

**Development policy** We will support appropriate development necessary to achieve the objectives of the Thames waterway plan

**Possible actions**

- 1 establish a planning policy sub group of the River Thames Alliance
- 2 develop model policies for the Thames for adoption in Local Development Frameworks
- 3 define “appropriate” with reference to the character of the river, for example to ensure that tranquil and remote reaches are not compromised
- 4 follow principles of Thames Environment Design Handbook guidance
- 5 undertake environmental impact and flood risk assessments of relevant projects and proposals
- 6 introduce mitigation and enhancement measures in accordance with Environment Agency guidance

For the river to thrive some development will be necessary to sustain the viability of its sport, recreation and tourism assets.

**Social inclusion policy** We will make the benefits of the river available to all parts of society.

**Possible actions**

- 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

Reports by the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council and Sport England reveal socially excluded groups have low levels of participation.

**Tourism policy** We will promote the Thames as a “must visit” destination, developing it as a key brand within Tourism South East.

**Possible actions**

- 1 provide up to date information that inspires people to visit the river
- 2 work in partnership through the River Thames Alliance Marketing Group
- 3 maintain, improve and publicise the visitthames website
- 4 establish a brand identity for the River Thames
- 5 seek positive media coverage to raise the profile of opportunities on the river
- 6 publish up to date tourist information about the river, including camping, angling, hiring a boat and reach information
- 7 provide a telephone answering service about the river
- 8 maintain an atmospheric photographic image library
- 9 erect signs on bridges and main routes identifying the River Thames

The river faces strong competition from other destinations employing significantly greater marketing spend. Users expect high quality information in a variety of media.

<b>POLICY 4</b>	<b>Tourism policy</b> We will provide an excellent experience for visitors to the Thames.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 set waterway standards for the provision of services and facilities</li> <li>2 encourage take up of quality grading schemes including hire boats</li> <li>3 improve provision and quality of riverside facilities</li> </ol>
Operators along the river must offer the highest standards.	

<b>POLICY 5</b>	<b>Tourism policy</b> We will provide information and interpretation for visitors at the riverside.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 provide interactive touch screen Thames information at key lock sites and principal towns along the river</li> <li>2 display local information at all lock sites</li> <li>3 include information about the landscape, wildlife and fishing</li> <li>4 provide signs from the towpath to nearby shops, pubs, restaurants and places of interest</li> <li>5 promote sensitive design and siting of signs through adoption of Thames Environment Design Handbook guidance</li> </ol>
Visitor surveys have revealed a strong demand for better information.	

<b>POLICY 6</b>	<b>Sport and recreation policy</b> We will use the river to increase participation in sport and active recreation.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 ensure that the Thames Waterway Plan is consistent with other regional strategies such as the South East Plan for Sport</li> <li>2 encourage innovative, inclusive and sustainable schemes to involve more people</li> <li>3 plan and manage increased use to minimise potential conflict</li> <li>4 publish codes of conduct in consultation with users</li> </ol>
The river is one of the region's major natural resources, right on many people's doorstep.	

<b>POLICY 7</b>	<b>Sport and recreation policy</b> We will work with sports and recreation clubs on the river to help increase their membership.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 support sport governing bodies and clubs with outreach programmes that encourage participation by all sections of society</li> <li>2 provide accurate up to date information about sport and recreation opportunities on the river</li> <li>3 provide facilities for multi sport clubs</li> </ol>
Canoe, sailing and rowing clubs provide people with access to boats, training and facilities. Angling clubs can promote participation.	

<b>POLICY 8</b>	<b>Sport and recreation policy</b> We will realise the open-space opportunities provided by the Thames.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 work in partnership through the River Thames Alliance to ensure that the value of the river is included in open-space audits and development plans</li> <li>2 provide accurate up to date information about sport and recreation opportunities on the river</li> <li>3 provide facilities for multi sport clubs</li> </ol>
To implement the Planning Policy Guidance advice given by Government (in PPG 17).	

