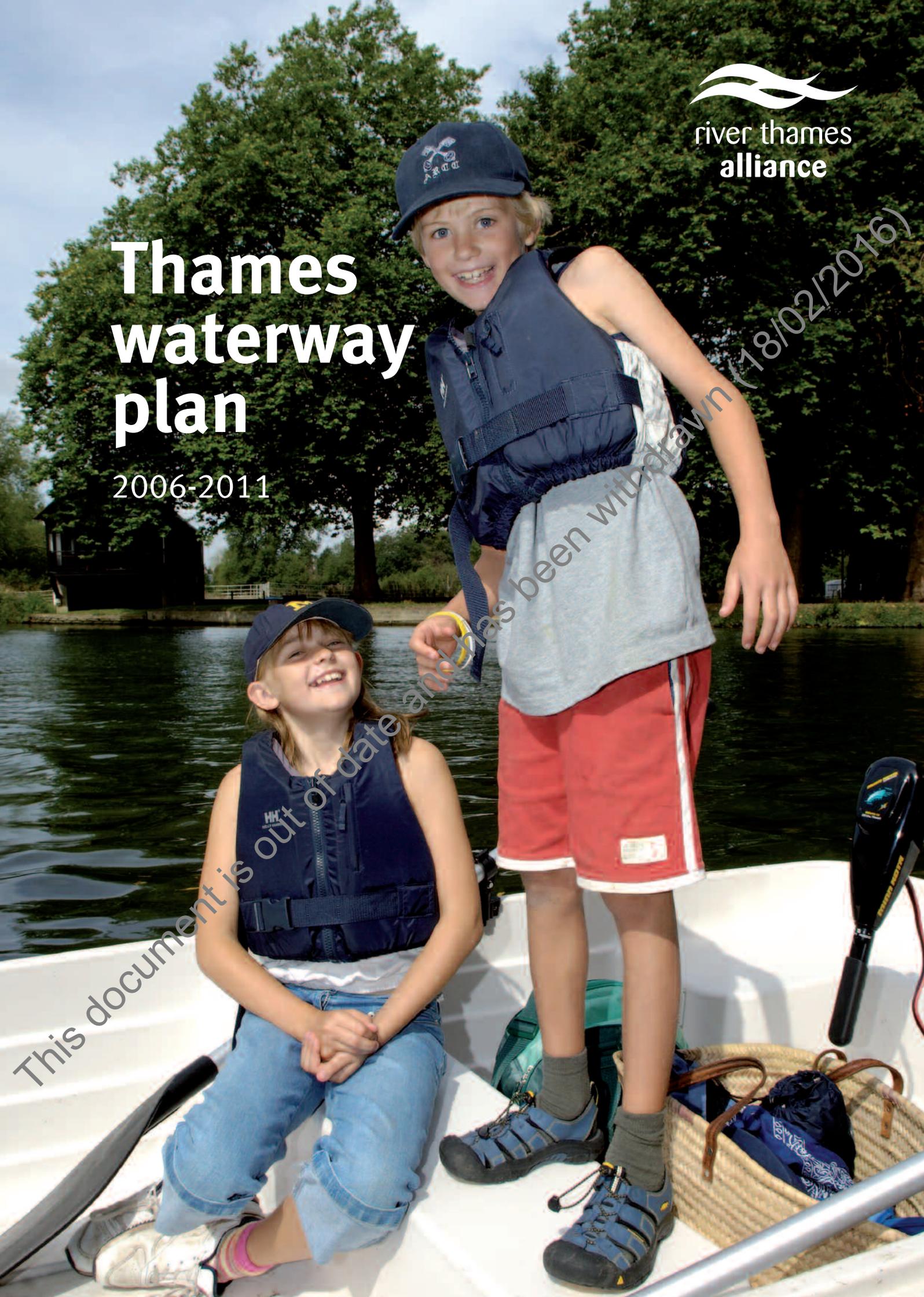




river thames
alliance

Thames waterway plan

2006-2011



This document is out of date and has been withdrawn (18/02/2016)

Thames waterway plan

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Thames waterway plan

Vision

The vision of the River Thames Alliance is **the healthy growth in the use of the freshwater Thames for communities, wildlife, leisure and business.**

Core objectives

- improve and promote access and information for all users (on water and land)
- improve and maintain the river infrastructure, 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

The core objectives can only be achieved through action-oriented partnerships. The River Thames Alliance offers a focal point for delivery of the plan.



1.0 Introduction

The Thames waterway plan has been prepared by the Environment Agency on behalf of the River Thames Alliance. The River Thames Alliance is a partnership of the key organisations that have an interest in the river. They include the local authorities that border the river, statutory bodies, trade organisations and user groups. Alliance members who provided information, advice and comments during the preparation of the plan are listed in Appendix 1.

The Environment Agency is the leading public body protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. It is responsible for pollution prevention and control, making sure industry keeps its impacts on air, land and water quality to a minimum. It also has a major role in flood risk management, conservation and fisheries management.

The Thames waterway plan, however, is concerned primarily with the responsibilities that the Environment Agency has for recreation and as a navigation authority. Its scope is the corridor of the River Thames from its source near Cricklade in Gloucestershire to Teddington on the outskirts of London.

The River Thames Alliance commends the Thames waterway plan and urges individual members of the Alliance to modify their own plans and policy documents to reflect it. The plan often introduces policies using the words ‘we will’. The ‘we’ embraces appropriate members of the Alliance.

The plan builds upon the recreation strategy published by the then National Rivers Authority and Sports Council in 1995.¹ Whilst many of the aspirations in the 1995 strategy remain valid², the policies contained in this plan have been revised to take account of subsequent changes in levels of use and Government policy.

This document provides a strategic framework for the river. It contains suggested actions in support of its policies, but at this stage, most are un-costed and aspirational. In many cases there has been no discussion with the relevant landowners whose agreement would be required. Parish and Town Councils alongside the river will have an important part to play. Some actions will be dependant upon securing planning approval. Many will only be achieved if additional sources of funding are secured.

The challenge for the River Thames Alliance is to translate the policies into planned, funded actions with clearly identified responsibilities and a firm timetable for action. Work is already underway, and throughout the plan we have included examples of good practice. These case studies powerfully illustrate the strength of partnership working. We will encourage the creation of new partnerships as necessary to implement the plan.

We also recognise the significant contributions made by the voluntary sector. These include carrying out conservation work, facilitating access for people with disabilities, providing sport and recreation opportunities, coaching, running events and promoting the river.

The overall aim of the Thames waterway plan is to map out the reinvigoration of leisure and tourism along the river corridor in ways that are both socially inclusive and sustainable.

¹ Space to live, space to play. A Recreation Strategy for the River Thames. Eileen McKeever, National Rivers Authority, 1995.

² In particular, the 1995 policies remain valid and unaltered for the tidal river below Teddington.

2.0 Approach

The Environment Agency formally started work on the Thames waterway plan in June 2003 with a workshop forming part of the launch of the River Thames Alliance. A broad range of organisations was represented, including local authorities, government bodies, boating associations, environmental bodies, commercial trade organisations and user groups. More than 70 key groups participated in workshop sessions that shaped the core objectives and identified the key dilemmas and opportunities that the plan would need to consider.

The next stage of preparing the plan involved:

- reviewing the cultural strategies, recreation and planning policies of all the local authorities next to the river
- consideration of how the Thames waterway plan objectives might help to achieve the policy objectives of other key groups
- gathering baseline information, including data on navigation and recreation facilities and the environmental, social and economic characteristics of the river corridor
- consultation with commercial operators to help understand the needs of businesses directly and indirectly reliant on the river
- considering the aspirations of users for provision of facilities and services on the river.

Drawing on this, we developed waterway standards, identified key issues and formulated policy options. We examined the sustainability of each option to see what impact each would have. We then considered measures that would reduce any harmful effects, particularly on the environment and identified opportunities for enhancements. The use of Strategic Sustainability Assessment (SSA)¹ has been an integral part of the plan process from the outset. We looked at the potential impacts from boating, towpath use and facility development and used the SSA to identify preferred policies and actions. The SSA also established indicators that could be used to monitor the sustainability of the plan. (These are explored in section 20 of the plan.)

One area of debate was whether (and how) to define a geographical area for the river and its corridor. Some argued that this was essential to establish where the plan's policies would be applied and as the basis for seeking special planning status for a green river park. We decided not to follow this route, preferring instead to focus on outcomes. We believe that they are achievable within the existing framework if members of the River Thames Alliance adopt the policies of the plan, and the importance of the river and its wider valley setting is adequately recognised in the regional spatial strategy.²

Progress on the plan was reported to a meeting of the River Thames Alliance in November 2003. Over 100 stakeholders were invited to share their aspirations for the river at this event or to make written contributions.

The River Thames Alliance also ran workshops in Reading in June 2004 to consider draft waterway standards and to review and prioritise possible policies and supporting actions that would help achieve the core objectives. People were invited to send written comments on the standards, policies and actions by the end of October 2004. Maps were also provided to make it easier for stakeholders to record their aspirations for the river, using local knowledge, on a site-by-site basis. Over 60 organisations sent comments.

We were able to use all this information to help produce a final draft plan that was issued as a formal consultation document seeking views from interested groups within a period of 12 weeks, ending July 2005. In total we received 114 responses. We received 46 consultation responses online, 45 through the post, and 23 letters. We grouped the comments received and gave them all careful consideration. Requests for changes to the plan were considered by the River Thames Alliance Management Committee.

To see a summary of the consultation comments and the changes made, please go to our website www.riverthamesalliance.com. The website also has maps that show where new facilities are needed and improvements suggested by consultees.

If you do not have access to the Internet and would like a copy of the consultation response summary, the improvements maps, or if you have any other questions about the Thames waterway plan, you can:

- telephone us on 0845 6015336
- email us at visitthames@environment-agency.gov.uk putting 'TWP' in the subject heading
- write to Angela Morris at:
King's Meadow House
King's Meadow Road
Reading
RG1 8DQ

We are very grateful for all the help, advice and comments provided. This plan reflects the issues, opportunities and problems identified by all the individuals and groups who have participated. Appendix 1 lists the organisations that have responded to the consultations.

Taking the Thames waterway plan forward

33 members of the River Thames Alliance have already endorsed the plan. We hope that all our members will quickly integrate the policies and actions into their everyday work. We must turn the plan's objectives into improvements on the riverbank.

All the data, maps and information used in the preparation of the plan are freely available for members to incorporate into their own work. Inevitably, some facts will have changed since the plan was written. We welcome feedback to keep the data and maps accurate.

We will develop a simple way to keep track of improvements made and record new opportunities as they arise. This will allow us to keep the plan alive, active and up-to-date. We will provide annual reports on progress and carry out a full review of the plan in five years time.



¹ SSA is explained in section 5.4 of this plan.

² Under preparation by the South East England Regional Assembly. See section 4.0

3.0 Underlying principles

Stakeholder engagement principle

The Thames waterway plan will be developed, reviewed and implemented with the involvement of all interested stakeholders.

We will use the River Thames Alliance to achieve this.

Sustainability principle

The plan will be a model for sustainable development of the river.

Sustainable development means meeting economic, social and environmental aims at the same time, and requires us to consider the long-term implications of decisions to ensure effective protection of the natural environment. This is explained in detail in section 5.

Economic principle

We will optimise the assets of the river to help achieve a sustainable economy.

The river makes a significant contribution to the region's economy. This is explored in more detail in section 7.

