

WAID UK 2025 Summary for the National Water Safety Forum

This report details the 2025 release of water-related fatality data. An interactive version of this report can be found online [here](#). Please be aware that this trend report uses enhanced five-year WAID data (2019 to 2023). This means that overall numbers, outcomes and some fatality details (e.g. location, ages, sex) may differ to previously published data tables and reports (more information on the enhanced data can be accessed [here](#)).

Overall water-related fatalities

In 2025, there were 587 water-related fatalities in the United Kingdom (UK) from all recorded causes. There were fewer fatalities, overall, compared to the previous years (see Figure 1, which also breaks down water-related fatalities by outcome).

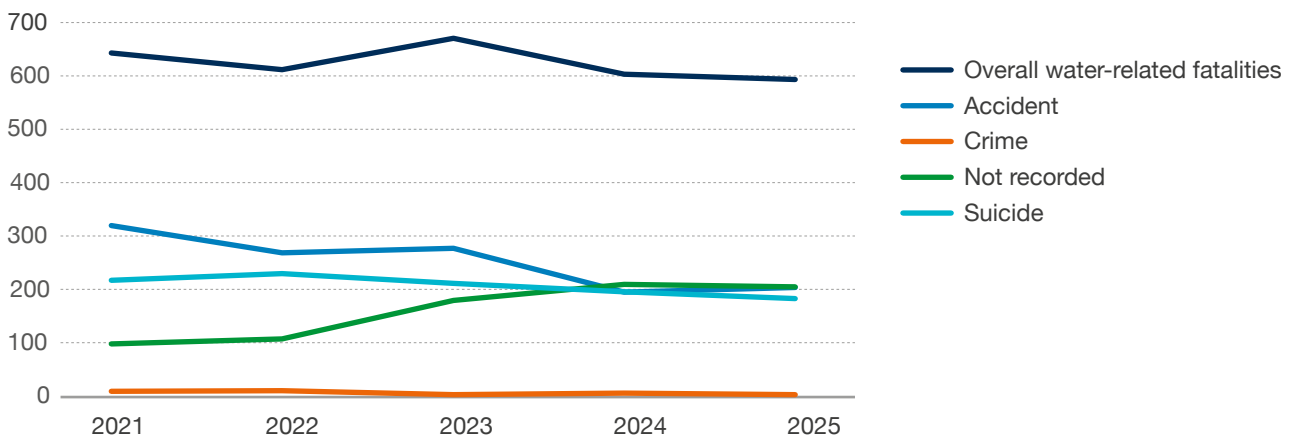


Figure 1: Overall water-related fatalities by year (2021-2025)

The 2025 figures show that overall water-related fatalities decreased. When compared to the original UK Drowning Prevention Strategy (DPS) baseline and the DPS review average, the 2024 figures are below both (see Figure 2).

Year	Overall water-related fatalities
UK DPS baseline	676
DPS review average (2019-2023)	636
2021	635
2022	605
2023	662
2024	597
2025	587

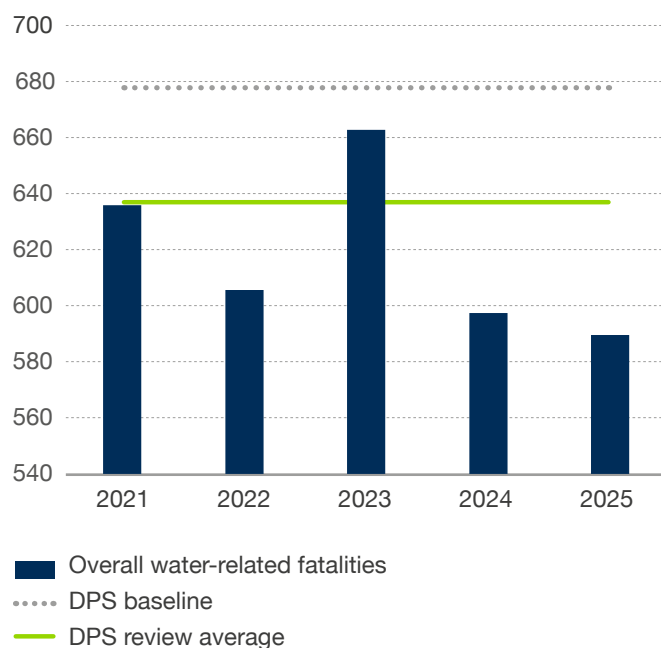


Figure 2: Overall water-related fatalities by year (2021-2025) vs UK DPS baseline and DPS review average

Accidental fatalities

In 2025, there were 202 accidental fatalities¹ in the UK. **This is a 49 per cent decrease in comparison to the UK DPS baseline and a 28 per cent decrease in comparison to the DPS review average** (see Figure 3). However, caution should be taken in the interpretation of this trend due to the high number of not recorded/inconclusives in the 2025 data. The 2019 to 2023 data uses an enhanced dataset with a reduced number of not recorded/inconclusives.

