

Press release

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Water Safety Scotland shows support for World Drowning Prevention Day

Members of Water Safety Scotland have welcomed the first World Drowning Prevention Day which will be held annually on July 25 and follows on from the United Nations General Assembly who passed a [Global Resolution on Drowning Prevention](#) in April 2021.

The Scottish Government have also praised the new water safety initiative, Ash Denham MSP, the Minister for Community Safety said:

"World Drowning Prevention Day is an important opportunity to raise awareness about water safety issues and I would like to thank Water Safety Scotland and RoSPA for their continued dedication and hard work. The risk of drowning is often overlooked and it is important that people are aware of the dangers so they can enjoy Scotland's beautiful inland and coastal waters safely and responsibly."

This historic agreement invites member states to take action to prevent drowning fatalities in line with the World Health Organization's (WHO) [2014 recommendation report](#) and subsequent [guidance](#).

The recent estimates from the WHO show that globally, an approximate 236,000 people drown every year and that drowning is among the ten leading causes of death for children and young people aged 1 – 24 years.

Data from the Water Incident Database ([WAID](#)) shows that in Scotland on average, there are 97 water-related fatalities each year. The most recent statistics from 2020 revealed that there were 99 water-related fatalities with 39 due to accidental drowning.*

The WHO has coordinated preparations for World Drowning Prevention Day and has invited stakeholders across the world to mark the occasion. Water Safety Scotland fully supports the UN Global Resolution and World Drowning Prevention Day**

Michael Avril, Chair of Water Safety Scotland said:

“Water Safety Scotland is proud to support World Drowning Prevention Day and is looking forward to continuing to work with partners in Scotland to prevent future drowning tragedies.

Scotland carries a disproportionate burden; the accidental drowning rate is almost double the UK’s average when the relative population is taken into account.

We want people to enjoy Scotland’s waterways in as safe a way as possible and recommend that people follow [Scotland’s Water Safety Code](#) in order to help themselves and others stay safe around water.

The key pieces of advice from the code are to:

- Stop and think - spot the dangers
- Stay together, stay close
- Know what to do in an emergency

Please [#RespectTheWater](#)”

Organisations across Scotland will be participating in a social media campaign highlighting their support for the day and for Scotland’s Drowning Prevention Strategy.

Scottish Canals are supporting the WHO’s suggestions of “Going Blue for World Drowning Prevention Day”. The Kelpies, 30-metre-high horse-head sculptures in Falkirk, will be lit up blue on the evening of the 25 July to mark the occasion and show their support as members of Water Safety Scotland and for World Drowning Prevention Day.

Richard Millar, Scottish Canals’ Chief Operating Officer said: “Scotland’s canals are vibrant green and blue spaces for all to enjoy and connect with nature whether you are taking to the towpaths by boot or bike, or enjoying the canal by boat or paddle sport.

“It is important that no matter how you choose to enjoy the waterways, that all users are aware of the dangers that canals, reservoirs, and any body of open water can pose. Scottish Canals is proud to be supporting World Drowning Prevention Day and will continue to champion safety messaging from partners and our own #CanalCareful safety campaign to ensure canal users are equipped with the knowledge to keep themselves and others safe.”

Scotland’s Drowning Prevention Strategy is currently in its fourth year with a review set to be published next spring along with a water safety conference that will be organised in conjunction with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA).

Ends

Notes to editors

* The 97 water-related fatalities is based on WAID data from 2013 -2015 and is outlined in Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy. The 2020 increase should be set against a longer term trend in the reduction of accidental drownings. The strategy can be viewed at www.watersafetyscotland.org.uk/strategy/

Further information on the data can be found in Water Safety Scotland's 2020 Data Trend Report which can be accessed here: <https://watersafetyscotland.org.uk/media/1758/waid-2020-trend-report.pdf>

** Progress in Scotland has been mapped by Water Safety Scotland against the [UN's recommendations](#)

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Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy targets a reduction of 50 per cent in the number of accidental drowning deaths, against a three-year average baseline of 50 (from 2013-2015). The strategy can be viewed at www.watersafetyscotland.org.uk/strategy/

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The World Health Organization guidance and information for World Drowning Prevention Day can be accessed online here: <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-drowning-prevention-day/2021>