Funding principle

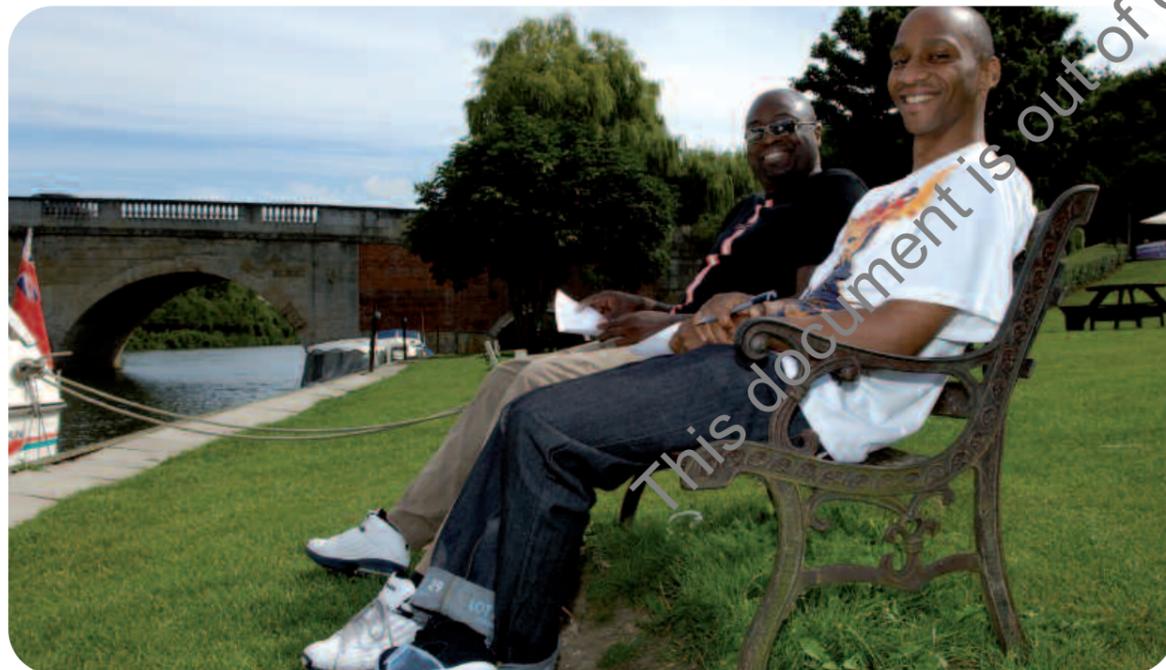
Long-term funding is essential to maintain the infrastructure and facilities along the river and implement the plan's objectives.

Recently (2004/05), the Environment Agency received some additional funds from Government, and this has helped with urgent repairs on the river. However, since 1990, capital expenditure on the river has been well below the level needed to maintain its existing assets. Considerable further investment is necessary to maintain and achieve the facility improvements that the plan recommends. Unless additional funds can be generated, then the river and its use, as defined in this plan, is not sustainable.

Health principle

We will optimise the assets of the river for people's health and fitness.

The river provides a readily accessible resource for people's health and wellbeing. It can play a major role in support of Government policy to encourage more people of all ages to take part in active recreation including countryside walking.¹ This is explored in more detail in section 9.



4.0 Context

The river cuts across many other strategies for health, sport, economic regeneration, tourism and the environment. We have, wherever possible, reflected these strategies in later sections of our plan.

We hope that, in turn, the Thames waterway plan will influence the plans of relevant national and regional bodies and those of the local authorities next to the river.

The regional spatial strategy for the south east¹ contains policies covering many topics, such as housing, transport, employment, tourism, and the environment that are relevant to the Thames waterway plan. Some are referenced in later sections. Information on the progress of the South East Plan can be found at:

www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan

The Environment Agency is a member of the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities and endorses its strategy for waterways, *Steering a Fresh Course*.²

Government has also set out its requirements from navigation authorities in the policy document *Waterways for Tomorrow* (Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, July 2000).

Together these documents set a clear framework. We are required to:

- increase the economic and social benefits offered by waterways, maximising their potential as catalysts for urban and rural regeneration
- encourage people to make use of the inland waterways for leisure and recreation, tourism and sport
- protect historic buildings and areas

Sustainable development means meeting economic, social and environmental aims at the same time, and requires us to consider the long-term implications of decisions to ensure effective protection of the natural environment.

- maintain and enhance biodiversity and landscape value
- encourage freight and passenger transport by boat.

The way the Environment Agency proposes to achieve this is set out in *your rivers for life ~ a strategy for the development of navigable rivers 2004–2007* (Environment Agency, January 2004).

This waterway plan applies the strategy principles to the River Thames.

The Environment Agency's vision is of a rich, healthy and diverse environment for present and future generations. Achieving this vision means:

- a better quality of life
- an enhanced environment for wildlife
- cleaner air for everyone
- improved and protected inland and coastal waters
- restored, protected land with healthier soils
- a more environmentally friendly business world
- wiser, sustainable use of natural resources
- limiting and adapting to climate change
- reducing flood risk.

The waterway plan will make a contribution to the achievement of this vision (More information about the Environment Agency's strategies can be found at www.environment-agency.gov.uk.)

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is a directive from the European Union that aims to protect the water environment. We believe this plan follows the principles of the WFD. Information about the WFD can be found at: www.environment-agency.gov.uk.

¹ A Sporting Future for All (paragraph 8.13) Department for Media Culture and Sport, March 2001

¹ Draft South East Plan Part 1: Core Regional Policies, South East England Regional Assembly, July 2005

² Steering a Fresh Course, Association of Inland Navigation Authorities, September 1999

This waterway plan brings together all the interests on the non-tidal parts of the river, but the Thames continues as a major resource through London to the sea. Its importance is recognised in the London Plan's Blue Ribbon Network Policy.¹ The approach adopted by the Blue Ribbon Network could be used as a model for the non-tidal river.

London boroughs are asked to prepare detailed appraisals of their stretches of the river and its environs in collaboration with other boroughs, the Mayor and relevant stakeholders. These appraisals are expected to consider:

- the local character of the river
- public and freight transport (on land and water, existing and potential)
- development sites and regeneration opportunities
- opportunities for environmental and urban design improvements

- sites of ecological or archaeological importance
- areas, sites, buildings, structures, landscapes and views of particular sensitivity and importance
- focal points of public activity
- public access
- recreation and marine infrastructure
- indicative flood risk.

The appraisal should also identify areas of deficiency and the actions needed to address these deficiencies. These relate to facilities for:

- water-based passenger, tourism and freight transport
- water-based sport and leisure
- access and safety provision
- marine support facilities and infrastructure and moorings.



5.0 Sustainable development

5.1 Introduction

The waterway plan aims to be a model for sustainable development of the river. Sustainable development is all about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations to come. It is about a more inclusive society that achieves and shares the benefits of increased economic prosperity, which is less wasteful in its use of natural resources, and in which the environment is protected and improved.

The UK government is committed to the principles of sustainable development and its approach is set out in *Securing the future – delivering UK sustainable development strategy* (HM Government, 2005). This new strategy develops the 1999 UK Sustainable Development Strategy, which included four central aims:

1. social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
2. effective protection of the environment
3. prudent use of natural resources
4. maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

Sustainable development means meeting economic, social and environmental aims at the same time, and requires us to consider the long-term implications of decisions. The Government's revised strategy shows in more detail how the four central aims can be integrated into sustainable development driven by the following principles:

- living within environmental limits
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- achieving a sustainable economy
- promoting good governance
- using sound science responsibly.

An important element of the UK strategy is a set of indicators and targets intended to focus attention on what sustainable development means, and to give a broad overview of whether we are achieving a 'better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come'.

At a more local level these indicators and targets are presented in Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks (RSDFs). These are overarching documents that inform other strategies and policies in the region and are prepared by a collaboration of several bodies, including the Regional Chamber or Assembly, Government Office and Regional Development Agency.

5.2 The integrated regional framework

The South East of England developed its own RSDF in 2001, with 25 regionally derived objectives and 41 indicators under the four main aims of sustainable development. In 2004 an Integrated Regional Framework (IRF) was published, which establishes a shared vision and objectives for integrated working and, ultimately, sustainable development of the region. The IRF is an evolution of the RSDF and was produced not only by the South East England Regional Assembly, but also the Government Office for the South East, South East England Development Agency, Environment Agency, Department of Health, South East Forum for Sustainability and Regional Action and Involvement South East.

The IRF provides a common reference point for sustainable development and aims to help guide the work of other organisations to ensure sustainable development is at the heart of policy. As well as the same 25 objectives as the RSDF, it also includes the following vision for the South East: 'a prosperous region delivering a high quality of life and environment for everyone, now and in the future'.

The Environment Agency has applied the South East RSDF in preparing the Thames waterway plan. (The vast majority of the non-tidal River Thames is within the South East Region, with just the extreme upstream and downstream reaches falling outside.)

A better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come.

¹ The London Plan, Mayor of London, February 2004

5.3 Sustainable waterway leisure and tourism in the South East

Leisure and tourism activities have significant implications for the environment, economy and social fabric of the River Thames corridor. This is especially apparent within major settlements along the Thames itself, such as Oxford, Abingdon, Reading, Maidenhead, Windsor, Chertsey and Kingston, on the outskirts of London. The River Thames has been referred to as ‘liquid history’ because of the famous riverside towns, stately homes and historic sites, such as Runnymede and Hampton Court, along its course. It is a major tourism and leisure resource that supports a wide range of activities and facilities, including: holiday accommodation, powered and non-powered boating (for both sport and recreation, as well as for commercial purposes), walking, observing wildlife, cycling and angling. However, these varied uses put pressure on the river and its surroundings. We need to plan and manage the use of this unique resource in sustainable ways so that future generations can enjoy it.

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East (RPG9) acknowledges and supports the regionally significant role played by the River Thames as a Priority Area for Tourism. Policy TSR7 of RPG9 (approved by the Secretary of State in November 2004) specifically promotes joint working to achieve the potential for informal recreational and sporting uses through improved management and access. Similarly Policy TSR2 (Rural Tourism) requires local authorities (through their planning policies and decisions) to protect access to, and support proposals for, inland waterways and associated facilities. The South East England Regional Assembly sees the Thames waterway plan as a key mechanism for delivering these objectives, which have been carried forward into the *Draft South East Plan*.

Leisure and tourism not only brings economic vitality. It also contributes to the quality of life, through enjoyment of the countryside, improving health and wellbeing. Sustainable leisure and tourism requires an approach that ensures the long-term viability and quality of natural, human and financial resources.

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

5.4 Sustainable development principles

We have used Strategic Sustainability Assessment¹ (SSA) to integrate environmental, as well as social and economic, considerations into the development of the plan. As part of this process, we defined a sustainable development framework for the Thames based on objectives included in the South East’s RSDf and IRF and more detailed criteria pertinent to the Thames (see Appendix 2). The appraisal criteria under each objective were used to test the sustainability of potential Thames waterway plan policies and proposals. Our aim is for the plan to consider the full range of sustainable development issues and to provide criteria against which to judge performance in achieving the plan’s objectives. Where possible the SSA identifies possible targets and indicators.

The SSA is concerned with the assessment of high-level policies and proposals. Environmental Impact Assessment will be applied, as necessary, to individual sites. The principles of sustainable development and the use of SSA will be integral to the further development of the plan and its subsequent revisions. The SSA document and a short summary is available at: www.riverthamesalliance.com

A further SSA will be carried out when the River Thames Alliance has identified responsibilities and a firm timetable for action.

Policy 1 - development

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

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 and water supply.