Year	Accidental fatalities
UK DPS baseline	395
DPS review average (2019-2023)	282
2021	315
2022	265
2023	273
2024	193
2025	202

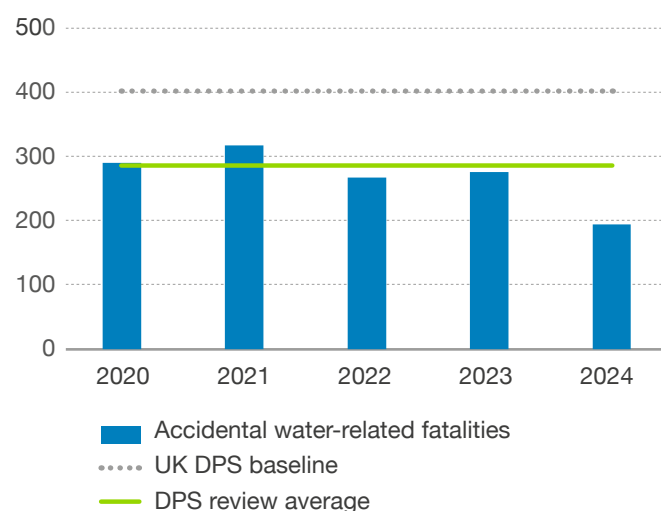


Figure 3: Accidental fatalities by year (2021-2025) vs UK DPS baseline and DPS review average

¹ Accidental fatality refers to accidental and natural causes suspected.

Key points

In 2025:

- There were 202 accidental fatalities
- 85 per cent of accidental fatalities were male
- Males aged 60 to 69 were the highest group for accidental fatalities (see Figure 4)
- 57 per cent of accidental fatalities happened at inland waters (see Figure 5)
- Recreational activities accounted for 63 per cent of accidental fatalities (see Figure 6)
- 41 accidental fatality reports noted the presence or potential presence of drugs and/or alcohol
- The rate of accidental water-related fatalities has decreased in comparison to the UK DPS and the DPS review. In 2025, the accidental water-related fatality rate was 0.29 (see Figure 7)
- When considering the population rate, males 60 to 69 were the highest group (see Figure 8)
- August was the month with the most accidental fatalities (see Figure 9).

