

Response received 9 April 2005 from Individual #6:

Responses to questions

1. Yes. The current system is a significant factor for small boat owners on a tight budget, especially as the primary reason for maintaining a radio is safety. Other benefits are marginal.
2. Yes. However smaller craft tend to pass through many hands in their lifetime. There may be administrative problems (and costs) when the licence details are not passed on with the boat ownership. One possibility could be scrapping licenses for equipment (it should all be CE approved) and relying on the radio operators' licence. This should increase the number of owners undertaking formal training and qualification in radio procedure.
3. Yes, although this would then be only an administrative burden (and cost), and seems a bit pointless. I would very much welcome the removal of charges for keeping a radio though - it would enable me to purchase one!
4. Yes - this seems logical.
5. No. It is accepted the primary purpose for fitting a radio in smaller vessels is safety, so it would be logical for the MCA to have administrative responsibility for the information relating to these licences. They could also undertake enforcement (or better still) education.
6. Not in a position to answer, because I thought that one still needed a licence in this area.
7. Yes.
8. Yes, but see my responses above. This change could significantly improve safety if handled by the MCA.
9. No.

Additional comments

A. The power to stop boats and to inspect licenses is essential to the agency administering radio licences. When delegated to other authorities (especially the Police), this power is abused and used as an excuse for 'stop and search' where equivalent powers are absent. This alone prevents some owners from installing radios for safety purposes. Any inspection powers should be restricted to safety-only organisations and, of course, the radio licensing authority.

B. The objectives of licensing and of marine safety identification appear to be becoming confused. Marine safety identification could be resolved by a plate permanently fitted to every boat giving licence and radio identification details in the manner of the 'Thames Tonnage' identification. This would ensure (in most cases) that relevant information was retained across changes in ownership. Competence, compliance and suitability of equipment should be the responsibility of the operator, who should be subject to a licence renewal scheme, perhaps every 5 years, so that awareness and knowledge is maintained. Such a scheme could also be internet-based, using self assessment questions to validate information acquisition.