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

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

6.2 Local Government boundaries (map 2)

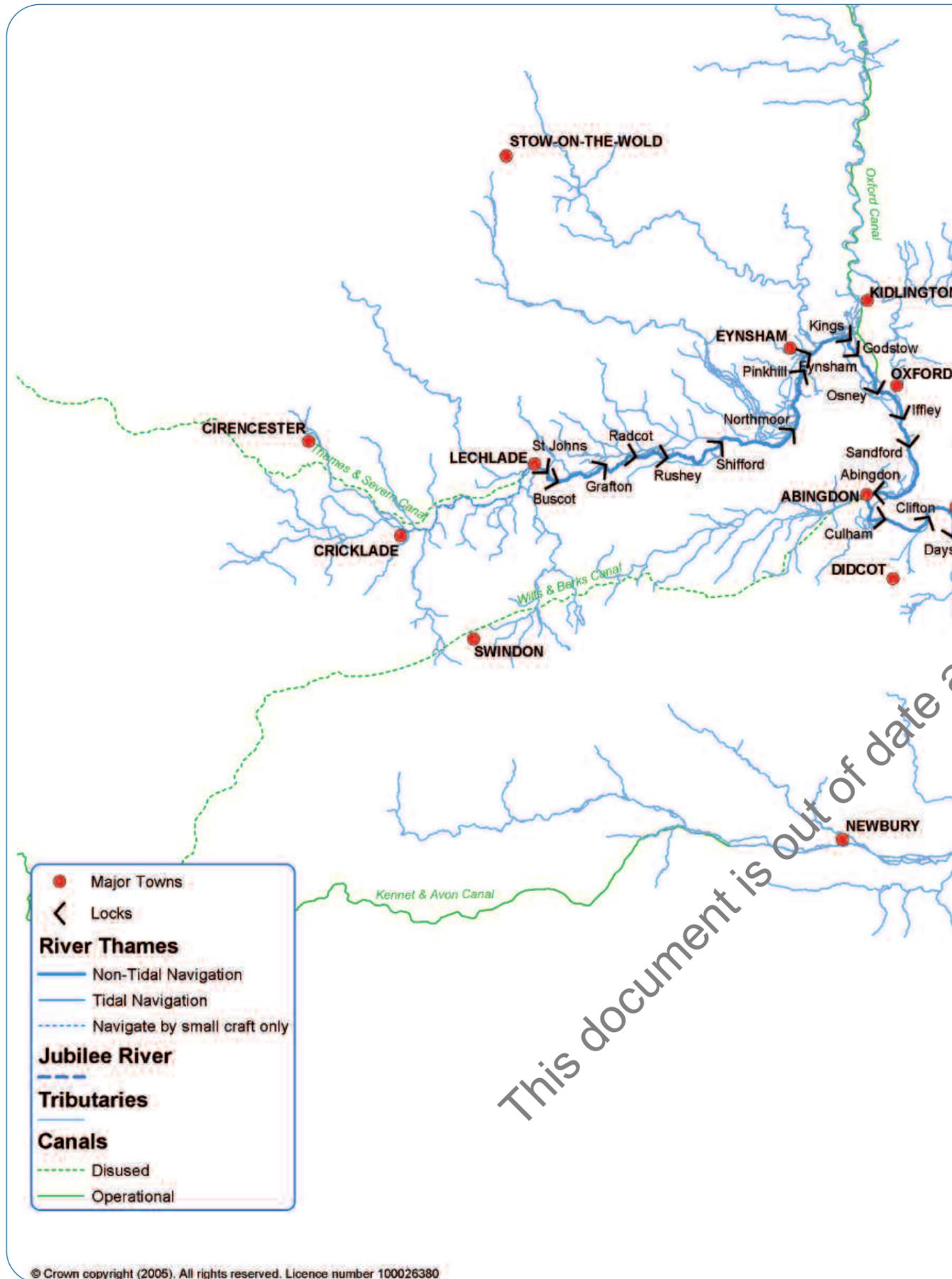
The river runs through 25 administrative areas.

For 185 of its 238 kilometres (77per cent 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.

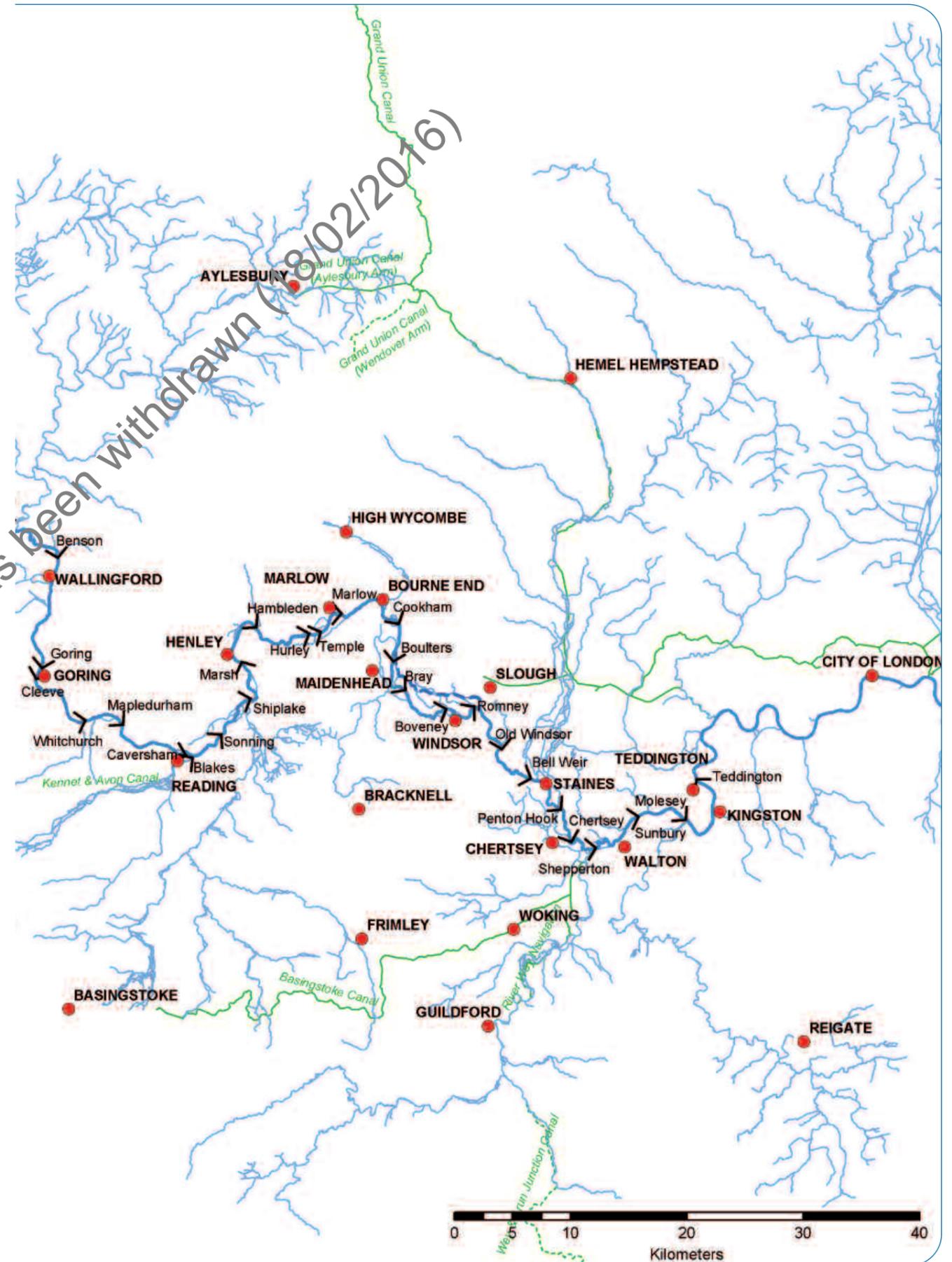
River users hold expectations of consistent standards of provision along the river’s length.

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

¹ This approach draws on both Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA). A full explanation is provided in a separate SSA Report, available from the Environment Agency.



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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 beauty.¹

Angling is one of the nation's favourite pastimes. 11 per cent 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 per cent.²

Walkers on the Thames towpath rate scenery/ landscape and relaxation/peace as the main attractions.³

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 wards.⁵

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 £580 million.

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 million.⁶

The Environment Agency has a statutory responsibility 'to enhance the contribution salmon and freshwater fisheries make to the economy'. Within the Thames Region, 108,000 people purchase annual rod licences for coarse fishing, spending almost £70 million on licences, permits, tackle and bait.⁷

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, (economic value generated by the non-tidal river)

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

⁶ British Marine Federation Research

⁷ Environment Agency Rod Licence data 2003-04 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 in the South East is projected to grow by 1,094,800 by 2027.

This will further emphasise the open space value of the river corridor and its role in providing sport and recreation opportunities close to where people live.

At the same time the population increase, caused by significant inward migration to the region from both within the UK and from outside, will create major demand for new housing.

The population is ageing. There will be a significantly smaller proportion of the population aged 25 to 44 in 2027, but a larger proportion aged over 65.

The number of people aged 25 to 44 will actually fall by 1.7 per cent whilst those aged 65 and over will increase by 56 per cent. By 2027, almost a quarter of the region's population will be aged over 65. 17.4 per cent growth in 45 to 64 year olds is also predicted.

Significantly, these are key age groups of people using the Thames path and owning powered boats. 43 per cent of walkers using the Thames Path are aged 45 and over². 89 per cent of owners of powered boats are aged 45 and over.³

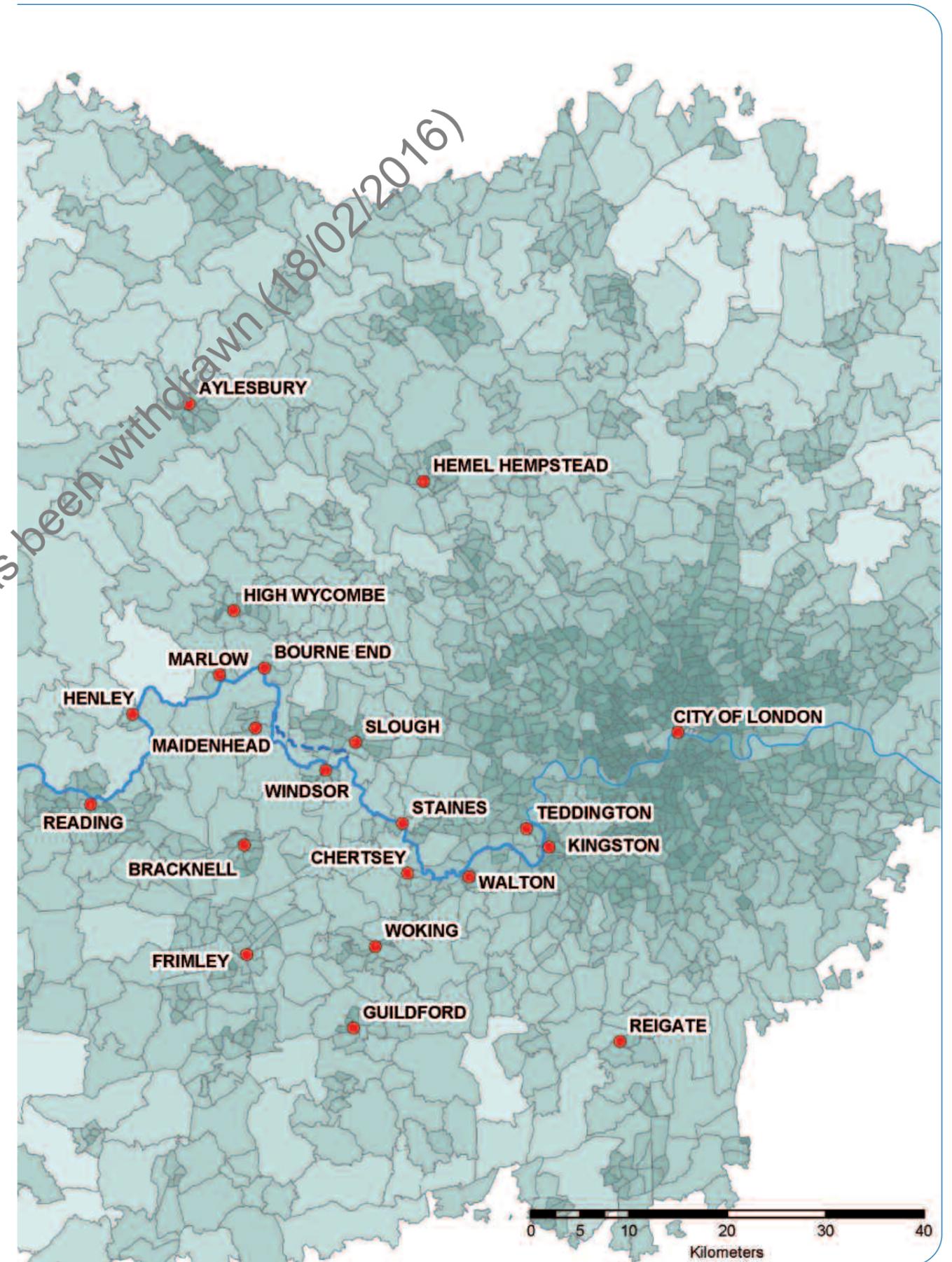
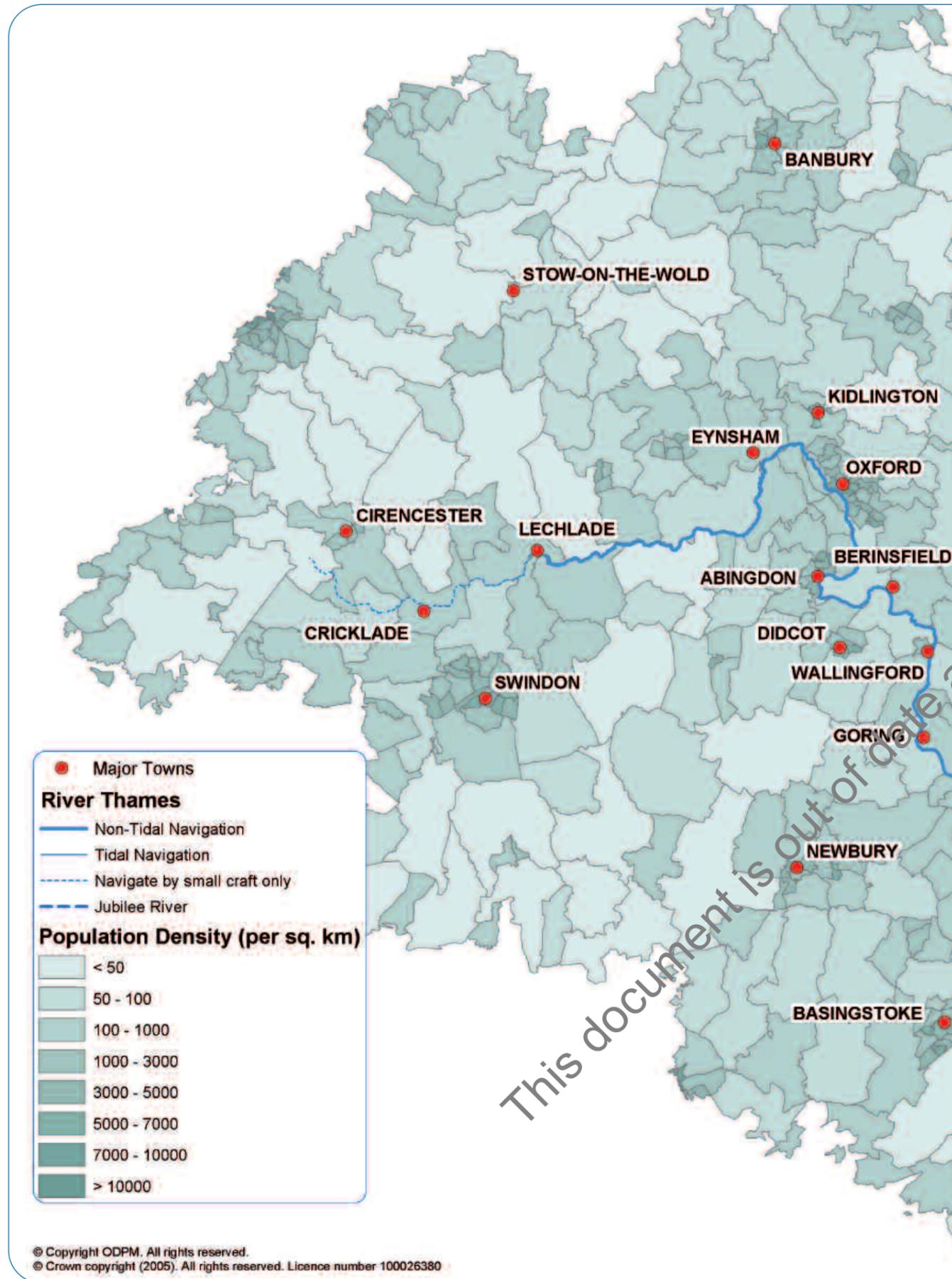
By 2027 almost a quarter of the region's population will be aged over 65.