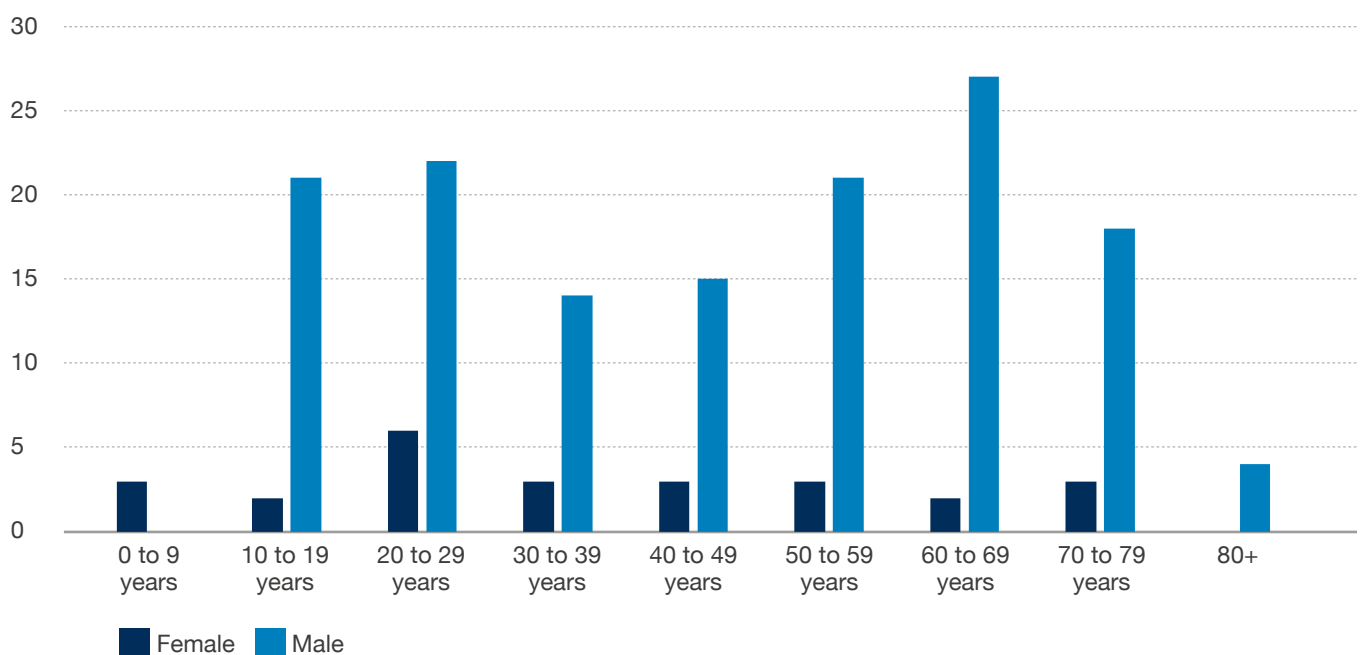


Figure 4: Accidental fatalities by age, n=167, 35 excluded

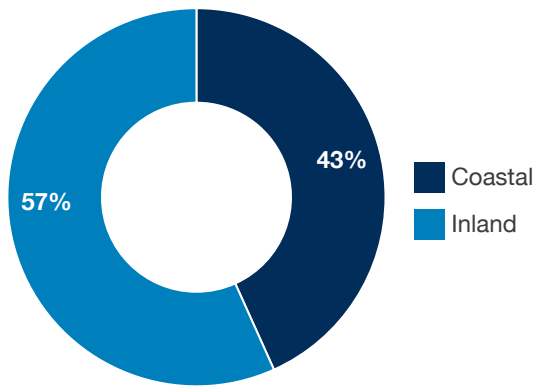


Figure 5: Accidental fatalities by location, n=171, 31 excluded

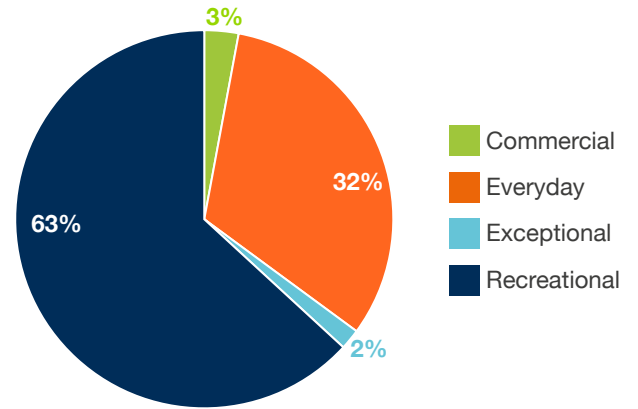


