

6.0 The River Thames

6.1 River Thames and its tributaries (map 1)

9950 square kilometres of southern England are drained by the Thames.

The river supplies two thirds of London's drinking water.

The Environment Agency manages 218 kilometres of navigable river from Cricklade, near its source to Teddington. (The Thames is tidal below Teddington and navigation comes under the Port of London Authority.)

The average fall of the river over this distance is 0.34 metres per kilometre. As a result there are 44 locks and associated weirs which are manned all year to assist boaters and control water levels for flood defence.

The river varies considerably in width from 18 metres at Lechlade to 100 metres at Teddington.

Seven main tributaries join it along this distance: the Cherwell, Thame, Kennet, Loddon, Colne, Wey and Mole.

6.2 Local Government boundaries (map 2)

The river runs through 25 administrative areas.

For 185 of its 238 kilometres (77% of its length) the river forms a boundary between authorities. This brings problems. Although the river is at the edge of a jurisdiction it is essentially the centre of the landscape. Clearly land use decisions on one bank could have significant impact on the opposite side of the river.

Also river users hold expectations of consistent standards of provision along the river's length.

This plan is therefore important in providing a coherent overview to help address these issues.

7.0 Socio-economic baseline

7.1 Population (map 3)

10.5 million people, over one fifth of England's total population, live within 30 kilometres of the non-tidal Thames.

12,000 houses lie within 500 metres of the river.

Boating, walking and cycling give direct physical benefits. People are also mentally and spiritually refreshed near water, valuing the riverside for its peace and beauty¹.

Angling is one of the nation's favourite pastimes. 11% of the population has fished in the past two years and as many again are interested in going fishing. Among 12 to 16 year olds this rises to 21%.²

Walkers on the Thames towpath rate scenery/landscape and relaxation/peace as the main attractions³.

7.2 Economic value⁴

14 million leisure day visits and 28 million casual local visits to the river generate £119 million expenditure annually.

Tourism related employment is particularly important to the immediate riverside corridor, supporting some 18,400 jobs in the riverside wards⁵.

Tourism volumes are particularly notable in Oxford, and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

The presence of the river enhances property values within the surrounding corridor by nearly £580m.

The 26,000 boats registered to use the river generate £85 million expenditure.

The annual turnover of companies in the Thames Boating Trades Association in 2003 totalled £110 million⁶.

The Environment Agency has a statutory responsibility 'to enhance the contribution salmon and freshwater fisheries make to the economy'. 108,000 people living in the Thames Region purchase annual rod licences for coarse fishing, spending almost £70 million on licences, permits, tackle and bait⁷.

Q

Can you supply any data that would help to establish the economic value of the river?
(Use section 6- Data)

¹ Environment Agency Customer Satisfaction Survey 1998 Maritime Leisure Research Group, Southampton Institute. Land based visitors.

² Public Attitudes to Angling. Environment Agency 2000

³ National Trails Thames Path User Survey 1999, Centre for Leisure Research

⁴ Extended Economic Valuation of the River Thames. Ecotec Research and Consulting Ltd. February 2002

⁵ The smallest unit within a local authority for which government collects statistics

⁶ British Marine Federation Research

⁷ Environment Agency Rod Licence data 03-04 and Thames Region Fisheries Strategy and Newscast Research, ADAS for Environment Agency, January 2005. Note that over half this spend is likely to be on lake, rather than river, fishing.

7.3 Demographic changes¹

Changes in population demographics impact on waterway planning, particularly for leisure and tourism.

- population is increasing
There are more people living in the UK than ever – 59.2 million in 2002 and this is projected to grow to 62.4 million by 2021.
- ageing population
The number of children aged under 16 fell by 18% between 1971 and 2002. During the same period there was a 27% increase in the number of people aged 65 and over. Projections suggest that the number over 65 will exceed those under 16 by 2014.
- big growth in 55 to 64 age group
- growth in 40 to 54 year olds
Significantly these are key age groups of people using the Thames path and owning powered boats. (60% of walkers using the Thames Path are aged 35 and over². 89% of owners of powered boats are aged 45 and over³).
- growth in young adults (15 to 24)
- fall in the number of families and young children
- significant growth in single person households (up from 18% to 29% between 1971 and 2003)

7.4 Social inclusion

Government policy is to make waterways accessible to all parts of society.

“We will support the greater recreational use of the waterways for all, including the towpaths and waterside paths, where practicable.

We will encourage navigation authorities to increase access to the waterways for the young, disabled and disadvantaged”⁴.