¹ South East Plan Consultation Draft Technical Note 5 (revised) Demography, South East England Regional Assembly March 2005

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

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



This document is out of date and has been withdrawn (18/02/2016)

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’.¹

The Inland Waterway Amenity Advisory Council² (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 communities (especially Asian)
- 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.

Investment is needed to maintain the river to provide sport and recreation opportunities that can deliver wider benefits to local communities.

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 prevention.¹ 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’.

Case study 1

River Thames Boat Project

The River Thames Boat Project is a registered charity that owns and operates Richmond Venturer, a Dutch barge that has been converted into a community boat and floating classroom. It is fully accessible to people with disabilities and equipped with a variety of educational resources about the Thames.



From its base in Kingston, the Venturer provides day and residential cruises and educational activities tailored to meet the needs of socially excluded groups. In 2005 58 per cent of their work was with older people and people with disabilities and 25 per cent involved education and training programmes. 14 per cent of the users came from minority ethnic groups.

The charity is run on a budget of £72,000 by one full-time and one part-time member of staff, four skippers and a team of 60 volunteers (including the Trustees). 43 per cent of the volunteers are female. Two teachers deliver *School on the River*, a day of curriculum-based, hands-on, environmental education activities.

Relevance to plan policies:

- fully accessible for people with disabilities
- social inclusion
- environmental education

¹ Waterways for Tomorrow, Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, July 2000

² 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.

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

7.5 Deprivation (map 4)

Government has produced a measure of deprivation derived from a combination of relevant weighted factors.¹ 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 wards² is 1.15 and the most deprived scores 75. 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 per cent Asian population.³ (On average in England, 91 per cent of the population is white.)

Three Slough wards adjoining the Jubilee River⁴ have Asian populations of 25, 31 and 43 per cent.

Elsewhere there are only small ethnic variations. Two wards near the river in Oxford (Iffley and Cowley Marsh) have approximately 10 per cent Asian population. Four riverside wards in Reading have Asian populations of between eight and 15 per cent, and Black populations between six and nine per cent.

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

Policy 2 - social inclusion

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 and act to remove them
- 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.

Falcon Rowing and Canoe Club Oxford

The club provides a number of rowing and kayak paddling programmes that have been specially developed to encourage participation by young people and socially excluded groups. The club setting helps to reduce the dramatic drop in participation that usually occurs when children leave school. The initiatives include:

- outreach work with schools in deprived urban wards in east Oxford, such as Blackbird Leys, introduces children to the river and active recreation
- rowing coaching for pupils from state schools as part of the 2006 Active Sports Programme
- canoeing group for people living with mental illness
- rowing and canoeing for people with physical disabilities
- outreach programme to an Asian community
- canoeing for children from Asylum Welcome (an Oxford-based charity working to support refugees).

Around half Falcon's 240 members are women. But the club's continuing work reaching out to local communities is constrained by inadequate facilities. They have plans for a new building of low environmental impact, fully accessible, that will include showers and toilet facilities to



cater for the needs of all the above groups. Storage space for more boats, secure bike racks, kitchen, warm-up room and a community hall will enable the club to support an initial 20 per cent growth in participating schools, a 10 per cent increase in participants from hard to reach groups, backed up by 10 per cent more volunteer coaches, with similar year-on-year growth to follow. The club is seeking partners to fund this £750,000 investment in new facilities.

Relevance to plan objectives:

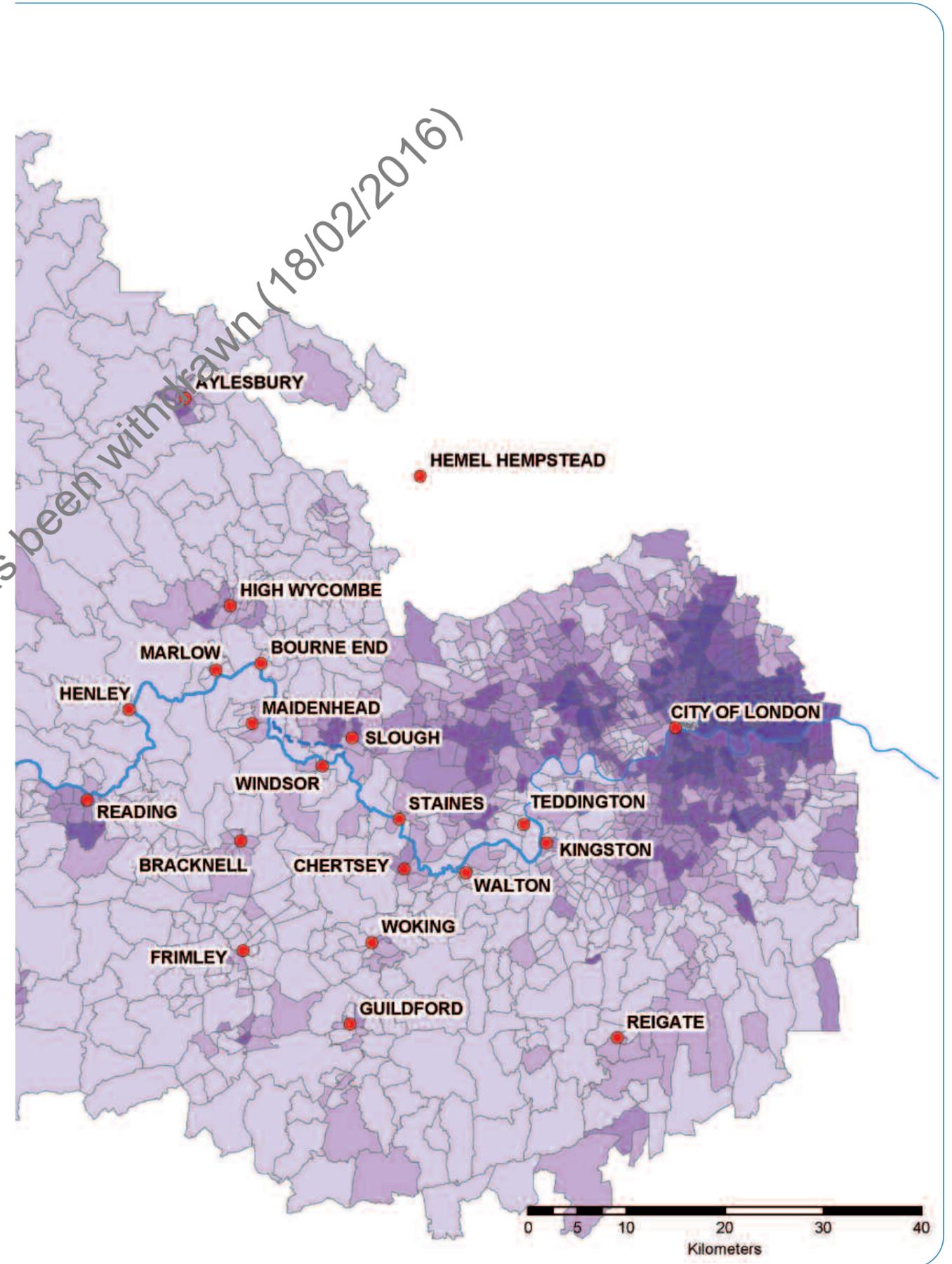
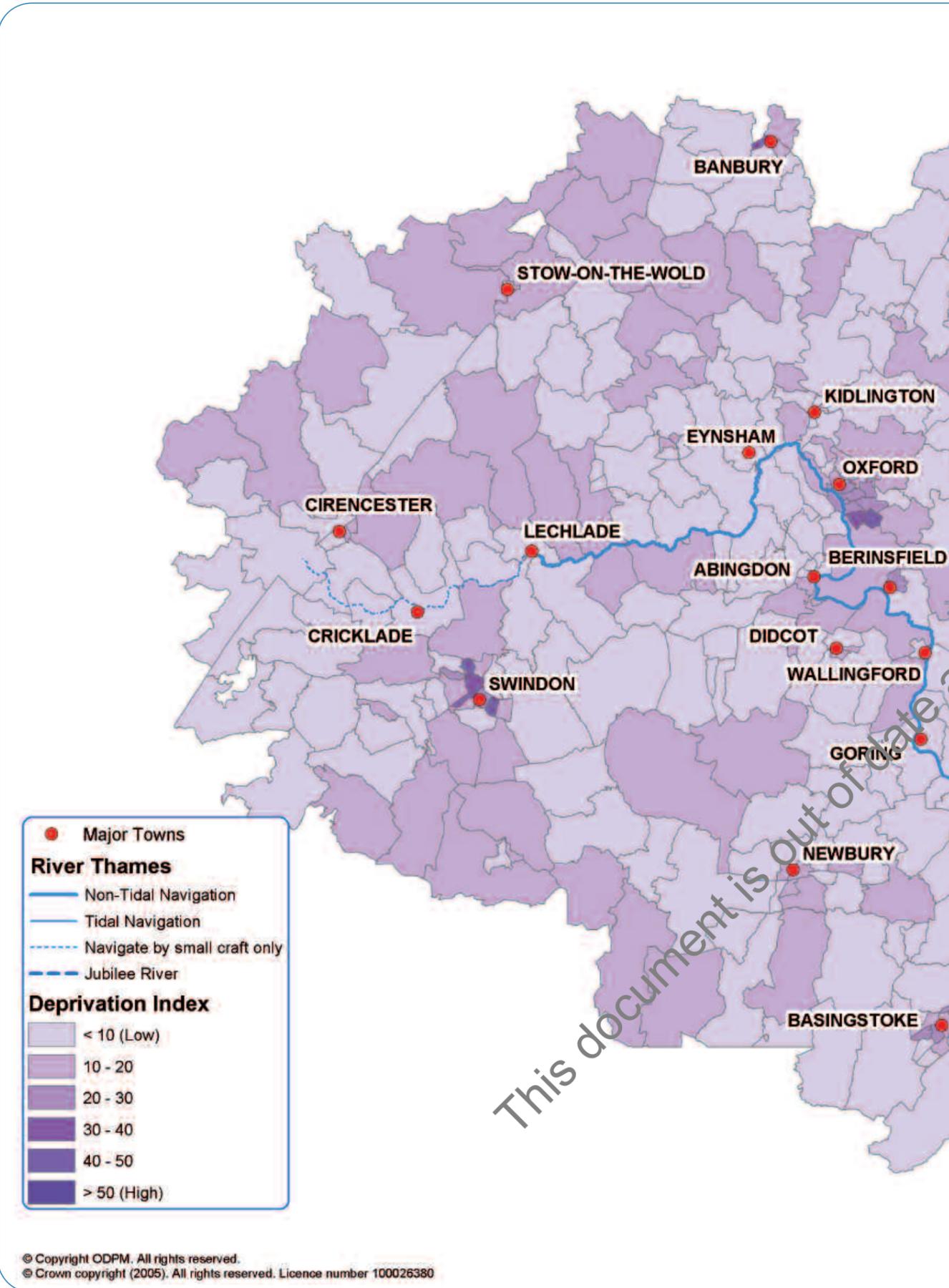
- social inclusion
- increased participation in sport and active recreation

