

16.0 Gateway opportunities

16.1 Introduction

Opportunities exist to establish a clear identity for the river at the junctions with adjoining navigations.

A number of working groups are already applying many of the principles of the Thames waterway plan to local studies. These include:

- Teddington Gateway Project (where the river becomes tidal)
- Reading Waterspace Strategy (where the Kennet & Avon Canal joins)
- Oxford Waterways Partnership (where the Oxford Canal joins)
- Cotswold Canals Partnership (which will restore the junction with the Thames & Severn Canal at Lechlade)

The proposed restoration of the Wilts and Berks Canal will create a further gateway at Abingdon. A new junction with the Thames should be built by August 2006. The first 150 metres of new canal will link to a former gravel pit that will provide visitor moorings.

The work will also include a path and fishing platforms suitable for use by people in wheelchairs.

The full restoration of the canal will create new waterway rings with the Kennet and Avon Canal and the Cotswold Canals.

16.2 Teddington

Teddington Lock is the largest lock on the river. The site is a designated conservation area within the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. Teddington Lock is the central river feature in the Thames Landscape Strategy. The strategy contains policies to conserve, protect and enhance the river between Hampton and Kew, where it flows through a unique landscape of parks, open spaces and royal palaces. This stretch of Thames saw an influx of poets, artists and other inspirational thinkers during the 18th century and is considered unparalleled within London in terms of its landscape, architecture and nature conservation.

The Thames Landscape Strategy was written, and is being implemented, by partnerships of local communities, businesses, and statutory bodies. It contains strategic planning guidance as well as site-specific projects.

The Teddington Gateway scheme will conserve and enhance heritage features, facilitate access for all, and increase appreciation and understanding of this unique landscape.

The Environment Agency is the lead organisation, working closely through the Thames Landscape Strategy. Key partners are:

- London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
- Port of London Authority
- Teddington Society
- Local businesses, clubs and residents



16.3 Reading

The Reading Waterspace Strategy has been produced by a partnership between Reading Borough Council, the Environment Agency, the Oracle Corporation, British Waterways and The Waterways Trust.

It is a vision for the waterside that draws on local knowledge and ideas from businesses, community organisations and users. It identifies problems and opportunities, suggesting key ways to better link Reading town centre with its riverside.

The Council's Thames Park Plan also looks in detail at the role of the ribbon of riverside green space through the town. It examines many of the themes that are central to the Thames waterway plan. The role of the parks in providing sport and informal recreation opportunities on the doorstep; green transport issues, including river passenger boat transport and commuting on the towpath; learning opportunities and outdoor education; biodiversity, bank protection, and waterside habitat creation; boating issues, such as visitor moorings and slipway provision; the introduction of new uses (camping, residential moorings, restaurants and catering, art-in-the-park). Management implications and new ways to generate income are also considered.

16.4 Cotswold Canals restoration

The Cotswold Canals Partnership has completed initial feasibility studies for the restoration of the 12 kilometres Stroudwater Navigation and the 46 kilometres Thames & Severn Canal, which together, link the Thames to the River Severn and Gloucester. The Heritage Lottery Fund has given stage one approval to a £11.3 million bid for the first stage of restoration.

The full restoration on to the Thames will eventually change the pattern of boating on the river, introducing through traffic to the upper reaches and intensifying the trend towards more narrow boats using the river.



16.5 Oxford

The Oxford Waterways Partnership consists primarily of Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, the Environment Agency, British Waterways, the Inland Waterways Association, Oxford University, the Oxford Preservation Society, and Thames Water plc.

It will carry out a detailed audit and appraisal of the character and use of Oxford's waterways and adjoining areas, including the interaction between the natural and built environment. Following consultation with local interests, it will produce a series of recommendations and costed opportunities for improving the waterways.

The key elements include:

Analysis of economic and commercial value

- opportunities for an improved tourism role for the waterways
- opportunities for an improved commercial role for the waterways
- identification of opportunity areas or regeneration zones
- use of the waterways for navigation and transport, including passenger, tourist and freight
- opportunities for renewable energy generation along the waterways
- industrial, commercial, residential, and other uses of the waterways and banks.

Physical environment and landscape analysis

- landscape of the waterways themselves, including landmarks, views and skylines
- relationship of the waterways to Oxford's townscape and the wider Oxfordshire landscape
- impact of development and other human interventions on the waterways and city
- contaminated land and areas of landfill within 250 metres of the waterways
- areas and features of nature conservation importance.

Analysis of recreational and cultural value

- use of and public access to the waterways and their banks for sport, recreation, and leisure
- facilities such as moorings, basins and marinas
- heritage sites and areas of archaeological interest and importance
- contemporary cultural and artistic activity, including festival and celebratory opportunities
- cultural history and literary connections.

Specific outcomes include the identification of funding sources and creating a mechanism to secure them. Part of the strategy should also be capable of being issued by the local planning authority (or authorities) as Supplementary Planning Guidance or equivalent.



17.0 Education (map 18)

The Thames can be used to inspire delivery of many areas of the national curriculum. It provides an educational resource, relevant for several subjects, that is easily accessible for study and fieldwork. There are 804 schools within 5 kilometres of the river.

The river also provides a rich resource for informal learning for people of all ages. In addition, sport

and recreation provide opportunities for social and physical education.

We must ensure that people continue to have the appreciation, skills and knowledge of the river and its historic landscape that will be needed to manage and care for it in the future.

Policy 28 - education

We will optimise the contribution the river can make to education and lifelong learning

Possible actions

- 1 establish an education sub-group of the River Thames Alliance
- 2 introduce learning projects in partnership with education resource providers like the River & Rowing Museum, including a pilot using passenger boats on the river
- 3 produce curriculum support material based on the river corridor
- 4 ensure adequate training and courses are available for all the special skills needed to manage the river and its corridor

The river provides an accessible and interesting resource, relevant to many education disciplines.

Case study 10

The River & Rowing Museum

The River & Rowing Museum is raised on columns above water meadows beside the Thames in Henley. Moorings and a landing stage for trip boats encourage visitors from the river. It has three main galleries devoted to the River Thames, the international sport of rowing and the town of Henley. There are also three special exhibition galleries, a riverside café, shop, education centre, library and function rooms.

Education for all lies at the heart of the museum's purpose. The museum has a dedicated Education Centre that supports the needs of teachers and learners of all ages and levels. There is a comprehensive service to schools including teacher training and resource materials linked to the National Curriculum.

