



Department for Transport

# Domestic Waterborne Freight: UK 2016

**The total amount of goods moved for all domestic waterborne freight declined by 3% to 30.4 billion tonne kilometres (bt-k) in 2016.**

### About this release

This publication provides information on freight traffic moved within the United Kingdom by water transport, known as 'Domestic Waterborne Freight'. The statistics are based on re-analysis of the domestic element of the Port Freight statistics which is published by the Department as a separate series combined with a survey of inland waterway operators.

Next Update: December 2018

### Definitions

#### Inland waters

Traffic carried by barge or sea going vessels on the inland waterways network (rivers and canals).

#### Coastwise

Traffic carried around the coast from one UK port to another.

#### One-port

Traffic to and from offshore locations - such as oil rigs and sea dredging.

#### Goods moved

Freight traffic for this publication is measured in terms of "goods moved" (the tonnage of goods lifted multiplied by the distance travelled and expressed as tonnes-kilometres). Although, most of the tables supporting this release contain statistics on goods lifted in addition to goods moved.

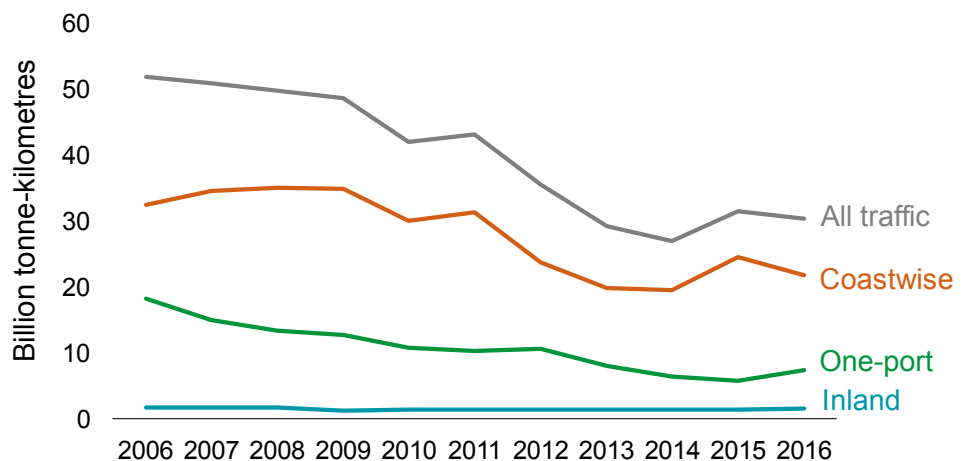
The decline in the distance of goods moved occurred despite a 4% increase in the total amount of goods lifted to 102 million tonnes (mt).

### Domestic waterborne freight goods moved and lifted, 2016

	Goods Moved (bt-k)			Goods lifted (mt)		
	2015	2016	Percentage change	2015	2016	Percentage change
<b>Inland waters</b> 	1.5	1.6	↑ 7%	47.0	50.8	↑ 8%
<b>Coastwise</b> 	24.5	21.7	↓ 11%	42.6	39.7	↓ 7%
<b>One-port</b> 	5.8	7.4	↑ 27%	18.7	21.0	↑ 12%
<b>Total</b>	31.4	30.4	↓ 3%	98.2	102.0	↑ 4%

The total volume of goods moved has declined by 41% since 2006, and was largely driven by the decline of one-port and coastwise traffic. However, goods moved to and from one-port locations has increased by 27% since 2015.