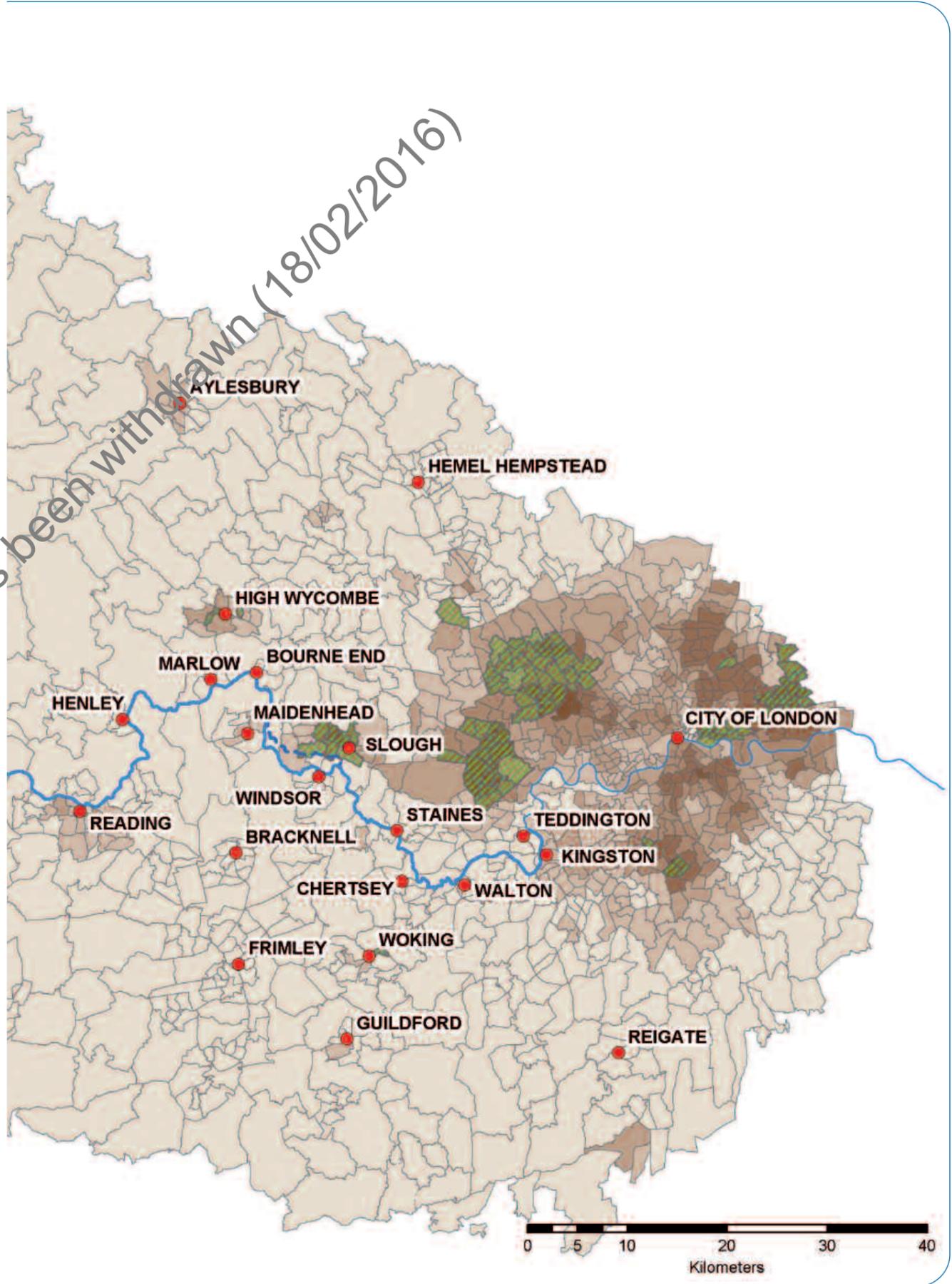
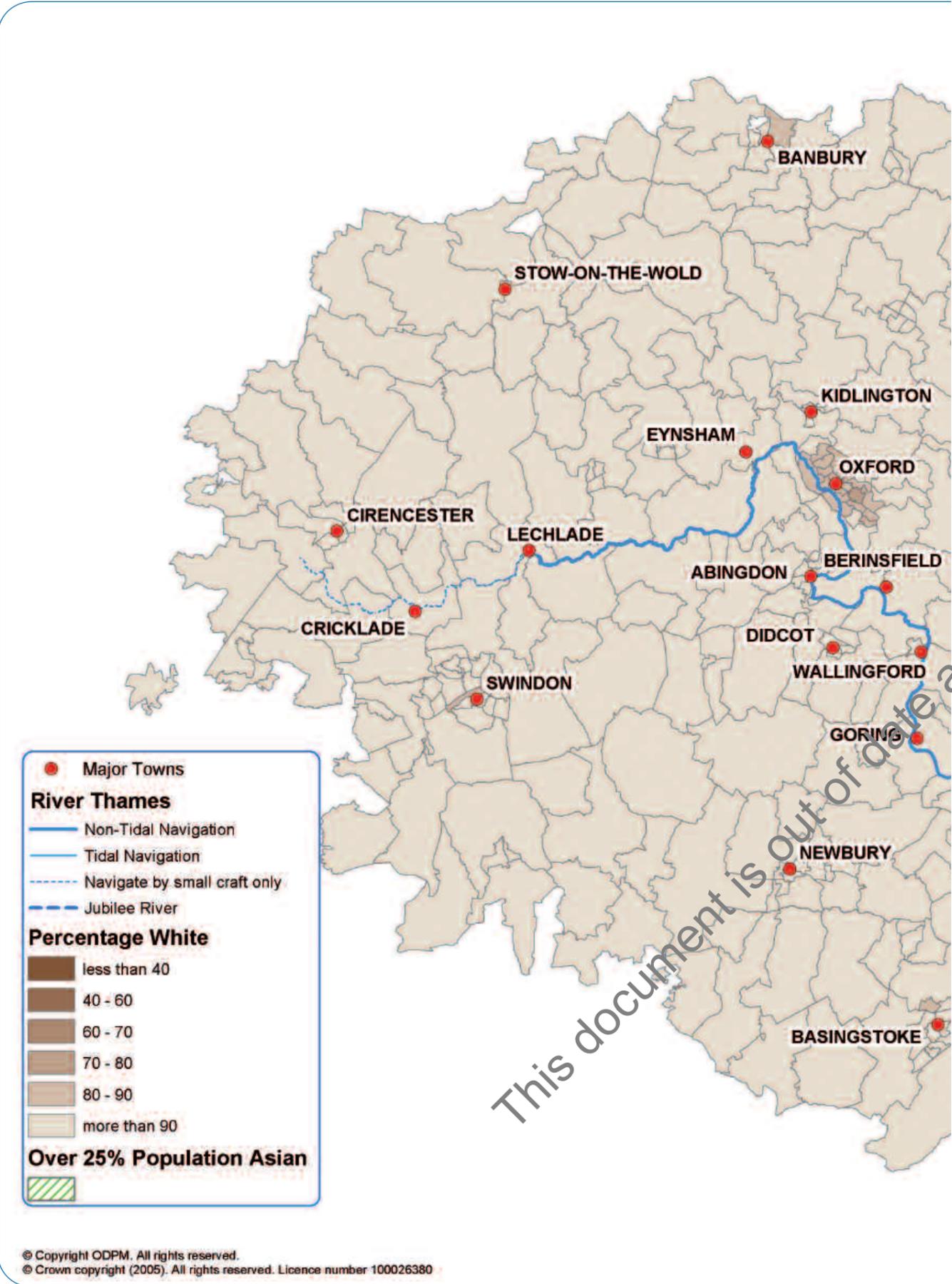
¹ Source: Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, Indices of Deprivation 2000

² The smallest unit within a local authority for which government collects statistics.

³ 2001 Census

⁴ The Jubilee River runs alongside the Thames for 11.6 kilometres providing flood alleviation for Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton. For details, see the case study on page 81.





8.0 Tourism (map 6a and 6b)

8.1 Tourism trends

Tourism continues to be a significant economic driver. The river lies within the Tourism South East Region.

In 2004 the region attracted 16.6 million domestic tourist trips with a value of over £3,006 million, making it the second most visited of all the regions apart from London.¹ However, the South East has been losing market share to other regions.

Longer domestic holidays are declining whilst the trend for more short breaks looks certain to continue. The Thames, with 10.5 million people living within 30 kilometres of the river, is well placed to benefit.

The number of overseas visitors to the UK fell between 1998 and 2001 (with a 9 per cent fall in 2001, the year of the foot and mouth epidemic). There was steady recovery in 2002 and 2003. Then a 12 per cent increase made 2004 a record year

with 27.8 million visitors from overseas (with a further 5.5 per cent growth predicted in 2005).²

The South East Region, with 14.2 per cent of the UK total, receives the highest number of overseas visitors outside London. In 2004, 3.95 million visitors spent £1,467 million in the region. The river, with its proximity to the major UK gateways of Heathrow, Gatwick, Dover, Portsmouth and Southampton, is well placed to gain potential benefit from these overseas visitors.

The Thames is being developed as a significant brand for tourism.³ In addition, the historic towns of Oxford and Windsor, Henley and its regatta, and the areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs) are all recognised and valued as key tourism assets of the region.

The traditional river activities of boating and fishing provide a potential focus for promoting tourism.

Policy 3 - tourism

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 www.visitthames.co.uk 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 and boat hire
- 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
- 10 support and promote events based on the river

¹ The United Kingdom Tourism Survey, 2004. The survey covers trips away from home lasting one night or more taken by residents of the United Kingdom for holidays, visits to friends and relatives, business and conferences. Tourism is measured in terms of volume (trips taken, nights away) and value (expenditure on trips).

² International Passenger Survey, 2004, Office for National Statistics

³ The Thames has been identified as a key brand within the Tourism Berks, Bucks, Oxon sub-region of Tourism South East.

The river faces strong competition from other destinations employing significantly greater marketing spend.

