

## River Thames - guidance for event organisers

### General advice and information

1. We strongly advise you read and understand the Thames Navigation Licensing and General Byelaws 1993, which you can download at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/boatingbyelaws](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/boatingbyelaws)

You can also find other relevant legislation (e.g. The Thames Conservancy Acts and The Environment Agency (Inland Waterways) Order 2010) at [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

For more essential information to help you plan your event safely including river conditions, closures and restrictions, boat registration and publications, please go to [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/riverthames](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/riverthames)

2. You are responsible for making adequate, suitable arrangements for the safety of event participants, spectators and members of the public.
  - a) We recommend you undertake a risk assessment of the particular location and nature of your event. You should remind participants of their responsibilities for their own safety and that of others. Advice on risk assessment for water-related events is normally available from the governing bodies for the sports and activities, e.g. British Rowing, British Canoe Union, Royal Yachting Association etc. We invite you to send a copy of your risk assessment to the named contact Waterway Officer in the letter we sent you in case we can provide you with additional safety information.
  - c) We advise you to provide an adequate number of safety boats suitable for rescue, manned by competent personnel, along with a sufficient number of marshals throughout the area of the event, to be alert to potential risks.
  - d) We advise that the River Thames is not a designated bathing water. Rivers are not sterile areas and swimming in them carries a risk of picking up infections. Also, the Thames is a very busy river used by a lot of different boats and there are many underwater hazards such as submerged obstacles and strong, cold currents. Further guidance about swimming in rivers can be obtained from Public Health England [http://www.hpa.org.uk/webc/HPAwebFile/HPAweb\\_C/1317139609697](http://www.hpa.org.uk/webc/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1317139609697)
  - e) We advise in the case of stream warning boards being displayed or other adverse circumstances, the risk assessment for the event is reviewed and necessary action is taken, for example the event be modified, suspended, cancelled or postponed in the interests of safety. Your local Waterway Duty Officer will be pleased to offer guidance or advice in this situation. Call 03708 506 506.
  - f) We advise you hold an event only during the hours of daylight and in good visibility conditions.
  - g) We advise you the event takes place entirely at your own risk and responsibility. The Environment Agency will not accept any liability for death or injury unless resulting from negligence on behalf of the Environment Agency.

3. We recommend you place notices advising all river users the event is taking place – ideally at locks upstream and downstream of the event site and also at each end of the event area.
4. You need our formal written consent to place marker buoys, floating notices, lay a buoyed channel or install other structures in the river. If you wish to do any of the above you must contact your local Waterway Office and discuss your plans. There may be requirements as to where and when you can place such objects to avoid causing an obstruction to river traffic.
5. We recommend you tell local passenger boat operators, hire boat bases, river-based clubs and the event co-ordinator of the local River User Group (RUG) about your plans for the event and discuss any concerns they may have. Your local Waterway Office will be happy to provide an email address for the event co-ordinator of the local RUG.
6. We operate a charging scheme to recover our costs for providing patrol launch service at river events in certain circumstances. We will discuss and agree event management and patrol attendance details including any applicable charges with you in advance.
7. We operate a 24 hour system of Waterway Duty Officers. If you need up-to-date information, or to report an incident on the river during your event, you can telephone us using the numbers below.

Environment Agency telephone numbers:

Local Waterway Office - 03708 506 506 (Mon – Fri 9am-5pm)

Incident and emergency hotline - 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)

River conditions information - 0845 988 1188 (when prompted press 1, followed by 011131)

8. Please provide the local Waterway Office with the name and telephone number of the person in charge (preferably who will be 'on site') during the event. It is important for us to have the correct details during your event so we can contact somebody if necessary. The details will also be available to our patrol crews if we are providing patrol coverage in support of your event.
9. This advice and guidance relates to the navigable water space and any land in Environment Agency ownership only, if the event takes place on any other lands not in the ownership of the Environment Agency you will need to contact the land owner separately and seek their permission to stage your event on their land.
10. Please ensure that all interested parties are kept informed of any changes to the event which could affect the advice or permissions that have been given.

### **Our aim**

We aim to minimise risk and maximise the success of your River Thames event, through effective communication and support. If you have any related queries, or require any further information, please contact us and we will be glad to help you.

We also welcome any comments or feedback on the information we have provided to help you arrange your event.

If you would like your event listed on the Visit Thames website, please complete the attached form and return it to the contact details at the bottom of the form.

customer service line  
03708 506 506

incident hotline  
0800 80 70 60

floodline  
0845 988 1188

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)