Figure 6: Accidental fatalities by activity, n=171, 31 excluded

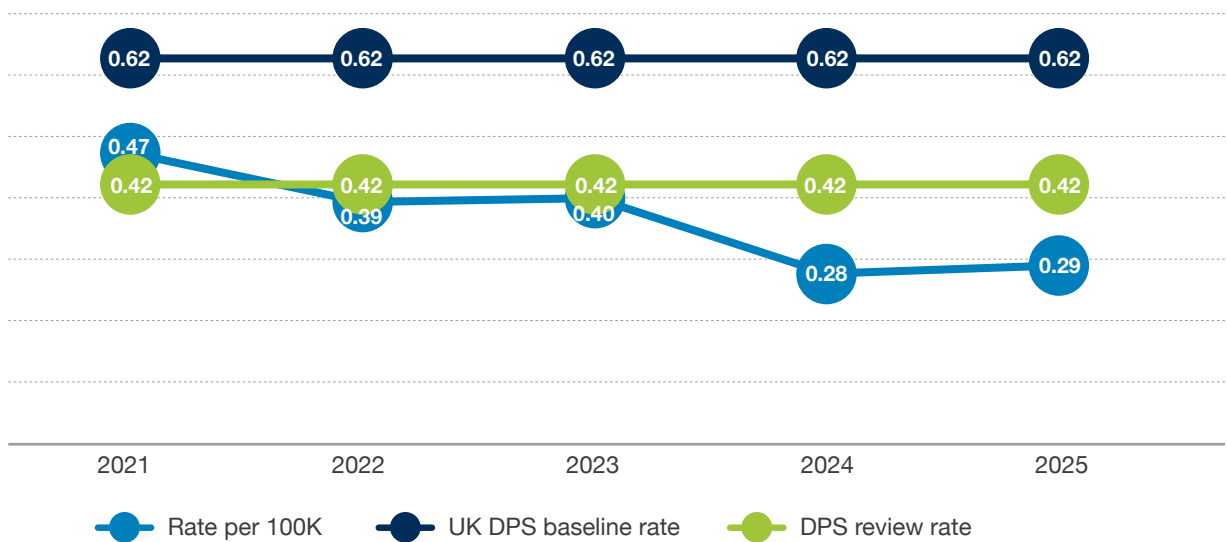


Figure 7: Accidental fatality rates by year (2021-2025) vs UK DPS baseline rate and DPS review rate. Rates are per 100,000 (Population Source: ONS)