Case study 3



Marketing the River Thames

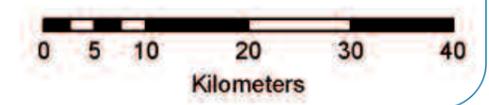
The River Thames Alliance has set up a marketing group to pool resources and develop coordinated actions to promote the river. The group is a partnership of private and public sector organisations including trade associations, local authorities, and attractions like the River and Rowing Museum, Henley, Tourism South East, Thames Path National Trails and the Environment Agency act as a steering group.

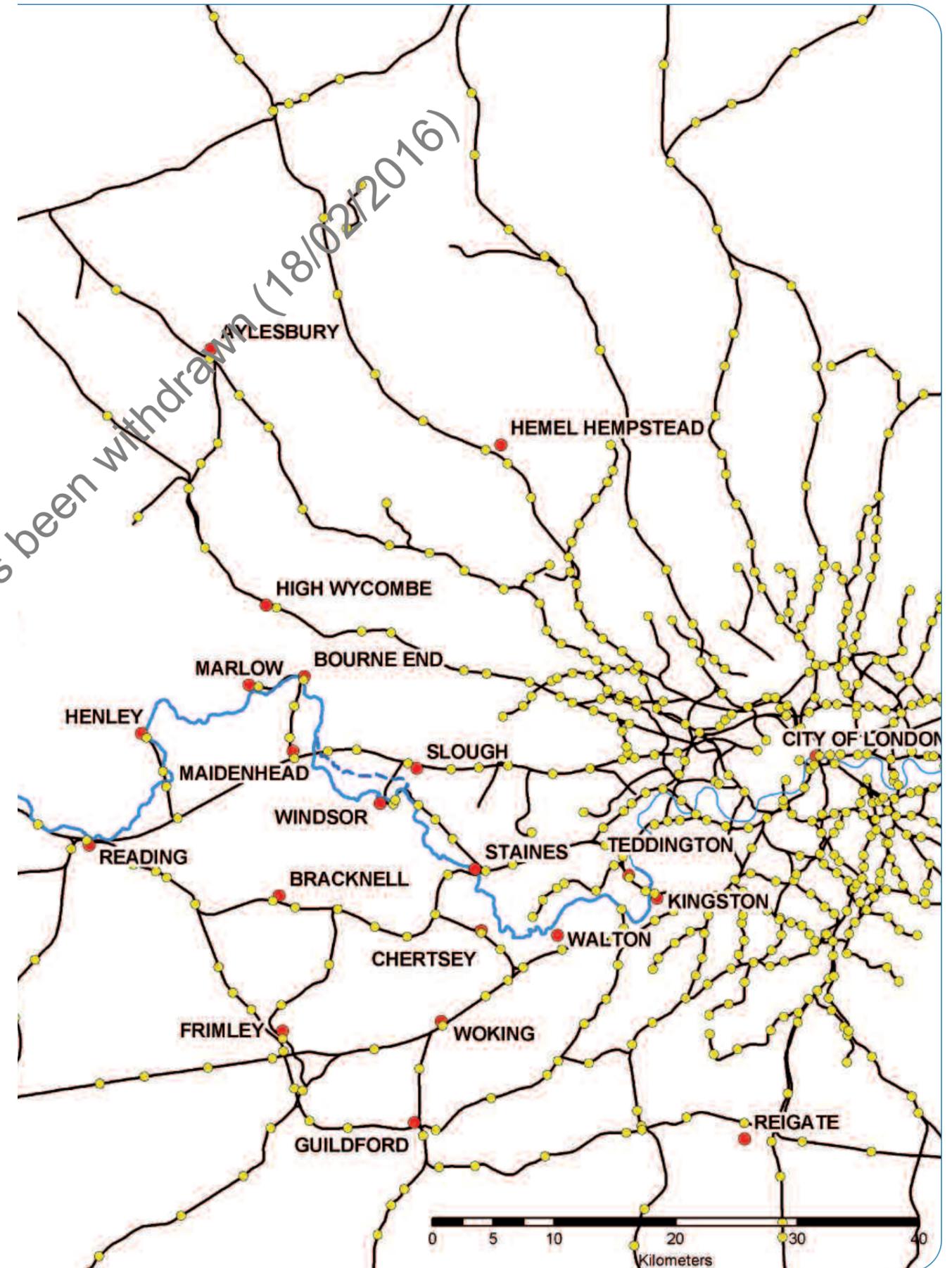
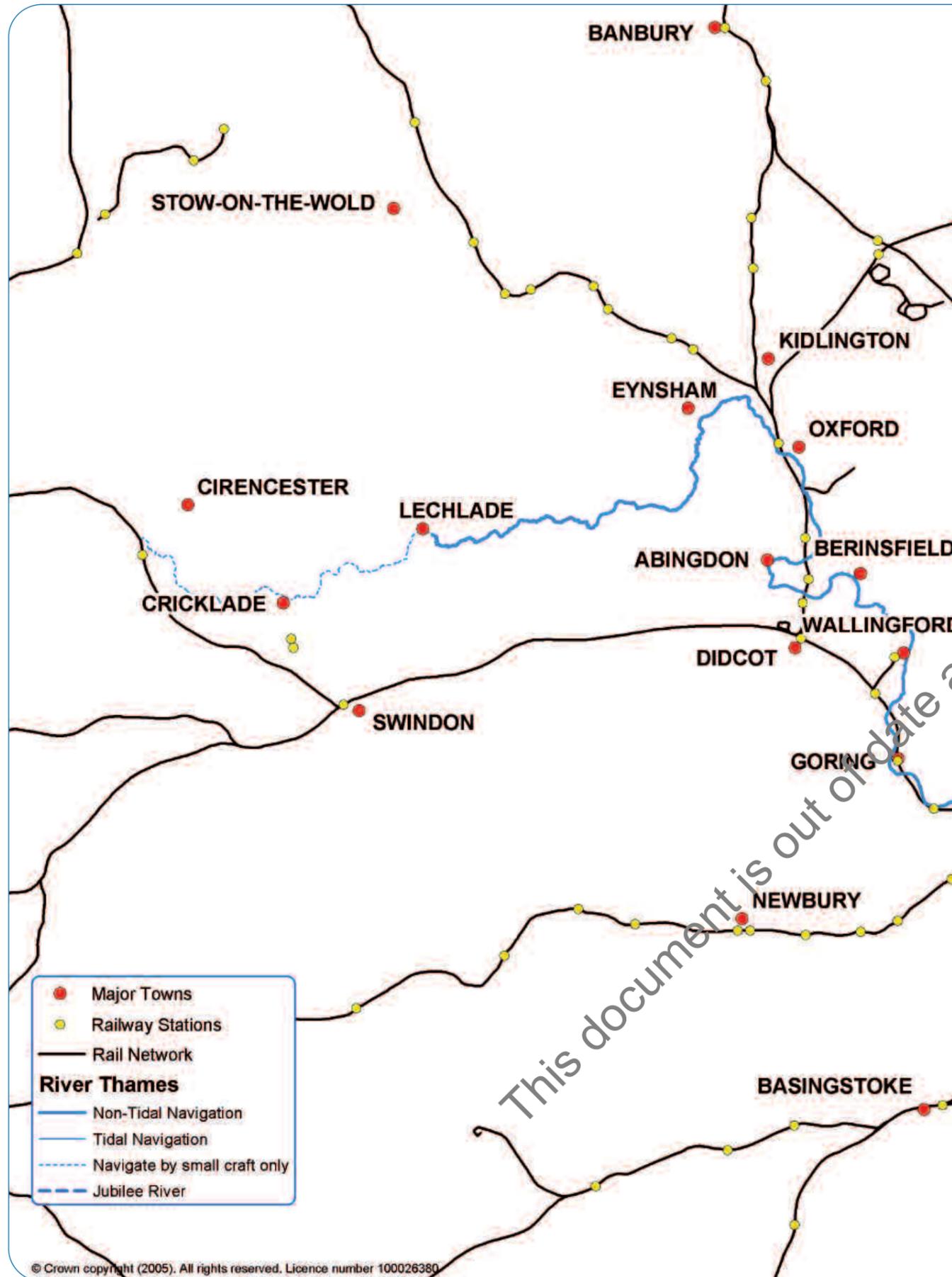
The *Discover the River Thames* campaign coordinates leaflets, posters, a website and public relations with simple, focussed images and messages, free from competing individual partner logos.

The marketing provides ideas for days out and healthy things to do on and alongside the river.

Relevance to plan policies:

- helps to establish a brand identity for the Thames
- promotes increased use of the river
- encourages use of public transport to get to the river
- promotes active recreation
- partnership working





8.2 Visitor attractions (map 7)

The Thames has a tremendous wealth of nearby visitor attractions. It offers more than any other inland waterway. There is great potential to develop tourist day and staying visits based on the river. Better visitor moorings at places of interest and improved signing to attractions from the towpath are needed to help realise this potential.

The number of visits made to attractions in England increased by 11 per cent between 2000 and 2004.¹

Visits to farms (by 48 per cent), gardens (36 per cent) and heritage centres (31 per cent) increased most, those to farms showing good recovery after falling dramatically in 2001 because of the foot and mouth epidemic.

Visitors to country parks (18 per cent), museums and art galleries (16 per cent) also increased over the same period. Wildlife attractions and zoos (8 per cent) and historic properties (4 per cent) had smaller increases, whilst visits to leisure and theme parks stayed about the same.

Legoland, Windsor, is the top attraction charging admission in the Tourism South East Region with 1.37 million visits in 2004. In the same year, Windsor Castle had 923,280 and Hampton Court 498,377 visits.

8.3 Visitor expectations and product quality

Visitors expect ever-higher quality of product and service. Competition for leisure spend is intense and new products and destinations are fast appearing. The rapid growth in new short-break destinations opened up by the low-cost airlines is a current example of such competition.

We know from survey work what walkers and boaters would like to see improved.²

Top of the list are better provision of toilets and water points. Better maintenance of the Thames Path is also needed with 29 per cent complaining about it being muddy and 27 per cent concerned about dog mess. Visitors would also like better provision of refreshments and information, with signing to places of interest. The greatest need specifically for boaters is for short-term or visitor moorings to access nearby pubs, shops, restaurants and places of interest.

Policy 4 - tourism

We will provide information and interpretation for visitors at the riverside

Possible actions

- 1 provide interactive touch screen Thames information at key lock sites and principal towns along the river
- 2 display local information at all lock sites
- 3 include information about the landscape, wildlife and fishing
- 4 provide signs from the Thames Path to nearby shops, pubs, restaurants and places of interest
- 5 promote sensitive design and siting of signs through adoption of *Thames Environment Design Handbook* guidance

Visitor surveys have revealed a strong demand for better information.

¹ Visitor Attraction Trends, England, 2004, VisitBritain, August 2005

² National Trails Thames Path User Survey 1999, Centre for Leisure Research
Environment Agency Navigation licence survey, Test Research, June 2003
Rivers and Broads Hire Cruiser Industry Study, Ken Dodd Associates, Nov 1998
Environment Agency Customer Satisfaction Survey 1998, Maritime Leisure Research Group, Southampton Institute. Land-based visitors.

Policy 5 - tourism

We will provide an excellent experience for visitors to the Thames

Possible actions

- 1 set waterway standards for the provision of services and facilities
- 2 encourage take-up of quality grading schemes including hire boats
- 3 improve provision and quality of riverside facilities

Operators along the river must offer the highest standards.

Case study 4

Cotswold Water Park

Cotswold Water Park is Britain's largest water park with 133 lakes created by gravel extraction, covering over 40 square miles. It adjoins the Thames Path and provides a network of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways. It is a significant tourist attraction in the upper reaches of the river.

The park is a nationally recognised area for wildlife, with spring-fed water of the highest quality. There are three nature reserves with bird hides. In spring and summer the place is alive with warblers, hobbies, sand martins and numerous birds in passage. Dragonflies abound on warm summer days around the shores of the lakes. Between the lakes there are old meadows full of flowers and butterflies. Along the streams and rivers visitors may see kingfishers, dippers, wagtails, otters, crayfish and the now rare water vole. During winter the park hosts over 20,000 waterfowl of 40 different species.

The park offers a wide range of opportunities for water-based sport, including sailing, windsurfing, kayaking and water skiing. Other activities include angling, cycling, horse riding, paintballing and a high ropes aerial adventure. There are two country parks open to the public. Keynes Park is the larger, providing a range of facilities year round including a children's beach, café, adventure playgrounds and a variety of water sports and activities for all the family. Neighbridge offers visitors a less developed, relaxed setting.

