River Thames Customer Charter 2014-15

Our service for customers on the River Thames from Cricklade to Teddington

Welcome to the River Thames. We want all of our customers to enjoy using the River Thames. We aim to deliver a great service to our customers, and this charter explains the service we will provide between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015.

1. Lock service

While we aim to provide the best possible service to boating customers across all our sites throughout the year we cannot man every site, all day, every day. We will therefore deploy our staff to the busiest locks or those where the assistance of staff will be most beneficial and ensure the best possible levels of manning at weekends, Bank Holidays and school holidays.

Lock keepers hours of duty: July and August 9.00 – 19.00; May, June and September 9.00 – 18.00; April and October 9.00 – 17.00; November to March 09.15 – 16.00. Lunch break 13.00 – 14.00.

2. Enforcement plan and activity

We support a safe and enjoyable environment for our customers. Each year we develop a plan to explain the enforcement activity we will carry out to protect the river, customers and our income. For a copy of our enforcement plan, see www.gov.uk/government/publications/river-thames-enforcement-plan.

3. Maintaining our lock sites and facilities

We provide and maintain safe access to our lock sites and facilities. When we receive reports of facility breakdowns we arrange repairs as soon as we can.

We provide information about facilities that are not available at locks at www.gov.uk/river-thames-bridges-locks-and-facilities-for-boaters.

4. Maintaining the River Thames for boating

We keep our 45 locks (lay-bys, gates and chambers) in safe, working condition for boating.

We provide customers with information about any restrictions to using the river by email, on Floodline, at locks and at www.gov.uk/government/collections/river-thames-detail-for-closures-restrictions-and-lock-closures.

We give customers at least 10 days notice for planned restrictions lasting up to 24 hrs and at least 10 weeks notice for planned restrictions lasting more than 24 hours. For unplanned restrictions we provide information as soon as we can.

We arrange repairs immediately when we receive reports of critical lock breakdowns.

We maintain a navigation channel, normally the middle third of the river, and work with landowners to remove trees and other objects obstructing it.

We mark underwater obstructions we are aware of in the navigation channel and use signage to indicate the navigation channel and danger areas.

For details of maximum recommended boat dimensions and bridge heights please see www.gov.uk/river-thames-bridges-locks-and-facilities-for-boaters.

5. Managing water levels

We manage water levels to balance the many uses of the river, including boating, retaining enough for water companies to extract, managing flood risk and ensuring conservation sites, fisheries and water quality are protected. We measure water levels at lock sites and monitor them 24/7.

We operate the weirs and other structures to provide the best conditions possible for all uses of the river. Our ability to control water levels may change in flood or drought conditions.

6. Flow Management

The Waterways team will continue to work with Canoe England, and local stakeholder groups, to improve opportunities to use Agency structures and flow management for white water training and events, where deemed appropriate. We will also work with stakeholders to ensure any development on sites, or adjacent to them, as long as they do not have an adverse effect on existing uses.

7. Raising awareness of river conditions

River flows can sometimes be hazardous for boating, for example after heavy rain. We update our information and advice on river conditions, by 11.00 each day, at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/riverthamesconditions, where you can also subscribe to email alerts. We also provide information by displaying warning boards at lock sites during increased flows, showing the conditions upstream and downstream of the lock.

8. Responding to incidents

We support the emergency services in dealing with emergency river incidents. In an emergency, you must call 999.

To report non-emergency river-related incidents, including pollution incidents, call our 24 hour incident hotline 0800 80 70 60. We will respond as soon as we can or advise you on the best course of action.

See www.gov.uk/check-river-conditions-and-closures/river-thames for a list of riverside access points for the emergency services.

9. Registering your boat

All boats kept or used on the non-tidal River Thames must be registered with us. We provide a registration plate which you must display on your boat. For boats not based on the River Thames, short period registration is available to buy in advance, or from most locks.

This customer charter is produced after consultation with a range of customer representatives and we would like to thank those organisations that have offered their help and advice.

Would you like to find out more about us, or about your environment?

Then call us on
03708 506 506 (Mon–Fri 8–6)

Calls to 03 numbers cost the same as calls to standard geographic numbers (i.e. numbers beginning with 01 or 02).

email
enquiries@environment–agency.gov.uk
or visit our website
www.gov.uk/environment-agency

incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)
floodline 0845 988 1188

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