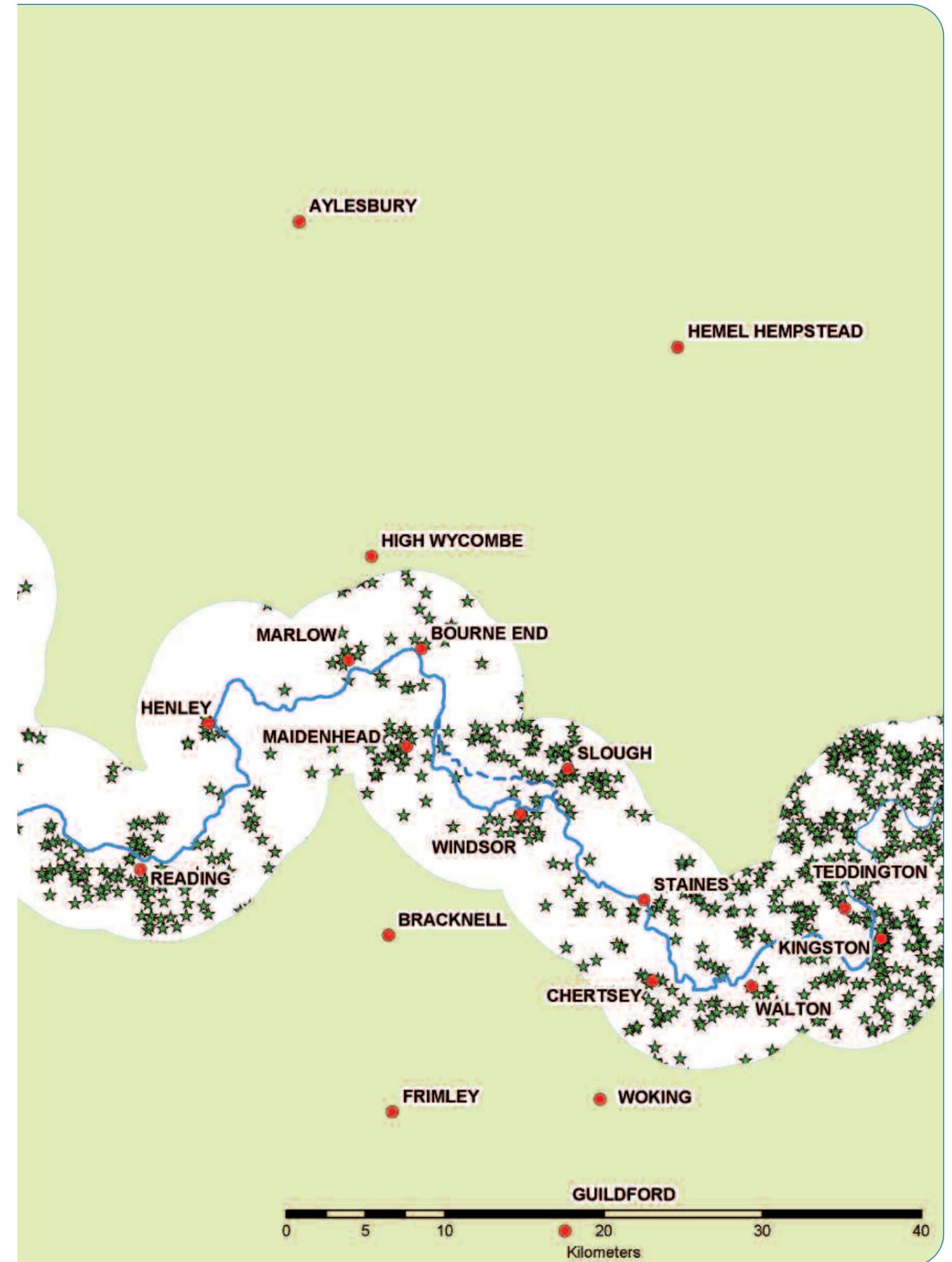
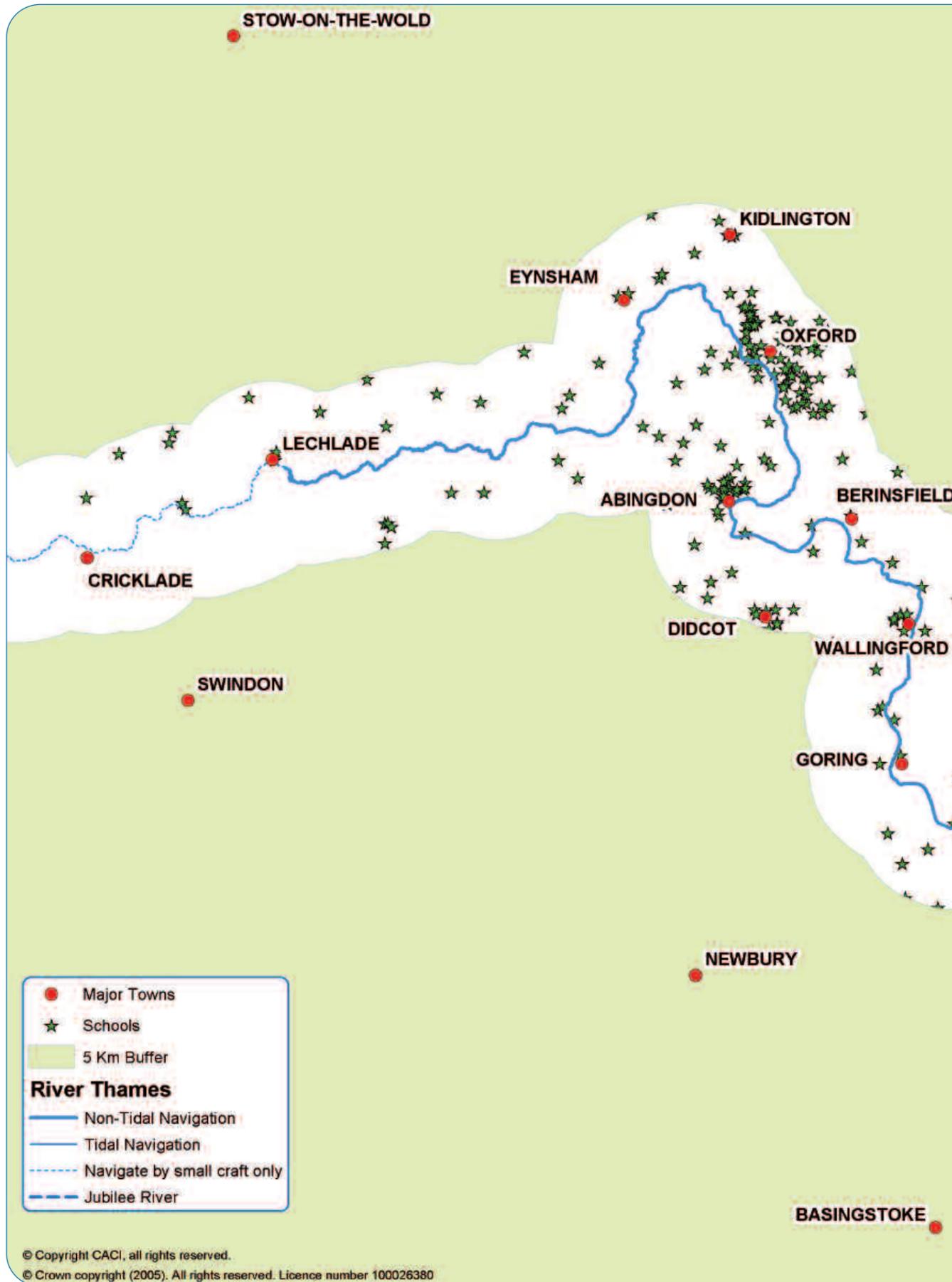
The museum runs a programme of out-of-school activities for young people and

families and a series of events and lectures for adults linked to special exhibitions. Interactive exhibits and trails throughout the museum and on the riverbank encourage people to broaden their understanding and appreciation of the environment, history and science.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded over £680,000 for the redevelopment and extension of the Education Centre, allowing the Museum to expand its formal education programme from January 2006.