The Inland Waterway Amenity Advisory Council⁵ (IWAAC) has produced a valuable, detailed report, “The Inland Waterways: towards greater social inclusion” (April 2001). It found key excluded groups to be:

- families and others excluded by low incomes
- disabled people (including those with restricted mobility and sensory disabilities)
- older people (notably 65 and over)
- black and other minority ethnic (especially Asian) communities
- women (because of fear of crime).

The term social exclusion was used to describe the disadvantage suffered by individuals, groups of people or communities that were restricted from taking a full and active part in society by a combination of problems such as low incomes, poor housing, bad health, physical disability and high crime environments.

IWAAC defined the key benefits that a waterway could offer to those currently excluded:

1. Better health through
 - walking and active recreation, to develop a healthy lifestyle
 - quiet relaxation to reduce stress and mental health problems.

¹ Social Trends 34, HMSO Office for National Statistics, January 2004

² National Trails Thames Path User Survey 1999, Centre for Leisure Research

³ Environment Agency Navigation licence survey, Test Research, June 2003

⁴ Waterways for Tomorrow ” (Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, July 2000)

⁵ The Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (IWAAC) is a statutory body set up under the 1968 Transport Act to advise on strategic policy for the use and development of inland waterways

2. Enhanced community development by
 - providing activities to bring residents together and develop contacts with other members of their community, including those from minority ethnic groups and different age groups
 - providing opportunities to meet and share enjoyable experiences and so make the local waterway a focus of community pride.
3. Increased confidence and understanding through
 - enabling disabled people to take part in mainstream activities with the confidence that facilities will meet their needs
 - encouraging those from black and other minority ethnic communities to use facilities in the wider community with the confidence that their needs will be respected
 - tackling fear of crime and encouraging more people, especially women, to feel more confident in using public spaces
 - enabling those with learning difficulties to enjoy and develop through access to new experiences.
4. Reduced 'at risk' behaviour by
 - providing young people with positive alternatives to offending or antisocial behaviour
 - encouraging local schools to take a pride in, and ownership of, their local waterway
 - providing a positive focus, which brings parents and children together, thus enhancing parenting skills.
5. Wider opportunities for education and economic development through
 - use of waterway themes within schools and the national curriculum to illustrate subjects such as geography, history, citizenship and environmental sciences and to learn new skills linked to training and personal development
 - developing new opportunities for training and employment through waterway-based regeneration and development.
6. Greater appreciation of the local environment through
 - regular contact with the historic buildings, environment and history of the waterway.

Government also requires local authorities to undertake Best Value reviews that take into account the wider benefits of sport to health, social inclusion, regeneration, educational opportunities and crime prevention¹. Investment is needed to maintain the river to provide sport and recreation opportunities that can deliver these wider benefits to local communities.

The Environment Agency has a statutory responsibility 'to enhance the social contribution fishing makes as a widely available and healthy form of recreation'.

7.5 Deprivation (map 4)

Government has produced a measure of deprivation derived from a combination of relevant weighted factors². These are:

- income
- employment
- health deprivation and disability
- education, skills and training
- housing
- geographical access to services.

The score for the least deprived of England's wards³ is 1.15 and the most deprived scores 75.

¹ A Sporting Future for All (paragraph 8.19) Department for Media Culture and Sport, March 2001

² Source: Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, Indices of Deprivation 2000

³ The smallest unit within a local authority for which government collects statistics

It is evident that the river generally passes through areas of relative affluence.

However, there are small pockets of relatively high levels of deprivation near the river in Swindon, Oxford, Berinsfield, Reading, Slough and Hounslow.

These are possible locations for targeted actions to support the social inclusion policy.

The river can also provide accessible recreation access for disadvantaged young people living in otherwise remote rural areas.

7.6 Ethnicity (map 5)

Hounslow and Slough have large Indian and Pakistani communities, with some Hounslow wards having over 50% Asian population¹. (On average in England 91% of the population is white.)

Three Slough wards adjoining the Jubilee River have Asian populations of 25, 31 and 43%.

Elsewhere there are only small ethnic variations. Two wards near the river in Oxford (Iffley and Cowley Marsh) have around 10% Asian population. Four riverside wards in Reading have Asian populations of between 8 and 15%, and Black populations between 6 and 9%.

These are possible locations for targeted actions to support the social inclusion policy.

POLICY 2	Social inclusion policy We will make the benefits of the river available to all parts of society.
	<p>Possible actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 focus attention on areas of deprivation 2 gain understanding of barriers to participation 3 develop projects to increase involvement of ethnic minorities, women and people with disabilities 4 work with clubs and user groups to promote existing opportunities to all
	<p>Reports by the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council and Sport England reveal socially excluded groups have low levels of participation.</p>
Q	<p>Can you tell us about any projects you have planned or undertaken that will aid social inclusion? (Use section 4 – Possible Actions)</p>

¹ 2001 Census