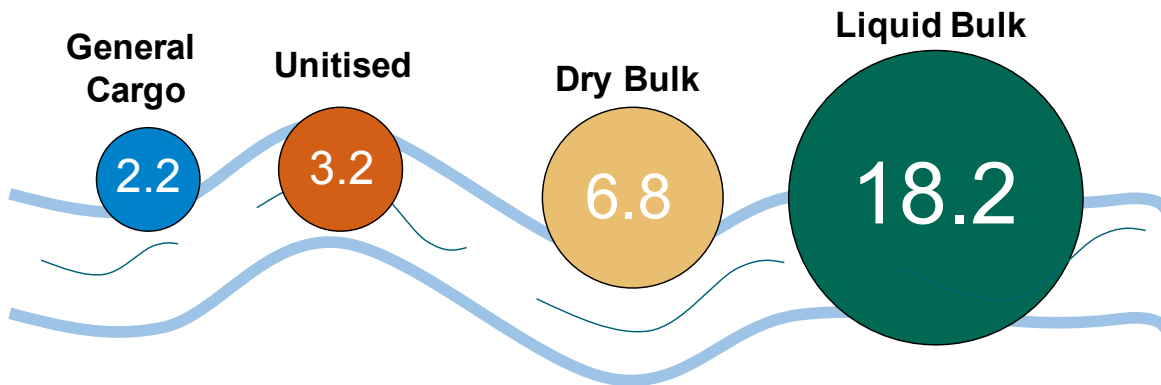
### Domestic waterborne freight goods moved, 2006 to 2016



## Goods moved by commodity

Of the total goods moved (30.4 bt-k), 60% was from liquid bulk goods in 2016. The remainder of the traffic was made up by dry bulk (22%), unitised traffic (11%) and general cargo (7%) where these proportions remain unchanged from the previous year. The majority of liquid bulk (92%) came from crude petroleum and petroleum products, with 16.6 bt-k of crude petroleum and petroleum products moved in 2016 compared with 16.8 bt-k in 2015.

### Domestic waterborne freight goods moved (bt-k) by cargo category, 2016, [DWF0102](#)



## Goods moved by inland waterway route

Inland waters traffic is carried by both barges and by seagoing vessels. Overall this accounts for a relatively small proportion of domestic waterborne freight traffic.

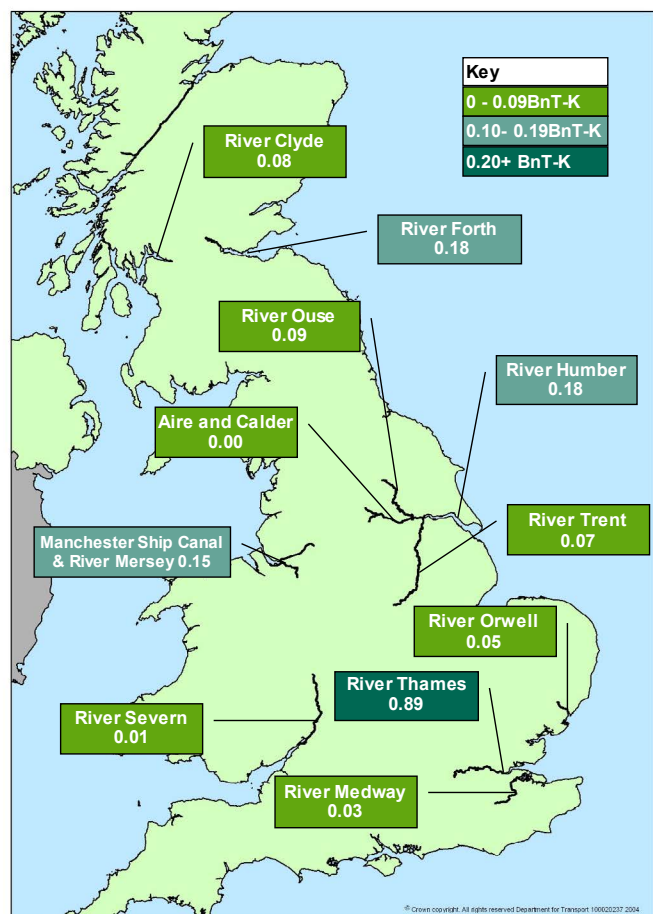
From 2015 to 2016, inland waters traffic has increased from 1.5 bt-k to 1.6 bt-k.