Relevance to plan policies:

- use of the river for education and lifelong learning
- provides a fully accessible tourist attraction of the highest quality



18.0 Services and facilities

18.1 Waterway standards

For the river to thrive, we must provide levels of service and facilities that meet the needs of our users. The overall scope of the standards follows the recommendations of the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities and the detail has been developed in consultation with river users.

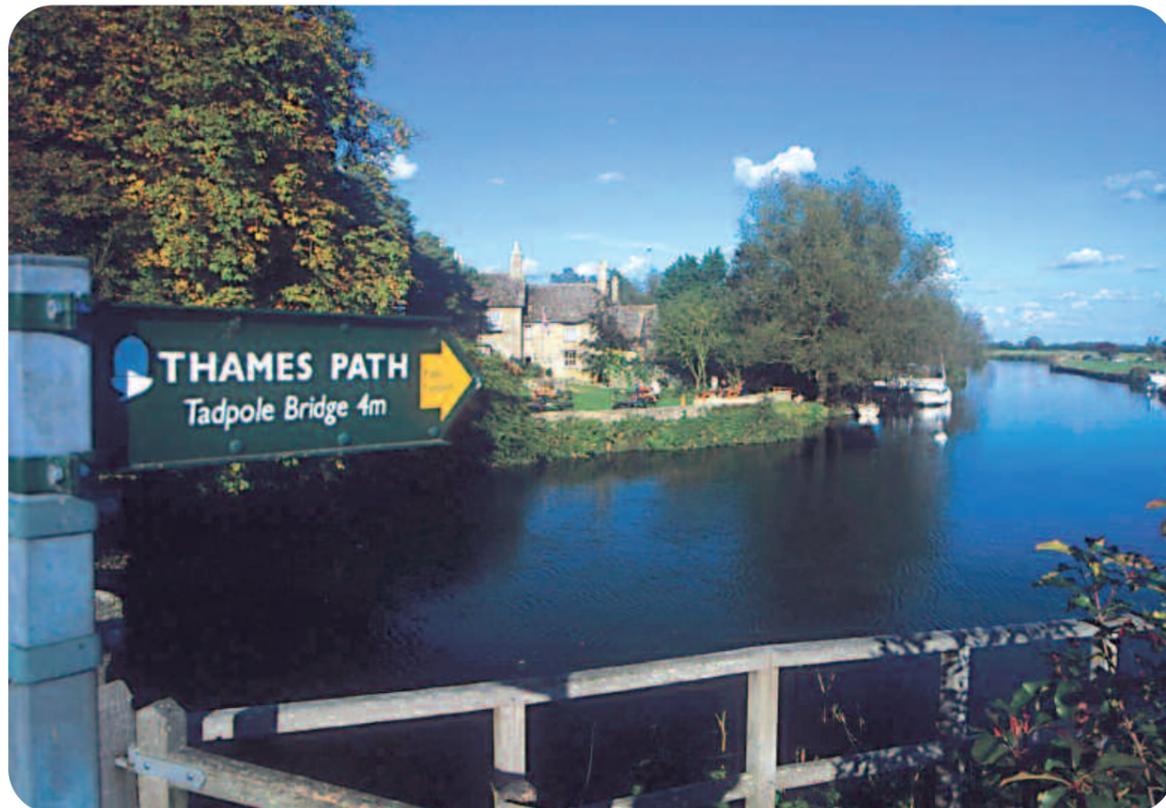
The standards relating to public rights of way next to the river broadly follow the *Quality Standards for National Trails in England* published by the Countryside Agency.

In general, the facility standards are intended to meet the needs of individuals.

The Environment Agency, as navigation authority, has taken lead responsibility for delivery of the standards shown in the shaded boxes.

(Commercial operators of passenger, trip, restaurant and hotel boats are expected to make suitable provision for their own operations.)

Achieving all the waterway standards will take time and investment. Concerted and committed action by members of the River Thames Alliance is vital.



18.1.1 Waterway standards – river corridor

1. Public rights of way next to the river

1.1 Obstructions

1.1.1 A readily passable and unobstructed route free from undergrowth and low overhanging branches.

1.2. Surface

1.2.1 Well managed, sustainable and sympathetic to the landscape.

1.2.2 Level and free from man-made obstacles or tripping hazards as far as possible.

1.2.3 Free draining as far as possible (although flow conditions of the river will dictate whether or not the path is flooded in winter).

1.3 Width

1.3.1 Where possible, two walkers should be able to pass in comfort. Ideal width (for walking only) of two metres but with a minimum of 1.8 metres in urban areas and one metre in rural locations.

1.3.2 If the path is a bridleway or designated cycle path, a five metre width is the ideal.

1.4. Barriers

1.4.1 There should be no unnecessary fences, stiles or steps. Where they are necessary at legal access points such as roads or byway junctions, they should be designed to prevent undesirable uses like motorcycling, but allow access by users of wheelchairs and personal mobility vehicles.

1.5. Litter and dog faeces

1.5.1 Bins provided and emptied at locations where there is a particular problem.

2. Structural aesthetics

2.1 The Environment Agency will install, paint and maintain structures (such as lock offices, lock gates, fencing) in accordance with the *Thames Environment Design Handbook*.

2.2 Other significant structures on or near the river should be managed and maintained so as not to spoil the river's beauty.

3. Graffiti

3.1 Offensive material removed within one week, other material within three months of awareness.

4. Signage

4.1 Warning signs erected prohibiting fishing and warning of danger at overhead powerlines.

4.2 Direction signs provided to clearly mark the route of the Thames Path. At principal access points they will indicate destinations and distances.

4.3 Direction signs provided to clearly mark cycle routes.

4.4 The Environment Agency will erect signs to name its sites, giving its Grid Reference and/or Post Code, highlighting facilities available and hazards to visitors, and giving an emergency phone number.

5. Car parking provision

5.1 Teddington to Kings: Car parking, available for public use, provided within 10 minutes walk of the river and Thames Path at least every eight kilometres (five miles) along the river. Should be well-drained and free of potholes and puddles.

5.2 Kings to Roundhouse Lechlade: Car parking, available for public use, provided within 10 minutes walk of the river and Thames Path at every river crossing or riverside settlement or at least every 16 kilometres (10 miles) along the river. Should be well-drained and free of potholes and puddles.