<b>POLICY 9</b>	<b>Access policy</b> We will encourage people to travel to the river on foot or by cycle.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 create footpath links and cycleways to the river, particularly from urban areas</li> <li>2 provide bridges or ferry services to cross river to access the Thames Path</li> <li>3 use fingerposts and waymarking to identify all access points</li> </ol>
Access to the river by cycle or on foot promotes health and is environmentally friendly.	

<b>POLICY 10</b>	<b>Access policy</b> We will encourage access by public transport.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 encourage bus and train services, especially at weekends, to riverside</li> <li>2 promote access by train or bus, to walk along the towpath returning from a different train/bus stop (using leaflets, web site, posters, special timetabling, shuttle buses, ticket deals etc.)</li> <li>3 improve footpath links and signage between stations and river</li> </ol>
Making recreation facilities accessible by public transport promotes social inclusion. Public transport is better for the environment than more cars.	

<b>POLICY 11</b>	<b>Access policy</b> We will provide facilities for those needing access by car.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 create car parks to serve popular angling and boating reaches</li> <li>2 provide adjacent slipways where necessary</li> </ol>
Cars are used for access by anglers carrying bulky equipment, and by people bringing canoes and trailed boats. 55% of walkers use cars to get to the riverside and parking is needed for people using wheelchairs.	

**POLICY 12**

**Access policy** We will provide access for people with disabilities.

**Possible actions**

- 1 carry out an audit to identify barriers to access
- 2 provide ramps for wheelchair access to lock sites and Thames Path
- 3 create wide level path free from stiles, to accommodate wheelchairs
- 4 create access and platforms to facilitate angling by people with disabilities
- 5 introduce scent trails and interpretation for people with visual impairment
- 6 provide accurate information so that people with disabilities are able to make an informed decision about suitability of access

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requires service providers to take reasonable steps to overcome barriers to access. In addition, the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems must be considered when Rights of Way Improvement Plans are prepared<sup>1</sup>.

**POLICY 13**

**Access policy** We will encourage walking alongside the river and on the adjoining access land and rights of way network.

**Possible actions**

- 1 align the Thames Path next to the river<sup>2</sup> on legally defined public rights of way
- 2 create, sign and promote circular walks incorporating the Thames Path
- 3 provide campsites or budget accommodation at 16km intervals (a day's walk)
- 4 provide drinking water at all lock sites
- 5 work with the National Trail Office to promote the Thames Path

The Thames is the only river to have a designated National Trail. Walking is a low cost activity that promotes health.

**POLICY 14**

**Access policy** We will encourage cycling alongside the river where it is appropriate.

**Possible actions**

- 1 clarify where cycling is currently permitted
- 2 define on a reach by reach basis lengths that are appropriate with reference to the Thames Path National Trail criteria
- 3 restore the historic towpath<sup>4</sup> and provide new bridge crossings
- 4 work with Sustrans and the National Trail Office to make local improvements to path surface and access

There is demand for leisure cycling on traffic-free routes. Cycling is a low cost activity that promotes health.

<b>POLICY 15</b>	<b>Boating policy</b> We will make it easier to take up low cost boating.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 provide canoe portage points above and below all locks</li> <li>2 provide campsites or budget accommodation at 16km intervals (a day's paddle/row)</li> <li>3 improve slipways and car/trailer parks</li> <li>4 provide white water for canoeists at existing weirs where feasible</li> </ol>
	It is important that people with low incomes are able to enjoy boating.

<b>POLICY 16</b>	<b>Angling policy</b> We will encourage angling along the river.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 support taster sessions with free block licences and reduced price for beginners licences</li> <li>2 provide improved access and facilities, particularly for anglers with disabilities</li> <li>3 promote fishing permits for use at locks and weirs</li> <li>4 provide up to date information on free and day ticket lengths</li> <li>5 promote angling on the Environment Agency's "free" towpath length below Staines</li> <li>6 research ways to manage crayfish</li> </ol>
	Fishing is an outdoor sport, readily accessible at a number of levels with the potential to be totally inclusive.