Of the navigable waterways, the Thames handled the most domestic traffic in the UK, accounting for 56% of all goods moved in the UK.

In terms of goods lifted, the River Thames handled around 25.8 million tonnes of freight (over half of all total traffic on UK waterways).

For more details on the figures above refer to the web tables [DWF0207](#) and [DWF0208](#).

### Major inland waterway routes, goods moved 2016



## Feedback from user consultation

The Department for Transport have continuously been reviewing these statistics annually to ensure they balance the needs of users against the resources needed to compile the statistics. In September 2017, DfT published a document outlining the changes to the production of the Domestic Waterborne Freight statistical tables. This can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/domestic-waterborne-freight-2015>. Following on from the review, the department will continue to publish tables: DWF0101, DWF0102, DWF0206, DWF0207 and DWF0208.

Table DWF0501 has been discontinued with the intention of users using the Port Freight statistics tables published by the Department here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/port01-uk-ports-and-traffic>. Table PORT0112 provides information on UK port traffic, by flag of carrying vessel.

We thank all users for their contribution to this review. If you have any comments or questions regarding the changes to the data series, please contact us at: [maritimestats@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:maritimestats@dft.gsi.gov.uk).

## Background notes

Port Freight statistics include all traffic that either arrives at or leaves UK sea ports. Details are given by weight and number of units loaded and unloaded. The statistics are based on returns from ports and shipping agents. For more information on these statistics see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-statistics-2016-final-figures>

The statistics in this publication cover freight moved by water in the UK. They are based on re-analysis of the domestic element of the Port Freight statistics, combined with a survey of inland waterway operators. Both coastwise and one port traffic will contribute towards the Port Freight statistics as can be seen in table [PORT0106](#).

However, inland waters traffic does not appear in the Port Freight statistics where it takes place solely on the inland waterway network. Furthermore, international freight - carried by sea to or from the UK - will appear in the Port Freight statistics but it will only count towards these statistics if it crosses into inland waterways. Further details of these calculations are given in the technical note for this publication: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maritime-and-shipping-statistics-guidance>

This publication also provides figures in terms of goods moved whereas the Port Freight statistics make no estimate of how far the freight goods may have travelled. However, many of the tables that support this release also contain figures on goods lifted. The format of the publications differs too. In particular, Port Freight statistics gives greater detail of the cargo carried as well as data for specific ports.

## Strengths and weaknesses of the data

Most of the data for this release comes from DfT Port Freight statistics. This is a robust data source, for more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-statistics-2016-final-figures>

The Port Freight statistics data does not always state a specific port or wharf, instead it references the statistical port which is made up of several smaller ports or wharves (e.g. Tilbury is a component of the statistical port London). In order to make the inland tonne-kilometres more accurate, the specific port is sometimes estimated using data the Department already records on ship arrivals and knowledge of the cargo type handled at certain ports. However, these estimates will not have a major impact on the data, even if the port has been wrongly estimated. This is because all of the component ports are close to the geographical location of the statistical port.

Some details of traffic coming from, or going to, minor ports are estimated. However, the total amount of traffic by cargo type is known for these ports. Therefore, the estimation is done in a way that is consistent with the totals and has little overall effect on the statistics. From 2000 onwards, more accurate recording of the routing of crude oil shipments has resulted in differences in one-port and coastwise traffic compared with earlier years. See the Technical notes at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maritime-and-shipping-statistics-guidance>

Some of the data for internal inland waters traffic is sourced from an additional survey of barge operators. As far as is known, this is comprehensive, and efforts have been taken to ensure that no double counting takes place between this and the data already collected from the port freight statistics. However, there is still a possibility that such traffic is not fully reported or is being double counted.

## Links to other information

This release is a summary of a larger set of data tables, charts and documentation on domestic waterborne freight statistics available from the Department for Transport web site at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/domestic-waterborne-freight-2016>

Other documents which form part of this release include a technical note describing the data sources, methods, definitions and data issues in more detail:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/maritime-and-shipping-statistics#technical-note>

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