6. Camp sites

6.1 Campsites to meet the needs of walkers, and other users like canoeists but not motorists no further than 16 kilometres apart.

6.2 Sites should have drinking water, toilet and shower facilities and refuse disposal.

18.1.2 Waterway standards – lock sites

7. Staff on site

- 7.1 All our lock sites will have staff on duty during published hours of service (with additional assistants in summer). They will provide information, advice, guidance and emergency assistance to all visitors.
- 7.2 All our locks will have an office and a sign giving an emergency out-of-hours telephone number.
- 7.3 Teddington Lock will be staffed 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

8. Lock operation

- 8.1 In normal circumstances, you should not have to wait more than 30 minutes to take a boat through when the lock keeper is on duty.
- 8.2 We will provide bollards to hold boats steady during lock operation, positioned for the range of craft likely to use the lock.
- 8.3 We will provide grab chains on the walls of the lock for craft like rowing boats, inflatables and canoes to be held steady during lock operation and to assist anyone falling in the water. We will recess the chains in the lock walls when locks are refurbished.
- 8.4 We will clean algae off the lock walls at least once a year.
- 8.5 We will provide steps recessed into both sides of the lock.
- 8.6 We will clearly mark, on both sides of the lock, the position of the cill or where boats should not be.
- 8.7 Each pair of lock gates has a walkway with non-slip surfaces and handrails.
- 8.8 Locks from Teddington to Godstow, inclusive, are automated using hydraulic power.

9. User operation of locks

- 9.1 We will put clear instructions at all locks to enable boaters to use the locks when the lock keeper is not on duty. Where possible, powered operation of locks by users will be provided during daylight hours.

10. Lay-bys and landings

- 10.1 Each lock has an upstream and downstream lay-by where boaters get off and wait for passage through the lock. We will design lay-bys so that they can be used over a range of water levels.
- 10.2 We will ensure that approaching boaters can see them clearly. We will design and position them to make it easy for craft to enter and leave the lock.
- 10.3 Lay-bys should be long enough to accommodate all the boats likely to be waiting to use the lock.
- 10.4 We will provide a level, firm, non-slip surfaced walkway either on land or offshore.
- 10.5 We will provide a low-level launching/exit (portage) point for canoes above and below each lock. They should be signed and clearly visible to approaching paddlers.
- 10.6 We will provide a portage route to allow canoeists to bypass the lock, with direction signs if the route is not obvious.

11. Toilets

- 11.1 We will provide toilets at every lock.
- 11.2 There should be enough toilets to cater for the number and type of visitors to the location, whether from river or on the bank.
- 11.3 We will provide at least a unisex WC, with hand basin, hot and cold water, lighting, toilet roll, disposal bin, hand towel, soap and mirror.
- 11.4 We will provide separate-sex WCs where appropriate.
- 11.5 We will design them to be accessible to people with disabilities.
- 11.6 We will keep them clean, tidy, and they should not be smelly. When staff are on site, they will clean up any mess within two hours of it coming to their attention.

12. Drinking water

- 12.1 We will provide water for filling portable containers (but not necessarily a hose supply) at every lock.

13. Access

- 13.1 All our lock sites are accessible to people on foot. Where practicable, we will provide access for people with disabilities. We will provide ramps where necessary at heavily visited sites and where busy public rights of way cross lock gates.
- 13.2 We will provide a hard surface, that drains immediately, around the vicinity of the lock to meet the needs of boaters and other visitors.

14. Information

- 14.1 We will erect signs showing what facilities are available at the lock, where the next facilities can be found and giving the distance to the next lock in both directions.
- 14.2 We will provide information and interpretation material in leaflets or on notice boards. We will highlight things of interest to visitors in the reaches above and below the lock. We will include recreation, wildlife, landscape and safety material.

- 14.3 We will provide information that is clear, accurate and up-to-date.
- 14.4 We will clean or repair damaged signs within seven days. If the damage is too great, we will remove them within seven days and arrange for their replacement if appropriate.

15. Seating etc.

- 15.1 We will provide informal seating for visitors that is appropriate for the location and its use.
- 15.2 We will provide picnic tables at popular locations.
- 15.3 We will provide facilities for locking bikes where necessary.



18.1.3 Waterway standards – navigation

(Cruising times are based on a speed of 8 kilometres per hour with an allowance of 20 minutes for passage through a lock.)

16. Fairway

16.1 The fairway is a channel, generally down the centre of the river, which, as a minimum, is wide enough for two craft to pass each other. In the middle and lower reaches this is usually not less than the central third of the channel. Further upstream it will be a greater proportion of its width.

16.2 We will maintain a fairway between each lock to allow the navigation of craft of the following dimensions:

	Length		Beam		Draught		Air Draught	
	(m)	(ft)	(m)	(ft)	(m)	(ft)	(m)	(ft)
Downstream boundary - Staines Bridge	60.0	197	7.0	23	2.0	7	5.5	18
Staines Bridge - Windsor Bridge	54.0	177	7.0	23	1.7	6	4.3	14
Windsor Bridge - Reading Bridge	37.0	122	5.0	16	1.3	4	3.8	12
Reading Bridge - Folly Bridge	33.5	110	5.0	16	1.2	4	3.7	12
Folly Bridge - Lechlade Roundhouse	30.5	100	4.0	14	0.9	3	2.2	7
Lechlade Roundhouse - Cricklade	Normally suitable for small craft, subject to seasonal conditions							

Please note that the measurements in feet have been rounded and are provided for guidance only.

- 16.2 We will mark shoals that encroach into the fairway with appropriately coloured buoys.
- 16.3 We will dredge, on a site-by-site basis, when necessary to achieve the navigable depth for the fairway.
- 16.4 We will remove debris from weirs and channel so that no more than small quantities of floating debris will be on the river and through navigation will not be obstructed.

17. Water levels

17.1 We will manage water levels so that the river is available for cruising 24 hours a day. We maintain the water level within +15.24cm to -7.62cm (+6in to -3in) of standard head water (SHW) unless in exceptional flow conditions.

18. Weirs

18.1 We will construct guards across all Environment Agency weirs on the main navigation channel.

19. Safe havens

19.1 We will identify location(s) in every reach where boats may be moored during periods of high-flow conditions.

20. Strong stream warnings

20.1 We will provide a 24-hour telephone advice line on river conditions and operate a system of navigation warning boards at locks to warn of strong stream conditions.

21. Channel direction and warning signs

- 21.1 We will install channel direction indicators at locations where there is doubt about the navigation channel. They will be clearly identifiable and kept free of vegetation and other obstructions.
- 21.2 We will provide direction indicators that are clearly identifiable at all junctions.
- 21.3 We will provide signed advance warning of hazards such as low bridges and weirs giving clear directions on how to navigate.
- 21.4 We will mark low bridges with their normal SHW airdraft.
- 21.5 We will mark the location of underwater cables with signs on either bank.