The park and vicinity offers camping and caravanning, self-catering holiday chalets, bed and breakfast, log cabins, and traditional inns.

Day-to-day management is carried out by the Cotswold Water Park Society. It was established in 1997 as a not-for-profit environmental body with charitable status, dedicated to improving the environment of the Cotswold Water Park for its residents and visitors.

It works in partnership with the local authorities in the area: Cotswold District Council, North Wiltshire District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Wiltshire County Council. Working through a Joint Committee, the four authorities control large scale strategic and planning issues. The Society is dedicated to fund raising, establishing partnerships with other bodies, and practical management on the ground. This includes operating a ranger service and running the country parks. The Society also works with privately owned businesses to market the area. The Society has a board of members drawn from the local authorities, parishes, sports and conservation organisations as well as businesses in the park and nearby. Its founder patron is professor David Bellamy OBE.

Cotswold Water Park illustrates many of the Thames waterway plan objectives relating to sport, recreation, landscape, biodiversity, accessibility, education and tourism. The guiding principle of the Cotswold Water Park Strategy is that of sustainable development, where the needs of business, people (including existing residents) and wildlife are successfully met without prejudicing the quality of life for future generations.

9.0 Sport and recreation (map 8a and 8b)

9.1 Government policy

Government has published a strategy for delivering its sport and physical activity objectives.¹

It found that the quality and quantity of participation in sport and physical activity in the UK is lower than it could be, and levels have not changed significantly over recent years:

- for sport: only 46 per cent of the population participate in sport more than 12 times a year, compared to 70 per cent in Sweden
- for physical activity: only 32 per cent of adults in England take 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week, compared to 57 per cent of Australians.

Participation is lower among women and some ethnic minority groups: for example, Indian (31 per cent), Pakistani (21 per cent), and Bangladeshi (19 per cent) women in particular have a lower involvement in sport than the national female average of 39 per cent.

There are also wide variations between young disabled people and their non-disabled counterparts.

Participation falls dramatically after leaving school, and continues to drop with age. But the more active in sport and physical activity you are at a young age, the more likely you are to continue to participate throughout your life.

One overarching strategy objective is to achieve a major increase in participation in sport and physical activity, primarily because of the significant health benefits and to reduce the growing costs of inactivity. The target is for 70 per

cent (currently 30 per cent) of the population to be reasonably active (for example 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week) by 2020.

Sport England's vision of making England an active and successful sporting nation means getting and retaining significant numbers of new participants.² The Regional Sports Board South East has the responsibility for reflecting these objectives in the strategic plan for the region.³ The River Thames can play a significant part in meeting many aspirations that form part of the Board's vision. In particular those to:

- drive up participation levels in the South East by at least one per cent year-on-year
- use the natural resources of the region to increase participation
- encourage informal active recreation.

Sports clubs on the river have a major role in achieving other Sport England aims to:

- increase club membership
- increase the number of people receiving coaching and tuition
- establish a network of multi sport Community Clubs.

Dorney Lake (close to the river between Windsor and Maidenhead) is the venue for the rowing, sculling and sprint canoeing events at the 2012 London Olympics. The 2006 World Rowing Championships will also be held there.

The high profile of these events will raise interest in sport, providing a platform to increase participation.

The more active in sport and physical activity you are at a young age, the more likely you are to continue to participate throughout your life.

¹ Game Plan, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, Dec 2002

² National Framework for Sport 2003

³ A short length of the river from its source falls within the Sport England South West Region. Their South West Plan for Sport has similar objectives.

9.2 Trends in participation

The table below shows the percentage of young people (aged 6 to 16) participating regularly in sport in 2002 comparing it to levels of participation in 1994.¹ The top three most popular sports are shown followed by other sports relevant to the river.

Figure 1 Percentage of young people participating regularly in sport 2002

Sporting activity	participation in 2002	Change since 1994
Swimming	51%	up by 1% (from 50%)
Cycling	49%	down 8% (from 57%)
Football	37%	no change
Walking (over one hour)	22%	down 1% (from 23%)
Fishing/angling	5%	down 2% (from 7%)
Rowing/waterskiing/canoeing	3%	down 1% (from 4%)
Sailing/windsurfing	3%	up 1% (from 2%)

Note that these are national statistics and do not necessarily reflect activity on the Thames. Nevertheless, they do indicate a challenge that needs to be addressed, particularly as activities taken up in childhood are most likely to continue into adulthood.

Policy 6 - sport and recreation

We will use the river to increase participation in sport and active recreation

Possible actions

- 1 ensure that the Thames waterway plan is consistent with other regional strategies such as the South East Plan for Sport
- 2 encourage innovative, inclusive and sustainable schemes to involve more people
- 3 explore benefits from 2012 London Olympics
- 4 plan and manage increased use to minimise potential conflict
- 5 publish codes of conduct in consultation with users

The river is one of the region's major natural resources, right on people's doorsteps.

Policy 7 - sport and recreation

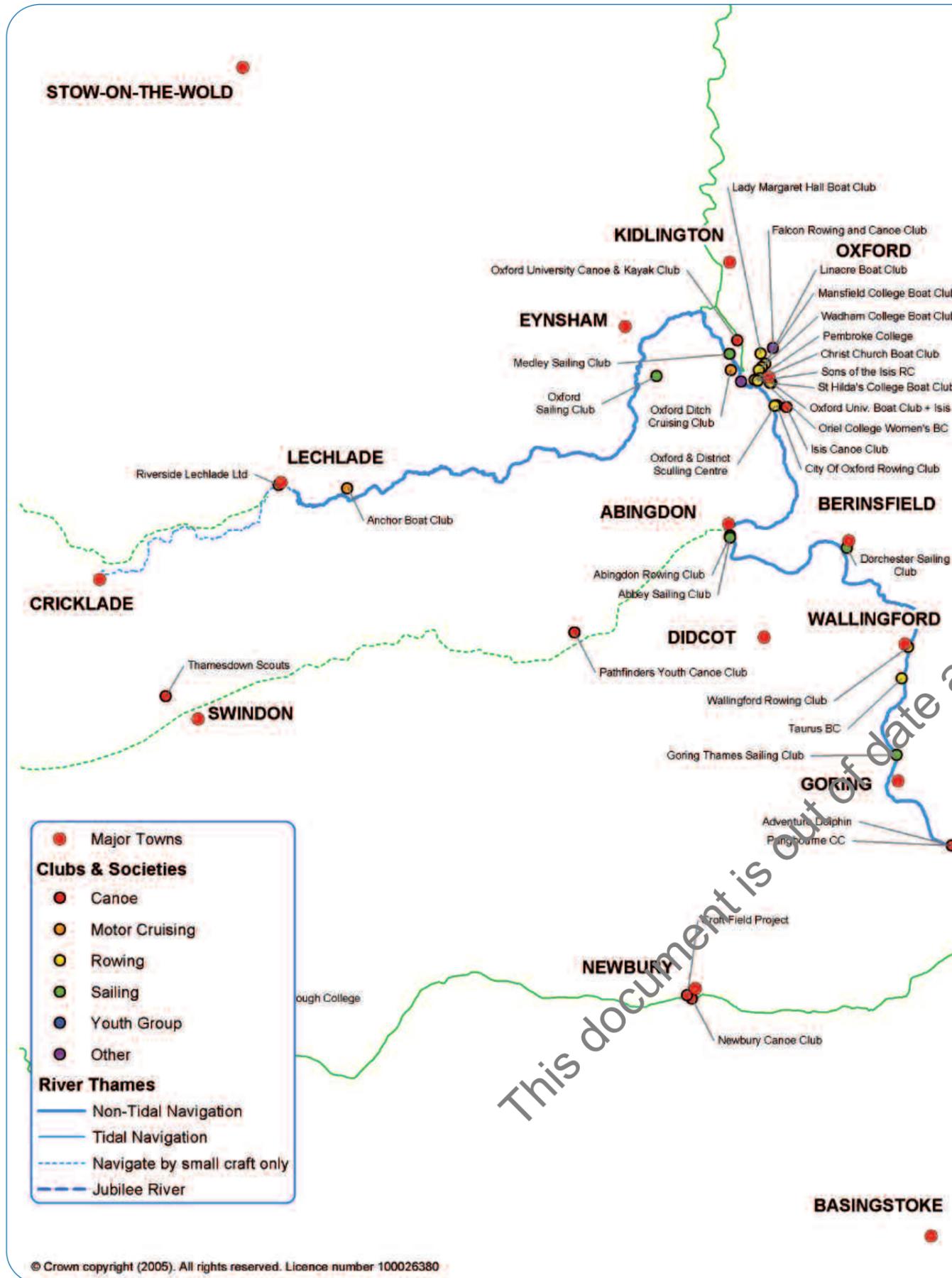
We will work with sports and recreation clubs and other providers on the river to help increase their membership and levels of participation

Possible actions

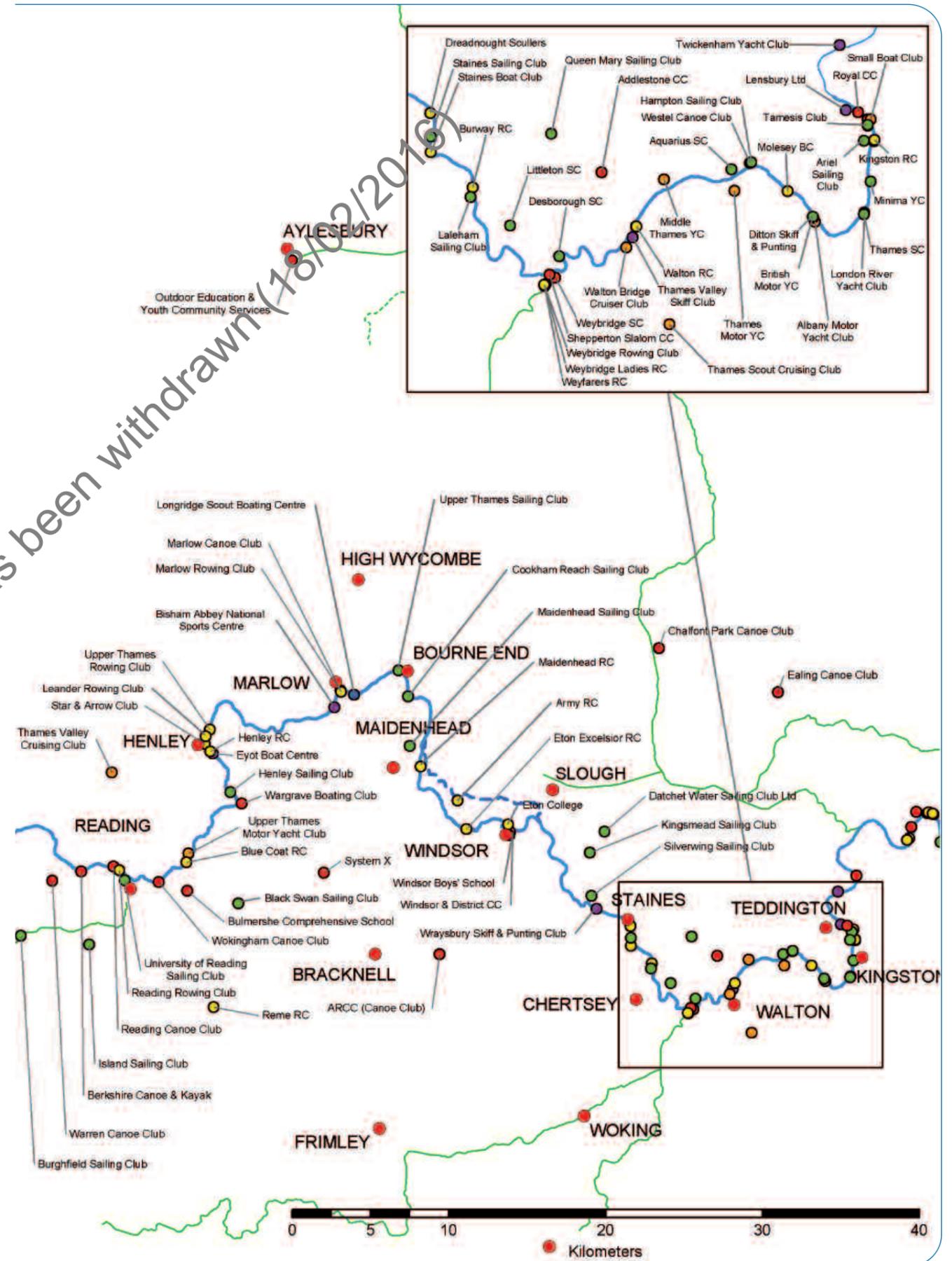
- 1 support sport governing bodies and clubs with outreach programmes that encourage participation by all sections of society
- 2 provide accurate up-to-date information about sport and recreation opportunities on the river
- 3 provide facilities for multi-sport clubs
- 4 review provision of block licences for unpowered craft

Canoe, sailing and rowing clubs provide people with access to boats, training and facilities. Angling clubs can promote participation.