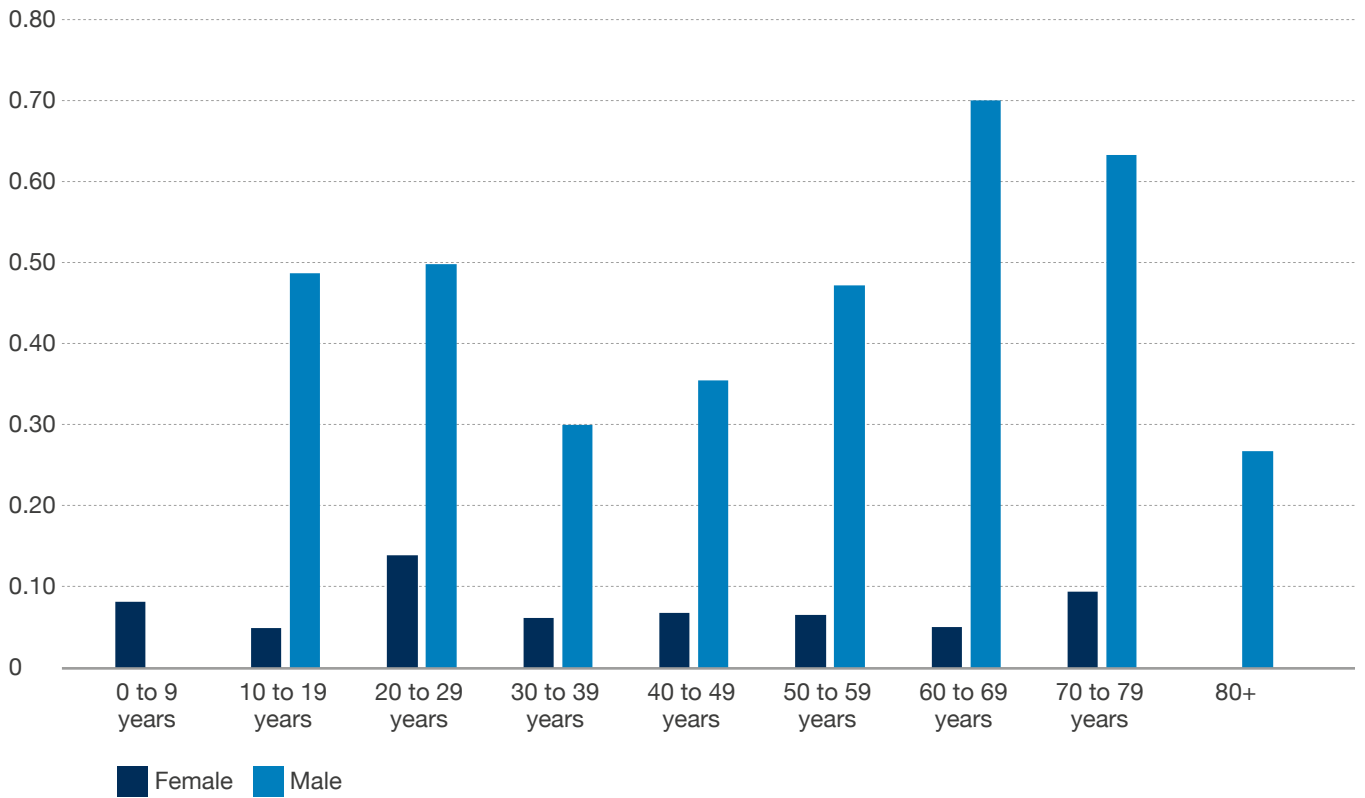


Figure 8: Accidental fatalities by age, sex and rate (based on ONS figures per 100,000). n=167, 35 excluded

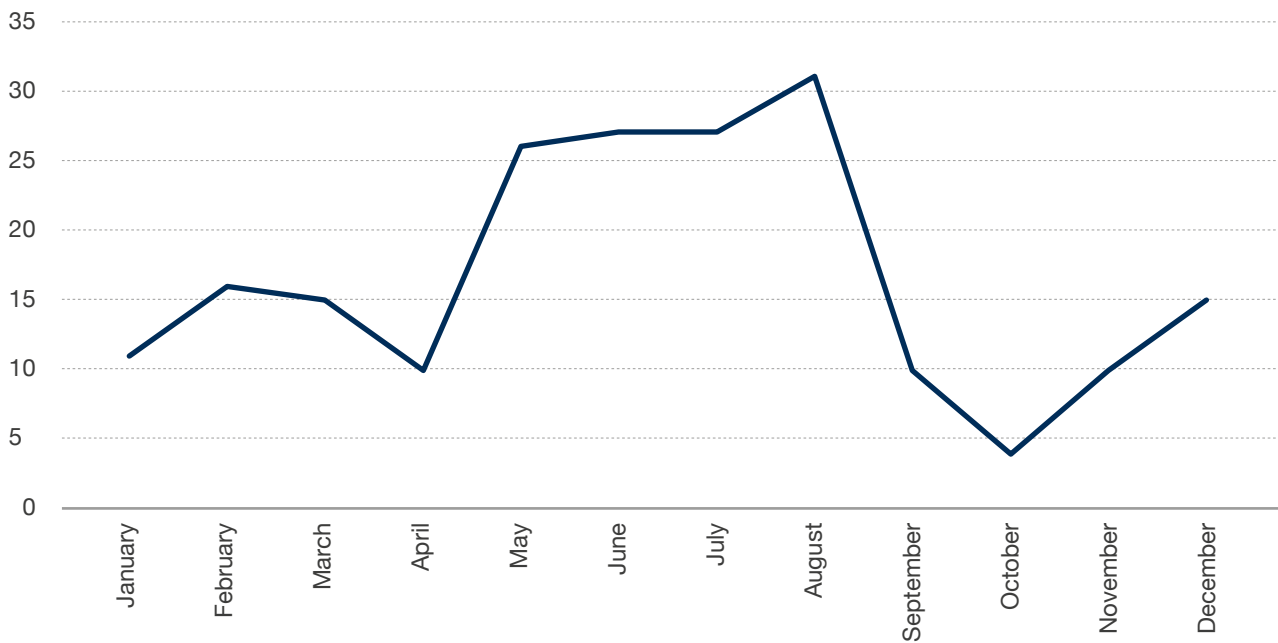


Figure 9: Accidental fatalities by month, n=202

Suicide fatalities

In 2025, there were **181 suicide fatalities at or near water in the UK**. This is slightly less than previous years but again caution should be taken in interpretation due to the high number of not recorded/ inconclusives within the 2025 dataset.