22. Bulk water

- 22.1 Drinking water, with adequate water pressure for supply by hose to boats, provided every two hours cruising.
- 22.2 Waiting time no longer than 30 minutes in normal circumstances.
- 22.3 Good site drainage. Space for two typical craft to moor alongside without obstructing the fairway.

23. Sewage pump-out

- 23.1 Provided every three hours cruising.
- 23.2 Payment at Environment Agency sites by pre-purchased card or token.
- 23.3 The pump-out facility must not be too close to a drinking water supply for public use on the same site.
- 23.4 Hand washing facilities provided.
- 23.5 They should be clean, tidy, and not smelly. When staff are onsite, they will clean up any mess within two hours of it coming to their attention.

24. Chemical (Elsan) disposal

- 24.1 Teddington to Kings Lock, Oxford: Provided every three hours cruising.
- 24.2 Kings Lock, Oxford to Roundhouse Lechlade: Provided every four hours cruising.

- 24.3 Hand washing facilities provided.
- 24.4 They should be clean, tidy, and not smelly. When staff are on site, they will clean up any mess within two hours of it coming to their attention.

25. Dry refuse disposal and recycling collection points

- 25.1 Teddington to Kings: Provided every one hours cruising.
- 25.2 Kings to Roundhouse Lechlade: Provided every two hours cruising.
- 25.3 Provided in a screened and visually unobtrusive but clearly marked location. Kept clean, tidy and not smelly, with refuse containers never more than 90 per cent full.
- 25.4 Hard, well-drained ground surface.
- 25.5 Containers for glass, tins and plastics.

26. Electric hook-up point

- 26.1 Provided every three hours cruising.

27. Showers

- 27.1 Teddington to Kings: Provided every four hours cruising.
- 27.2 Kings to Roundhouse Lechlade: Provided every six hours cruising.
- 27.3 They should be clean, tidy, and not smelly. When staff are on site, they will clean up any mess within two hours of it coming to their attention.

28. Landing points

- 28.1 Landing points provided at all sites where access to facilities (such as water points and pump out stations) is needed from the river.
- 28.2 They should be long enough to accommodate boats likely to be waiting to use the facility.
- 28.3 They should have a level, firm, non-slip surfaced walkway either on land or offshore.
- 28.4 They should be signed to show what facilities are available.

29. Visitor moorings (24 hour / overnight)

- 29.1 Clearly identified sites provided every 30 minutes cruising.
- 29.2 Wherever possible, mooring lengths should be sufficient to meet demand. (No minimum length is specified as it is better to seek lots of locations, and if necessary encourage rafting out, rather than ruling out small sites.)
- 29.3 They should be available throughout the year (subject to flood conditions).
- 29.4 Depth of water should allow craft typical of that part of the river to moor.
- 29.5 Moorings at attractions should provide information on what is available in the local area.
- 29.6 Moorings at facilities should provide information on what is available.
- 29.7 Where practicable, access for people with disabilities should be provided from the moorings to adjacent road, footpath, pub, shops, attractions or other facilities.
- 29.8 Sites with natural banks should be reasonably level and firm with no holes or trip hazards. Where possible, they should have mooring posts. The surface will be grazed or cut to a short sward.

29.9 Sites with hard edges should have a level surface and mooring rings or bollards at appropriate intervals.

30. Slipways

- 30.1 Provided at suitable points approximately every three hours cruising.
- 30.3 Designed for craft up to at least 7.5 metres (25 feet) long.
- 30.4 Built with solid base.
- 30.5 Secure parking for at least five vehicles and trailers within five minutes walk.
- 30.6 Place to temporarily moor boat before or after using slipway.

31. Boatyards

- 31.1 Repair, craneage and dry dock facilities available every eight hours cruising.

32. Fuel

- 32.1 Petrol, diesel and bottled gas available every four hours cruising.

33. Stoppage information

- 33.1 We will publish details in late summer of major stoppages planned for the following winter.
- 33.2 They will be discussed in advance with the Waterways Working Group.
- 33.3 We will keep Working Group members, River User Groups, clubs and operators informed of progress, issuing update notices, if necessary.
- 33.4 We will put information about stoppages on the waterways website (visithames.co.uk) and on blackboards located (as a minimum) outside locks immediately up and down stream of the lock affected. Information will also be circulated to representatives of key stakeholders on the river (such as the Thames Hire Cruiser Association, Thames Boating Trades Association, British Canoe Union and Amateur Rowing Association).
- 33.5 We will provide up-to-date information on a Waterway Information Telephone Line and the Environment Agency website.

34. Major works stoppages

- 34.1 We will plan and carry out major stoppages so that the length of time the navigation is closed to traffic is kept to a minimum.
- 34.2 They will only take place between the first week of November and the last week of March or the week before Easter, whichever is earlier, unless by agreement with user group representatives.

35. Routine planned stoppages

- 35.1 We will give users at least 10 days notice before planned stoppages of less than four consecutive hours.
- 35.2 We will give users users at least 10 weeks notice before planned stoppages of more than four consecutive hours.

36. Emergency stoppages

- 36.1 We will be on site within two duty hours of being told of a problem stopping navigation.
- 36.2 We will make repairs as quickly as practicable.



37. River management at navigation authority main offices

- 37.1 We will answer 90 per cent of telephone calls within 15 seconds during normal working hours (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).
- 37.2 Whenever possible, we will respond immediately to enquiries made in person or by phone.
- 37.3 If you require a written response, we will reply within 10 working days. If, due to the type of request, we have not been able to give you a full reply, we will tell you when you can have the answer you need. This should not be longer than 40 working days from the date of your request.
- 37.4 We will get to any navigation-related incident likely to have a major effect on the environment within two hours during our normal working day and within four hours at other times.

- 37.5 Whenever we are told about an incident, we will give feedback to the person who reported it.
- 37.6 We will respond within 10 working days to applications for consent to hold an event on the river. Where appropriate, we will attend the event to provide advice and assistance and to ensure that the event is being run properly.
- 37.7 We will issue a navigation licence within 10 working days if the application is filled in properly, the correct fee paid and no additional consents are needed.
- 37.8 We will acknowledge a complaint immediately we receive it. We will send a full response within 10 working days, unless we need time to investigate further. If so, we will let you know when you could expect to receive a full reply.

18.2 Facility gap analysis

Figure 7 Number of gaps where facility provision fails to meet the standard

Standard	Within 5% of target	Within 15% of target	Within 15% to 50% of target	Missed target by over 50%	Total number of gaps
Car parks					0
Sewage pump-out					0
Boatyards			1		1
Showers				1	1
Slipways				1	1
Electric hook-up point				2	2
Elsan disposal		2			2
Fuel		1		2	3
Refuse disposal		1	2	1	4
Campsites			4	1	5
Bulk water	3		3	1	7
Visitor moorings	2	2	12	9	25
	5	6	22	18	51
Number of lock sites lacking facility					
Toilets		25			
Drinking water		14			

We have mapped the location of existing facilities and have identified gaps in provision against the standards as shown in the table above.

