

GRP Boat Disposal

Key Finding

Under the current UK model, whoever owns the boat when it reaches the end of its life is responsible for its disposal. However there is no national boat registration scheme for recreational craft so finding the owner of an abandoned vessel can be very difficult. Commercial and fishing boats do need to be [registered](#) as do craft used on inland waterways.

Abandoned Vessels

Abandoned vessels on private property are generally the responsibility of the landowner who will need to make their own arrangements for their removal at their own expense. Local or harbour authorities may consider action in certain circumstances. For example, harbour authorities may remove vessels that cause a navigational hazard. This action is at their own cost. Abandoning boats is essentially 'fly tipping'.

Boat insurance companies won't cover the cost of disposal. Boatyards and marinas can strip abandoned boats of any parts that can be sold on.

French Solution

New rules introduced in France 2019, require owners to pay an 'eco tax' when they register their boats and the funds generated are used to scrap old ones.

What Happens to GRP Boats that are Collected?

There is currently no process in the UK for recycling glassfibre, so the chopped up hulls go straight to landfill. GRP boat's hulls are composite layers made up of gelcoat, glassfibre, foam or balsa core. Separating the various elements is an expensive process which has little or no commercial value.

Published Resources

- [Plastic boats – how should we dispose of old boats when they reach the end of their lives? - Practical Boat Owner \(pbo.co.uk\)](#)
- [Abandoned vehicles: local authority responsibilities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [What to do with abandoned vessels - Stephens Scown \(stephens-scown.co.uk\)](#) - legal position
- [British Ports Association](#) - guidance
- [Solving the problem of derelict vessels - ABPmer](#)
- [RYA Policy Brief on End of Life Boats](#)