<b>POLICY 17</b>	<b>Boating policy</b> We will encourage more boats to use the river.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 resist loss/support provision of support facilities like dry docks and boat repair yards</li> <li>2 provide facilities for boaters (toilets, water points, refuse disposal etc.)</li> <li>3 marketing to raise awareness of the river</li> <li>4 run courses in boat ownership and boat handling skills</li> <li>5 promote events on the river</li> </ol>
	The number of privately owned powered boats has dropped 30% since 1990, from 12993 to 9049 in 2004.

<b>POLICY 18</b>	<b>Permanent mooring policy</b> We will encourage the creation of new permanent moorings.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 promote creation of off-river basins with soft edge treatments</li> <li>2 encourage improvement of existing moorings on the river supporting their extension where appropriate</li> <li>3 examine capacity of reaches to accommodate more boats (with particular reference to lock use generated)</li> </ol>
	Adequate provision of moorings is the key requirement for boating. Existing moorings are at or near capacity.

<b>POLICY 19</b>	<b>Visitor mooring policy</b> We will provide visitor moorings to meet boaters' needs.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 provide sufficient value for money visitor and overnight moorings at all riverside towns and attractions</li> <li>2 create moorings at new sites where required to meet the waterway standard</li> <li>3 encourage boaters to welcome other boats to moor alongside</li> </ol>
Adequate provision of moorings is the key requirement for boating.	

<b>POLICY 20</b>	<b>Residential boats policy</b> We will support the creation of new residential boat moorings in off-river basins with suitable facilities.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 consider the AINA guidance and adopt as appropriate</li> <li>2 limit the proportion of berths in a marina that are for residential use</li> </ol>

<b>POLICY 21</b>	<b>Hire boat policy</b> We will encourage a thriving, high quality hire boat sector on the river.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 provide value for money visitor and overnight moorings at all riverside towns and attractions</li> <li>2 provide facilities for boaters (toilets, water points, refuse disposal etc.)</li> <li>3 support quality grading scheme for boats on the river</li> <li>4 work with trade bodies' to support the hire boat industry</li> <li>5 market the river as a tourism destination</li> <li>6 support the creation of new hire boat bases</li> </ol>
Since 1980 the number of holiday hire boats registered on the Thames has fallen by 85%, from 815 to 123 in 2004.	

<b>POLICY 22</b>	<b>Passenger boat policy</b> We will support scheduled passenger boat services along the river.
	<b>Possible actions</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 create landing stages at all major towns and attractions</li> <li>2 resist loss/support provision of support facilities like dry docks and boat repair yards</li> <li>3 integrate timetable with bus and train links</li> <li>4 give priority at locks to scheduled service trip boats if necessary to keep to timetable</li> <li>5 advertise and promote services (including timetables on web sites)</li> <li>6 build river bus stops with shelter and timetables</li> <li>7 evaluate possible urban commuter services</li> </ol>
Passenger trip boats provide access on the river for people who cannot afford to hire or buy a boat.	

**Freight policy** We will encourage commercial transport of freight on the river.

**Possible actions**

- 1 give full consideration to waterway freight opportunities in regional spatial strategies, sub regional plans and local development frameworks
- 2 commission a study into the potential for freight transport on the river

Water transport is more environmentally friendly than road or rail.