Over half the locks do not have toilets available to users and 14 lack drinking water fountains.

Of the other gaps, five are within five per cent of target and a further six are within 15 per cent. The remaining 40 facility gaps are greater, with 18 missing the relevant target by over 50 per cent. The standard that is least well met is for visitor moorings.

We will use Strategic Sustainability Assessment to gauge the impacts of filling gaps and, where appropriate and possible, we will group them at the same location. By this means, the 51 gaps identified might be filled by putting new facilities at 29 sites. We will avoid putting new facilities in environmentally sensitive areas.

We will prepare recommended design guidelines for new facilities that follow the *Thames Environment Design Handbook* principles and include environmental considerations (e.g. toilets to incorporate water efficiency techniques such as dual flush, dry urinals, spray timer taps, grey water recycling, with posters to explain and promote efficient use of water). Advice on the use of flood-resistant construction will also be included.

As a significant amount of facility provision is at Environment Agency lock sites, we will develop specific management plans for every lock.

Policy 29 - services and facilities

We will provide services and facilities that meet the reasonable needs of all our users

Possible actions

- 1 set waterway standards for the provision of services and facilities
- 2 identify gaps in provision and introduce new or improved facilities to meet need
- 3 produce design guidelines for new facilities
- 4 produce lock site management plans

Other competitor waterways have already established standards. We will lose our users if we fail to meet their expectations.

Case study 11

Improved facilities at Hurley Lock

The lock island and the pretty riverside village at Hurley are popular with walkers, picnickers, anglers and campers, attracting over 160,000 visitors every year.

The lock keeper manages the river to create the optimum flows for canoeists to enjoy white water freestyle paddling at the main weir (venue for a major annual international rodeo competition), while the water below the island weir is a haven for novice paddlers.

All this demand has created pressure for improved facilities on the site.

In response, a partnership of the Environment Agency, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Slough Borough Council is working together to provide new showers, changing rooms, staff room and new public toilets.

The building will provide much better provision for the outdoor education project run by the Royal Borough's Community and Youth Services Unit. Canoeing at Hurley forms a key part of the project that introduces young people to the countryside and promotes a healthy and active lifestyle.



Joint working has enabled these needs to be accommodated in a single building that is fully accessible. Funding came from the partners and the New Opportunities Lottery Fund.

A vital part of the overall scheme is an Environment Agency project to put the lock site onto mains drainage, which was essential to meet the demand generated by the large number of people visiting.

Relevance to plan policies:

- helps to achieve waterway standards by filling a gap in the provision of toilets
- provides access for people with disabilities
- uses the river to increase participation in sport and active recreation
- partnership

19.0 Visitor risk management

There are several reasons for effective visitor risk management. First and foremost, we want visitors to the river to return home happy and satisfied with their experiences. We have a moral obligation to consider their safety and protect them from unnecessary or unreasonable risk.

Under Section three of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, we have a duty to ensure the safety of those not in our employment, so far as is reasonably practicable. We need to understand what 'reasonably practicable' means. In addition, as owners and managers of land and property, we owe our visitors (including trespassers) a duty of care to ensure they are reasonably safe.

Successful risk management demands a partnership between the manager, the visitor and other groups (such as governing bodies of sport), recognising that each carries a share of the responsibility for safety, dependent on the type of activity and location.

Visitors are frequently away from supervision by staff. This leads to poor reporting of accidents, incidents and near misses. Some visitors feel vulnerable, particularly on paths in urban areas. This is an issue that can be addressed through discussion with local police forces and community safety partnerships.

Different types of river user have widely differing expectations; from white water canoeists seeking adventure, difficulty and challenge, to parents looking for a place for their children to picnic and play without coming to harm.

We must take care to avoid implementing safety measures that conflict significantly with our access, recreation, landscape, heritage and environmental responsibilities. Nor should we take away people's sense of adventure and freedom.



Policy 30 - visitor health and safety

We will adopt a consistent approach to visitor risk management

Possible actions

- 1 carry out risk assessment and introduce risk control measures in accordance with the guiding principles established by the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group¹
- 2 gather information on accidents and near misses from user groups
- 3 work with police to achieve a safe river environment for visitors

We believe that it is possible to achieve acceptable levels of risk and enhance the environment and encourage public access. Safety, access and conservation need not be mutually exclusive.

20.0 Targets, monitoring and review

It is important to be able to judge over time how successful we are in meeting the plan's core objectives to:

- improve and promote access and information for all users (on water and land)
- improve and maintain the river infrastructure and facilities and services for all users
- contribute to enhanced biodiversity, heritage, and landscape value in the waterway corridor
- increase use of the river and its corridor.

We will judge the plan's success by the following key performance measures:

- the numbers using the river
- user satisfaction
- achieving waterway standards
- enhanced biodiversity, heritage and landscape value.

We will need to establish robust baseline data and measure changes. However, we must avoid the need for expensive new research and ensure that, as far as possible, categories of data are compatible with those of other organisations. We will therefore examine the criteria adopted for monitoring other plans in the region. For

example, the South East Plan, local development frameworks, regional plans for sport and the Water Development Framework.

For boating, the number of craft registered provides a reliable measure. However we will need to find ways to measure levels of participation in sport and recreation (for example: number of oarsmen, canoeists, walkers, anglers and cyclists).

It would also be very valuable to establish a programme of research that measures user satisfaction and identifies the extent to which use is socially inclusive. (Established surveys carried out by the Thames Path National Trails Office and the Environment Agency provide good base data about the opinions of walkers and boaters and how they travel to the river).

Key indicators of success in maintaining the river's infrastructure and facilities will be reducing the value of maintenance arrears and progress in meeting the waterway standards.

Key environmental measures include: area of new riverside habitat created, length of natural riverbank retained and monitoring Biodiversity Action Plan species such as otters, water voles and depressed river mussel.

Policy 31 - monitoring and review

We will monitor the impacts from implementing the Thames waterway plan

Possible actions

- 1 carry out Strategic Sustainability Assessment of the plan as it is developed and reviewed
- 2 gather data and research patterns of recreation use
- 3 set realistic, measurable targets with time scales, for every policy
- 4 measure social, economic and environmental impacts
- 5 formally review the plan in 2010

We need to be able to assess how successful we are in meeting the plan's objectives. It is important to respond to changes in people's activities and lifestyles. We must also be able to detect any adverse cumulative impacts from incremental change.