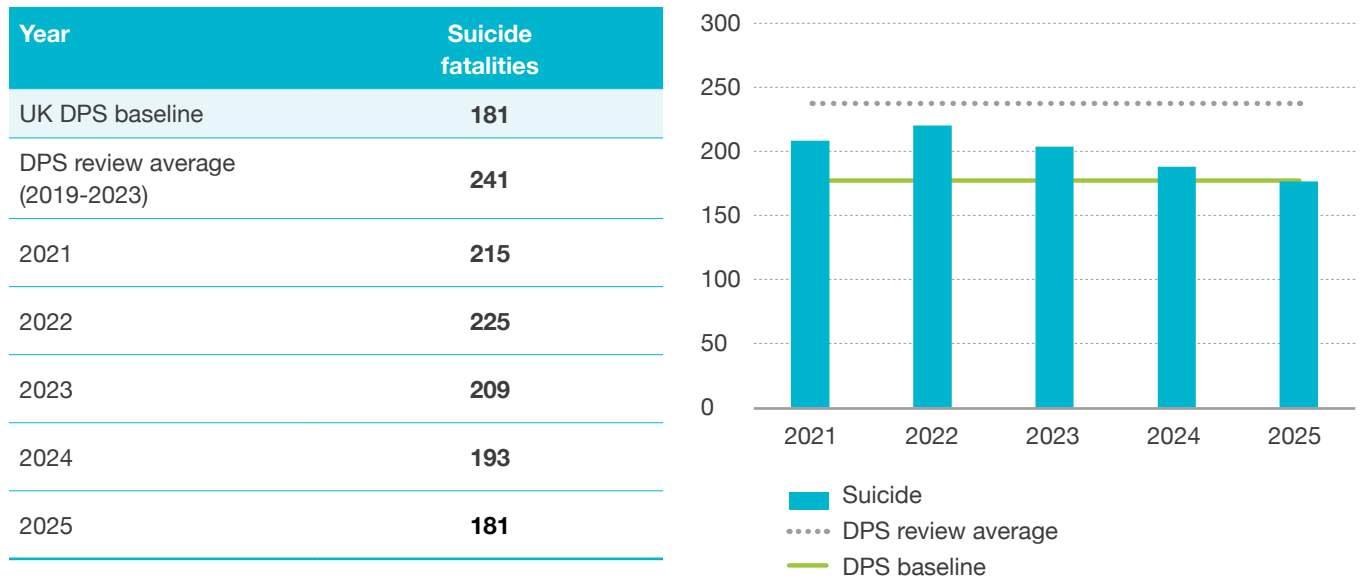


Figure 10: Suicide fatalities by year (2021-2025) vs UK DPS baseline and DPS review average

Notes

All data used are from WAID 2019 to 2023 (v2) and 2024 to 2026 (v1).

“Accidental fatalities” refers to suspected/confirmed accidental causes and natural water-related causes.

“Suicide fatalities” refers to suspected/confirmed suicide causes.

Population rate figures use ONS mid-year data. As official 2025 mid-year estimates have not yet been published, the 2024 population is used as a baseline.

Figures 5 and 6 exclude “ungrouped activities”.

Baseline figures

The UK Drowning Prevention Strategy baseline, as part of the 2025 review, was refined to provide a more specific baseline figure. This is based upon the same original dataset (WAID data 2010-2013) and shows an average baseline figure of 676 overall water-related fatalities, 395 of which were accidental.

The England baseline, as above, is based upon the original dataset (WAID data 2010 to 2013) as referenced in the Review of the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy.

The Scotland baseline is based upon 2013 to 2015 WAID data as detailed in Scotland’s Drowning Prevention Strategy (SDPS).

The Wales baseline is based upon 2016 to 2018 WAID data, as detailed in Wales’ Drowning Prevention Strategy (WDPS).

The Northern Ireland baseline is based upon the original dataset (WAID data 2010 to 2013), as referenced in the Review of the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy.

Scotland data

Scene and Outcome Review (SOR) data from the Drowning Incident Review (DIR) process has been used in this report and aligned with WAID data to classify water-related fatality outcomes from Scotland. While the two sources can differ in their raw form due to differences in classification, these discrepancies have been addressed. In particular, incidents recorded in WAID as “potential fatalities” or missing persons – where no body has been recovered and the Procurator Fiscal has not confirmed a fatality – have been reviewed and excluded. As these cases are not classified as fatalities within the DIR process, their removal ensures consistency between datasets.

WAID taxonomies

WAID taxonomies for activity include:

- ‘Everyday activities’ – running, walking, cycling, mobility vehicle, motor other, commuting
- ‘Recreational activities’ – adventure sports, angling, boating (other), motorboating, sailing, waterside activities
- ‘Commercial activities’ – only includes those categorised as ‘commercial’
- ‘Exceptional activities’ – person/animal rescue, person on ice, flooding
- ‘Ungrouped activities’ – bathing, residential, unknown activity, undetermined.