

PE1770/A

Petitioner submission of 7 January 2020

Our son Christopher lost his life in the Clyde in 2016.

Christopher went out with friends on 29/01/2016. He had arrived at the Broomielaw to make his way home. He would usually cross the Tradeston Bridge, but this had been cordoned off by Heras fencing because there was a storm going on and a part of the BT building had come down in this area. The police were present on the opposite side of the cordon which spanned the length of the Broomielaw from the street he had come down and all the way to the waters' edge. He spoke to the police at the beginning of the cordon and they told him to move away. He then proceeded to the middle of the cordon and the police had let a couple through from the south side at this point and he spoke to the couple and then he proceeded to the waters' edge in the freezing storm. The police came over and told him to move then they turned and went back to their bothy in the unsafe area. At this point Christopher proceeded to climb the barrier on the river side and had climbed over to shimmy along towards the bridge but he slipped. He had managed to grab the bottom rung of the Barrier and shouted for help. The police eventually heard him and they ran back over to the Heras fencing. He was a couple of feet away from them on the opposite side and clinging onto the barrier. The officers had to run around a lot to get a lifebelt. One of them pulled up the Heras fencing from the bottom to try and get through to him.

By this time he slipped into the water. They threw in the lifebelt but he could not reach it. He likely had cold water shock. The officer tried to get down the pontoon to help him but it was locked and when he called for someone to give him the combination number for the lock it would not work. By this time Christopher had drifted under the bridge and further out. He was floating on his back and they threw throw bags to him. The emergency services had arrived but despite efforts he disappeared. During the incident the officer had to call the CCTV monitoring office to ask for the camera to be turned to record the incident. The CCTV focuses more on the city centre and I feel that taking into consideration the amount of deaths in the Clyde there should be constant monitoring of this area.

As time passed it came to light that there were no ropes on the lifebelts. We thought this was odd as this could help get someone out of the water by pulling the lifebelt back and trying again if the person could not reach it the first time. This could be tried again and again if necessary. Although people are not trained to do this they could do their best to save someone.

We set up a petition to ask for ropes to be attached to the lifebelts at the Clyde in Glasgow. This was successful and the Glasgow City Council Water Safety group installed colour coded ropes and also throw bags.

We ask the committee:

To ensure all waterways throughout Scotland have life-saving equipment such as lifebelts and throw bags with ropes attached to increase safety and prevention of loss of life.

To mitigate the risk of failure to life saving equipment, we appeal to you to give credence to its necessity by enforcing the use of CCTV with active monitoring of locations of concern, walkways, isolated areas of entry to deep water so that opportunity may arise for COPFS to consider a case for prosecution if the perpetrators of vandalism of water safety equipment are identified and fatalities may also be prevented. We would like you to support all councils by funding life-saving equipment for all waterways throughout Scotland.

Moving forward to ensure all waterways initiatives become a rule of thumb, we also appeal to the committee that a discussion is tabled to ensure all new builds located along waterways to agree to install water safety equipment and include this in their planning application as a stipulation to being approved.