Organisations responding to Thames waterway plan final draft consultation July 2005	River Thames Alliance member
ACTVaR (Association of Councils of the Thames Valley Region)	✓
Amateur Rowing Association	
Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust	✓
British Canoe Union	✓
British Waterways	Interested party
Campaign to Protect Rural England, Oxfordshire	
CATA Community Alternative Transport Association	
Cherwell District Council	Interested party
Child Beale Trust	✓
Chilterns Conservation Board	
Chiltern Society	
Community Council for Berkshire	✓
Cotswold Water Park Society	✓
Countryside Agency	
DBA - The Barge Association	
Electric Boat Association	✓
Elmbridge Borough Council	✓
Environment Agency	✓
Gloucestershire County Council	
Hampton Sailing Club	
Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council	
Inland Waterways Association	✓
Kingfisher Canoe Club	
Kingston Cycling Campaign	
Kris Cruisers	
Lechlade Town Council	✓
London River Services	
Marlow Canoe Club	
Marlow Society	✓
MDL Thames Marinas	
Mid Thames Riparian Owners Group	✓
National Association of Boat Owners	✓
National Trust	✓
Nauticalia Group	
Oxfordshire County Council	✓
Oxfordshire Narrowboat Trust	
Passenger Boat Association	✓
Port of London Authority	
Ramblers Association	✓
Ramblers Association, East Berkshire	
Reading Borough Council	✓
River and Rowing Museum	✓
River Thames Boat Project	✓
River Thames Society	✓
River User Group 3	✓
River User Group 6	✓
River User Group 7	✓
River User Group 8	✓
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead	✓
Royal Yachting Association	✓
Runnymede Borough Council	✓
Sea Cadets	
South Bucks District Council	✓
South East England Development Agency	Endorses RTA
South East England Regional Assembly	Endorses RTA

Organisations responding to Thames waterway plan final draft consultation July 2005	River Thames Alliance member
South Oxfordshire District Council	✓
Spelthorne Borough Council	✓
Sport England, South East Region	✓
Surrey County Council	✓
SUSTRANS	✓
Thames Boating Trades Association(TBTA)	✓
Thames Fisheries Consultative Council	✓
Thames Hire Cruiser Association(THCA)	✓
Thames Landscape Strategy	✓
Thames Overways Projects	✓
Thames Path National Trails Office	✓
Thames Rescue Service	
Thames Rowing Council	✓
Thames Traditional Boat Society	✓
Thames Valley Angling Association	
Thames Water Utilities	✓
Thames Weir Project	
The Camping and Caravan Club	
Toughs Boatyard	
Tourism South East	✓
Upper Thames Fisheries Consultative Council	
Vale of White Horse District Council	✓
Wallingford Town Council	✓
West Berkshire District Council	✓
Wokingham District Council	✓
Wycombe District Council	✓

Organisations that did not respond to the final 2005 plan but who gave comments on the October 2004 consultation	River Thames Alliance member
Bray Cruiser Club	
Buckinghamshire County Council	✓
Chiltern District Council	
Copas Farms	
Cotswold Boat Hire	
English Nature	
Falcon Rowing & Canoeing Club	
Kennington Parish Council	
Mapledurham Estate	
Molesey Boat Club	
North Hinksey Parish Council	
North Wiltshire District Council	
Residential Boat Owners Association	✓
Richard Bishop & Partners	
Royal Borough of Kingston	✓
SMC Group Architects (On behalf of clients Arena Leisure plc)	
South Stoke Parish Council	
Walton Marine	
Taggs Boatyard	
Thames Scout Cruising Club	
Warborough Parish Council	
Wheatley Parish Council	
Woodcote Parish Council	

Overarching sustainable development objectives and their relevance to the Thames waterway plan

Social objectives	Relevance to TWP
1. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home.	Low
2. To reduce the risk of flooding that would be detrimental to public wellbeing, the economy and the environment.	Medium
3. To improve the health and wellbeing of the population and reduce inequalities in health.	High
4. To reduce poverty and social exclusion and close the gap between the most disadvantaged communities and the rest along the Thames corridor.	Medium
5. To raise educational achievement levels and develop opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work.	Medium
6. To reduce crime and the fear of crime.	Low
7. To create and sustain vibrant communities.	Medium
8. To improve accessibility to all services and facilities.	Medium
9. To encourage increased engagement in cultural activities across all sections of the community.	Medium

Environment objectives	Relevance to TWP
10. To improve efficiency in land use including re-using previously developed land and existing buildings and encourage urban renaissance.	Medium
11. To reduce air pollution and ensure air quality continues to improve.	Medium
12. To address the causes of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and reducing vulnerability to climate change.	Medium
13. To conserve and enhance biodiversity.	High
14a. To protect, enhance and make accessible for enjoyment the countryside and historic environment.	High
14b. To make the countryside and historic environment accessible.	High
15. To reduce road traffic and congestion through reducing the need to travel by car and improving travel choice.	Medium

Natural resources objectives	Relevance to TWP
16. To reduce the global, social and environmental impact of consumption of resources by using sustainably produced and local products.	Low
17. To reduce waste generation and disposal, and achieve sustainable management of waste.	Low
18. To maintain and improve the water quality of rivers and to achieve sustainable water resources management.	High
19. To increase energy efficiency and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources.	Low
20. To reduce the global, social and environmental impact of consumption of resources by using sustainably produced and local products.	Low

Economic objectives	Relevance to TWP
20. To ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from the economic growth of the Region.	Medium
21. To sustain economic growth and competitiveness.	Medium
22. To stimulate economic revival in areas requiring regeneration.	High
23. To develop a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy that excels in innovation with higher value, lower impact activities.	Low
24. To encourage the development of a buoyant, sustainable tourism sector.	High
25. To develop and maintain a skilled workforce to support long-term competitiveness.	Low

Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group Guiding Principles (www.vscg.co.uk)

The principles apply to individuals and groups visiting land, water, buildings and other structures. They are relevant to country parks, canals and rivers in urban areas as well as more open countryside.

Visitors include people engaged in informal recreation as well as participants in various sports and activities. The principles are not intended to cover employee safety or the work of contractors.

They are grouped under five main headings.

1. Fundamentals

- Take account of conservation, heritage, recreation, cultural and landscape objectives.
- Do not take away people's sense of freedom and adventure.
- Avoid restrictions on access.

2. Awareness

- Ensure that your visitors know the risks they face.
- Inform and educate your visitors about the nature and extent of hazards, the risk control measures in place, and the precautions that they themselves should take.

3. Partnership

- Recognise that people taking part in similar activities accept different levels of risk.
- Recognise that risk control measures for one visitor group may create risks to others.
- Work with visitor groups to promote understanding and resolve conflict.

4. Responsibility

- It is important to strike a balance between user self-reliance and management intervention.
- It is reasonable to expect visitors to exercise responsibility for themselves.
- It is reasonable to expect visitors not to put others at risk.
- It is reasonable to expect parents, guardians and leaders to supervise people in their care.

5. Risk control

- Assess risks and develop safety plans for individual sites.
- Risk control measures should be consistent.
- Monitor the behaviour and experiences of visitors to review visitor safety plans.
- Make sure that your work activities do not expose visitors to risk.

