in a downward direction, and if so please wait until it has locked through.
3. Open the bottom gates by leaning on the swing bar. The gate will only open once the water levels have equalised so apply steady pressure until you feel the gate move. Once the gates are open the craft may enter the lock, and if on its own in the lock, should stay as far back as possible to minimise the effect of turbulence.



4. Secure the craft by both bow and stern lines to the bollards provided. Always use a bowline to secure your lines, do not use a running line back to the boat which could jam causing injury or damage. It is not advisable for the shore crew to hold the warp, since loads can be considerable.
5. Close the bottom gates and sluices.
6. Only when you are satisfied that all craft are secure should you commence to flood the lock by raising the top sluices. Only open the sluices about 2" (5cm) at a time to keep turbulence in the lock to a minimum, starting with the sluice on the same side as a single moored craft, or the smallest craft. Continue to raise the sluices a little at a time as the water rises, but if the turbulence is too great lower the sluice a little. When the lock is full ensure the sluices are fully open, to make it easier to open the top gates.
7. Open the lock gates and exit.
8. Please leave a crew member to close the gates and sluices. This important part of the operation ensures that the lock chambers are ready for the next customer, though you may leave gates open for craft which are approaching in the opposite direction if they are near at hand.



LOCKING DOWNWARDS

1. Ensure that the bottom gates and sluices are closed. If the lock is empty, fill it by opening the top sluices. (If there is craft approaching which will use the lock in an upward direction, allow it to do so).
2. When the lock chamber is full, open the gates by leaning on the swing bar. The gate will only move once the water pressure has equalised so, leaving the sluices open, apply a steady pressure until you feel the gate move.
3. The craft may now enter the lock.
4. Secure the craft by both bow and stern warps using the bollards provided. Always use a bowline to secure your lines, do not use a running line back to the boat which could jam and cause injury or damage.
5. Close the top gates and lower the sluices.
6. Open the bottom sluices only after you are sure the boats are secure and crews ready. The sluices should be raised slowly to maximum, keeping an eye on the boats in the lock. If you are experiencing any difficulties, close the sluices.
7. Open the bottom gates and exit the lock.
8. Please remember to close all gates and sluices after the craft leave the lock.

SKIPPERS: NOTE WHEN LOCKING DOWN

The downward locking is much less turbulent than the upward, however, it is vital to have crew positioned bow and stern to pay off the warps as the craft descends. Failure to do so could result in the boat being hung up by its warps. If this does occur you must tell the shore crew to quickly shut the sluices, and seek the assistance of a lock keeper.