**Landscape policy** We will conserve and enhance the special characteristics of landscape value in the river corridor.

**Possible actions River-wide**

- 1 conduct a consistent and comprehensive landscape assessment of the entire river, updating existing studies where necessary
- 2 form local partnerships (similar to the Thames Landscape Strategy Hampton to Kew) that will use local river corridor characterisations to develop an agreed set of local prioritised actions, based on a thorough understanding of the natural, built and cultural heritage
- 3 sensitively manage the key landscapes, landmarks, locks, open spaces and vistas
- 4 respect and restore historic features
- 5 minimise the impact from potentially intrusive development
- 6 introduce selective landscape and amenity enhancements to reduce visual intrusion from recreation access, car parking and boat mooring facilities
- 7 create ecological buffer zones between the river and adjacent arable fields, and encourage a greater diversity of indigenous trees, shrubs and other plants where biodiversity has been reduced by agricultural practices
- 8 introduce planting to screen intrusive features (for example: road, rail and pylon routes) and frame views<sup>3</sup>
- 9 reinstate grassland and water meadows and introduce or regenerate woodland and scrub habitats on marginal land<sup>3</sup>
- 10 review, update and promote wide adoption of the Thames Environment Design Handbook
- 11 restore river infrastructure using traditional construction materials and appropriate designs (specified in Thames Environment Design Handbook)
- 12 retain headroom restriction on boat size imposed by Osney Bridge

The special landscape qualities are a vital part of the visitor experience.

**Climate change policy** We will plan how the river is managed to respond to climate change.

**Possible actions**

- 1 identify how best to adapt to climate change, minimising the negative effects, whilst taking advantage of more positive aspects
- 2 plan how to protect the interests of recreation and navigation whilst meeting the demands of flood risk management, water supply and protection of key water dependent environmental sites
- 3 consider the management implications arising from possible lower flows in summer and higher flows in winter
- 4 provide space for wildlife to adapt to climate change (buffer zones, wildlife corridors etc).

Our climate is changing and instances of violent storms, droughts in summer and floods in winter seem set to increase. This is likely to have significant impact on river levels

**Biodiversity and fisheries policy** We will enhance biodiversity and fisheries quality along the Thames and its corridor

**Possible actions**

- 1 conserve and enhance valued species and habitats with particular reference to river based Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species such as water vole, otter, white-clawed crayfish, depressed river mussel, Loddon Lily and fish BAP species, including barbel, salmon, lamprey, shad, grayling, brown trout and bullhead
- 2 conserve and enhance key features of particular wildlife importance, including flood meadows, backwaters, islands, natural banks and weir streams and pools
- 3 identify key areas for habitat protection and enhancement and manage to promote biodiversity
- 4 use soft bank protection, with hard edge works introduced only when essential and that incorporate compensation for loss of natural habitat when possible
- 5 where possible introduce bank enhancement to existing lengths with predominantly hard edge treatments
- 6 improve access for fish to reach spawning areas by modifying existing fish passes, where necessary and by introducing new passes or more natural by-pass channels around weirs
- 7 protect and restore the natural river environment, including valuable in-stream features such as gravel shoals, emergent reed beds and islands
- 8 protect underwater plant and fish communities
- 9 balance the recreation needs with the need to protect key water dependent sites when managing water levels
- 10 ensure that works and activities do not result in the transfer and colonisation of invasive non-native plant and animal species
- 11 raise wider awareness of the threat of invasive non-native plants and animals to the river's natural environment and character
- 12 produce site management plans (which include biodiversity and fisheries considerations) for every lock

The wildlife and habitats of the Thames are intrinsically linked to its character and thus, to the aesthetic, social and economic value of the river and its corridor to those living and working nearby and those using and visiting it. There is a direct link between fisheries quality and the value of the Thames for angling'

**Heritage policy** We will maintain and enhance the cultural heritage, historic assets and archaeological value of the river and its corridor

**Possible actions**

- 1 manage land, buildings and structures (such as locks, bridges and weirs) of historic interest, in harmony with their setting, design, materials and construction methods
- 2 carry out an audit of heritage features
- 3 protect and conserve buildings, sites and objects of archaeological, architectural, engineering or historic interest
- 4 raise awareness of historical significance of sites along the Thames through education, signage and interpretation initiatives

The Thames is world renowned for its character and history which helps to attract visitors and thus contributes to social and economic well-being

**Education policy** We will optimise the contribution the river can make to education and life long 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

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

**Visitor health & safety policy** 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 Group<sup>1</sup>
- 2 gather information on accidents and near misses from user groups

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.

**Service & facilities policy** 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 users if we fail to meet expectations.

**Monitoring & review policy** 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.