1. Fundamentals

Take account of conservation, heritage, recreation, cultural and landscape objectives

The use of modern safety precautions may conflict with conservation, recreation or landscape objectives. For example, it would be possible to reduce risk when crossing historical aqueducts by erecting railings. Handrails and steps could reduce risk on steep mountain descents. Fencing might lessen risk if erected at the edge of cliffs or water. However, the application of such control measures could fundamentally detract from the historical integrity of the structure and inherent attraction of the landscape. A balance must be achieved between risk and the impact of safety measures.

Do not take away people's sense of freedom and adventure

Do not destroy the appeal of wild and remote places by putting up signs and fences.

People should be free to participate in high risk or adventurous activities as long as they are aware of the risks. Riders of mountain bikes should not be prevented from experiencing the exhilaration of steep descents and challenging drops if that is their informed choice.

Where activities conflict, you might have to restrict one person's freedom for the benefit of others. However, first look for solutions that could still allow conflicting activities to take place, for example by zoning, or by scheduling them to take place at separate times.

Avoid restrictions on access

Try to find safety solutions that both allow access and protect the buildings or landscape. Only restrict access in the interest of conservation as a last resort.

You may need to exclude the public to carry out repairs or commercial operations (like timber harvesting). If so, keep restrictions as short as possible, and time them to cause least interference to visitors.

Avoid giving visitors a long list of dos and don'ts. Disclaimers rarely offer legal protection.

2. Awareness

Ensure that your visitors know the risks they face

Our aim is for visitors to be aware of all the risks they face and to have the chance to decide whether or not to accept them. There should be no nasty surprises.

Visitors may arrive with full knowledge of all the risks. Sometimes the risks are clearly visible on arrival at a site. In other cases, information about risk might be provided on signs at car parks or access points.

Once the visitor is aware of the nature of the risk, say for example an unfenced drop, he or she can then decide whether to accept it and go near the edge.

Usually it is reasonable for you to expect people to be aware of the normal risks associated with the sports and activities they are carrying out. You may, however, need to inform users of additional hazards specific to the site. For example, a sub aqua diver should have knowledge of the normal risks of the sport, but should be made aware of additional hazards, say from sluices, if diving in a reservoir.

Inform and educate your visitors about the nature and extent of hazards, the risk control measures in place, and the precautions that they themselves should take.

You can often control risk through information and education rather than by physical intervention on site. High-risk groups can be targeted. Children might be informed through schools. Participants in sport and recreation may be contacted through event organisers, governing bodies and local user groups, and by information issued with licences, tickets or permits. Stickers or leaflets can be applied to bikes, canoes, boats, fishing tackle, outdoor equipment and the like prior to hire or sale. Advice can be provided in tourist information centres, climbing shops, holiday accommodation, etc. The Internet, local radio and telephone message lines can be used to give up-to-date information; for example on weather conditions in mountain and coastal areas. Signs can be erected in car parks, stations and at other access points.

3. Partnership

Recognise that people taking part in similar activities accept different levels of risk

You need to understand differences in how people view and accept risk. Contrast the expectations of a family out for a gentle cycle ride with those of competitive mountain bikers. Many activities share this contrast between 'extreme' adherents and more gentle recreation participants. Codes of practice issued by governing bodies of sport can help your understanding.

Recognise that risk control measures for one visitor group may create risks to others

For example, a fence erected at a lock side to prevent a walker drowning, might create a crush hazard to a boater, whilst the raised stone grips that help prevent a boater slipping when pushing lock gates could create a trip hazard to passers-by. Speed humps designed to slow cars can be a hazard to cyclists.

Work with visitor groups to promote understanding and resolve conflict

For example, encourage cyclists to slow down or dismount on narrow paths used by walkers. Consider promoting physical segregation of different uses. Promote awareness of the needs of other users.

4. Responsibility

It is important to strike a balance between user self-reliance and management intervention

The risk control matrix illustrates this principle in greater detail. Note that the matrix is only a framework to guide analysis. Adverse weather conditions can make activities in easy terrain more hazardous. It is also reasonable to expect higher levels of user self-reliance on land where no recreational facilities have been specifically provided but public access is a fact. For example, paths in such areas that have been created by informal use will not be to the standard that visitors might reasonably expect of paths built and managed on a formal recreation site.

It is reasonable to expect visitors to exercise responsibility for themselves

For example, it is reasonable to expect walkers in mountains to be equipped with waterproofs and suitable footwear. It is reasonable to expect horse riders to wear proper safety helmets.

It is reasonable to expect visitors not to put others at risk

For example, people hang gliding should not alarm horses. Horse riders should not gallop past people with toddlers and pushchairs.

It is reasonable to expect parents, guardians and leaders to supervise people in their care

For example, in stopping children rolling stones over cliff drops, in watching children near water. The result is that there may not be a need to erect signs forbidding rolling stones, or fences to prevent access to water. (Note that the parent, guardian or leader may need to be informed of risks that lie out of sight.)

5. Risk control

Assess risks and develop safety plans for individual sites

Every organisation or individual property owner should have a visitor safety plan. This should set out the overall management framework and procedures for carrying out individual site assessments. It should contain an overview of accident data and consider what levels of risk are acceptable. What constitutes a 'site' will vary between organisations, and there will usually be a hierarchy of safety plans. A canal, a country park, or a forest could each have its own safety plan. Within them, a lock, a car park, or a picnic area could need an individual risk assessment and a safety plan.

The risk assessment would typically involve identifying activities on the site, the potential accidents, their causes, the likelihood of them happening and the possible consequences. If the risks are judged acceptable, then no action is necessary. The safety plan, however, would indicate the need to carry out a further assessment after a specified interval, or when use of the site changed. If the risks were unacceptable, further investigation might be required, or risk control measures might be planned. These measures should take into account available guidance from the Health and Safety Executive and other relevant bodies. The concept of doing what is 'reasonably practicable' should be considered in terms of meeting conservation, recreation and landscape objectives as well as considering the time, trouble, cost and effort of reducing risk.

It is valuable to carry out the site assessment through the minds of the visitors and by considering the activities they are engaged in. Look out for risks that some activities may pose to other users. Consider new activities that bring new risks.

Risk control measures should be consistent

Consistency is important within a particular location; from site to site within a regional or national organisation; and between different organisations. Ideally, the visitor should know what to expect at any location. Inconsistencies in the application of risk controls (for example the absence or presence of fencing at similar cliff edges and watersides) make it very difficult for visitors to make informed judgements about accepting risk. Note that consistency is not the same as uniformity. Design solutions should be allowed to reflect the individual character of each site.

Monitor the behaviour and experiences of visitors to review visitor safety plans

Learn from experience of incidents and near misses. Add questions about accidents to visitor surveys. Have systems in place for accident reporting and investigation, and for letting others know what lessons you have learned.

Make sure that your work activities do not expose visitors to risk

On occasion, this may require access to be diverted or denied; for example, when spraying bracken by helicopter or during commercial harvesting of timber.

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