¹ Young People and Sport in England, Trends in Participation 1994-2002, MORI for Sport England 2003



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9.3 Value of open space

There is increasing recognition of the contribution that open space can make to people's health and wellbeing.¹

The use of green spaces is one way in which people can use and enjoy their local environment. The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs 2001 Survey of Public Attitudes to Quality of Life and to the Environment found that just under half of adults aged 18 or over visited local green spaces or countryside, without using a car or other transport, at least once a month. A further quarter visited occasionally. However, one in ten never did so, while a further one in six said that they had no access without a car or other transport. People aged over 45 were the most likely to visit green spaces on 'most days', while those aged over 65 were the most likely never to do so.

Green space also has the potential to create biodiversity. For over a quarter of its length the river runs through designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). These nationally designated landscapes provide ideal opportunities for wider countryside recreation.

The river has a major role to play in providing accessible open space, recognised by Government.

Government's planning guidance defines green space as 'all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs that offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.'²

The guidance outlines how good policies for open space, sport and recreation can deliver the Government's broader objectives of urban renewal, social and community inclusion, health and wellbeing and sustainable development. Local authorities are advised to carry out a cross departmental audit (linking planning, community strategy and the Best Value process) of existing provision against an assessment of local community needs and aspirations. External groups should also play an integral part in the assessment.



Policy 8 - sport and recreation

We will realise the open-space opportunities provided by the Thames

Possible actions

- 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
- 2 provide accurate up-to-date information about sport and recreation opportunities on the river
- 3 provide facilities for multi sport clubs

9.4 Access and walking (map 9)

The Thames Path opened in 1996 as one of only 13 National Trails in England and is unique in following a river. It runs for 294 kilometres from the source of the river to the Thames Barrier in Greenwich. (The research findings that follow, however, have been selected to include only users from the source to Teddington).

The Thames Path was established by the Countryside Agency and has a management group drawn from all the highway authorities, the Countryside Agency, the Environment Agency and Tourism South East. A small team funded by the Countryside Agency and the highway authorities is hosted by Oxfordshire County Council and undertakes the day-to-day management of the Thames Path, with much of the physical maintenance carried out by volunteers. The Thames Path Management Strategy contains many of the aspirations set out in this document.¹

Two thirds of its users live within 16 kilometres. Although 39 per cent walk to the riverside, 55 per cent come by car and only 3 per cent use public transport.¹

The path, used equally by men and women, is an important asset supporting the objective to involve more women in exercise. 81 per cent of visitors appreciated the presence of lock keepers and 71 per cent had their enjoyment enhanced by motorboats.²

The river also acts as a barrier. This has a number of significant consequences. Settlements on the bank opposite the Thames Path cannot gain access unless there is a local bridge or ferry. Existing road bridges tend to funnel traffic creating congestion black spots. This in turn deters alternative transport modes, such as walking and cycling, delays buses, and produces air and noise pollution as well as considerable frustration.

The lower reaches, particularly between Cleeve and Marsh Lock and downstream of Marlow, are well served by rail connections. However, footpath links from stations to the river could be improved in many instances. Examples include Appleford, Wargrave, Culham, Goring, Pangbourne and Tilehurst. The upper reaches of the river are relatively inaccessible by public transport.

Policy 9 - access

We will encourage people to travel to the river on foot or by cycle

Possible actions

- 1 create footpath links and cycleways to the river, particularly from urban areas
- 2 provide bridges or ferry services to cross the river for access to the Thames Path
- 3 use fingerposts and waymarking to identify all access points

Policy 10 - access

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 river² on legally defined public rights of way, protecting the bank from erosion when necessary and possible
- 2 create, sign and promote circular walks incorporating the Thames Path
- 3 provide campsites or budget accommodation at 16 kilometre intervals (a day's walk)
- 4 provide drinking water and toilets 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.

¹ PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, July 2002

² A good overview of the literature is found in Planning Bulletin 12, Planning for Open Space, Sport England, September 2002

¹ The Thames Path National Trail Management Strategy 2001-2006, Countryside Agency

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



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Policy 11 - access

We will encourage access by public transport**Possible actions**

- 1 encourage bus and train services, especially at weekends, to the riverside
- 2 promote access by train or bus, to walk along the Thames Path returning from a different train/bus stop (using leaflets, website, posters, special timetabling, shuttle buses, ticket deals etc.)
- 3 improve footpath links and signage between stations and river

Making recreation facilities accessible by public transport promotes social inclusion. Public transport is better for the environment than more cars.

Policy 12 - access

We will provide facilities for those needing access by car**Possible actions**

- 1 create car parks to serve popular angling and boating reaches
- 2 provide adjacent slipways where necessary

Cars are used for access by anglers carrying bulky equipment, and by people bringing canoes and trailed boats. Parking is needed for people with mobility problems, and 55 per cent of walkers use cars to get to the riverside.

Policy 13 - access

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 the Thames Path
- 3 create a wide level path free from stiles, to accommodate people with mobility problems
- 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. The accessibility of 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.¹

¹ Statutory Guidance under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2002, Section 60-62. Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, November 2002

9.5 Cycling (map 10)

In the 1980s, when the proposal to create the Thames Path was being developed, the Countryside Commission's (now Countryside Agency) expectation was that substantial parts of the path would be suitable for shared use by walkers and cyclists. However, after extensive consultation, the submission document, which was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment, stated '.... it has become apparent that, far from being an obvious candidate for such a route, there are more problems associated with such dual use than would be encountered on other paths... The Thames Path National Trail was therefore, after deliberation, created as a long distance route for walkers.

In summary, the document concluded that:

- The likely level of cycling use would have a detrimental effect on unimproved surfaces, or would require surface improvements, which would be detrimental to the visual character of rural stretches.
- In some urban areas there was insufficient width to enable shared use without conflict.
- There were three stretches that would be suitable for shared use and unlikely to cause conflicts with other users of the path. It was proposed that they should be included in the National Trail: Runnymede to Windsor, Sonning to Reading and Donnington Bridge to Godstow (Oxford).

There is a need to create better access to the countryside for cyclists on safe transport routes. Recreational cycling makes an important financial contribution to rural economies and can also help to address social exclusion.

Cycling is encouraged and supported as a sustainable means of transport that offers a beneficial alternative to the car for getting to the river. However, the

Thames Path management group's policy is not to designate the trail itself as a long distance route for cyclists.¹ It will support, in principle, the development of cycle routes sharing alignment with parts of the trail, unless it is considered that the development will reduce the quality of experience for all walkers, including people using pushchairs and mobility aids and other disabled users of the Thames Path.

Where cycling is not already established, the management group's policy is that generally, in rural areas and through informal open spaces in urban areas, the path should be kept for walkers only. (Unless shared use of short sections of path is the only way to complete a safe link on a cycle route.)

Where cycling is already established, the management group recommends that local authorities convert public footpaths to bridleways by agreement with the landowner under Section 25 of the Highways Act 1980 (rather than converting footpaths to cycle tracks, because they are not recorded upon the Definitive Map). In such cases the management group asks for provision of a two-metre wide path for walkers, physically segregated by a landscaped strip from a further three metre wide path for cyclists.

There is strong demand for cycling to be encouraged, exemplified by the work of Sustrans.² Local authorities are encouraged to establish attractive, high-quality alternative routes for cyclists where the Thames Path is not suitable.

Areas for traffic-free cycling can be found in many parks, forests and gardens in the wider river corridor. For example, Swinley Forest in Bracknell is within 16 kilometres (10 miles) of Old Windsor Lock. Development of cycle routes parallel to the Thames Path will be acceptable if it does not adversely affect landscape character or the experience of other trail users.

Policy 14 - access

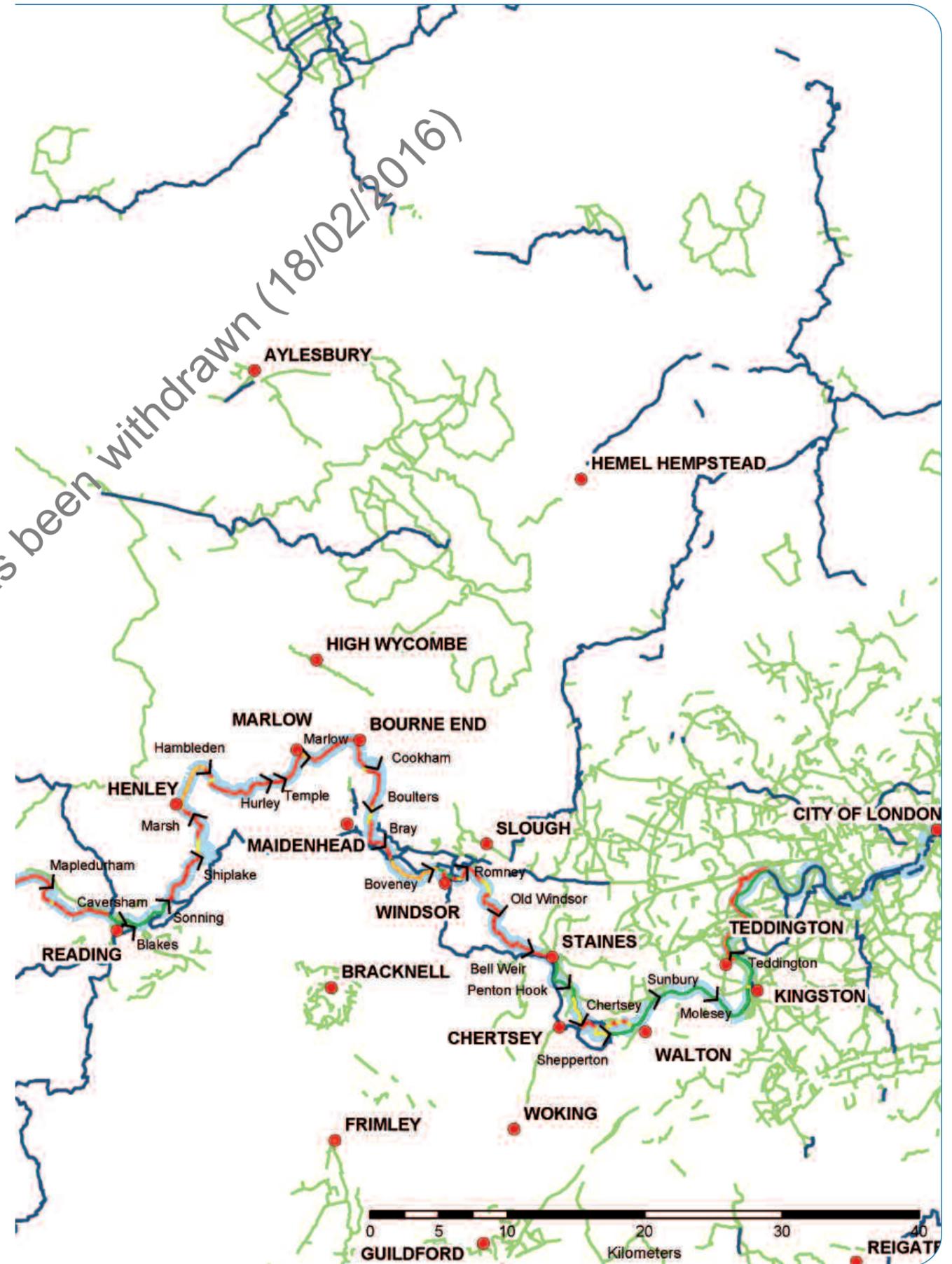
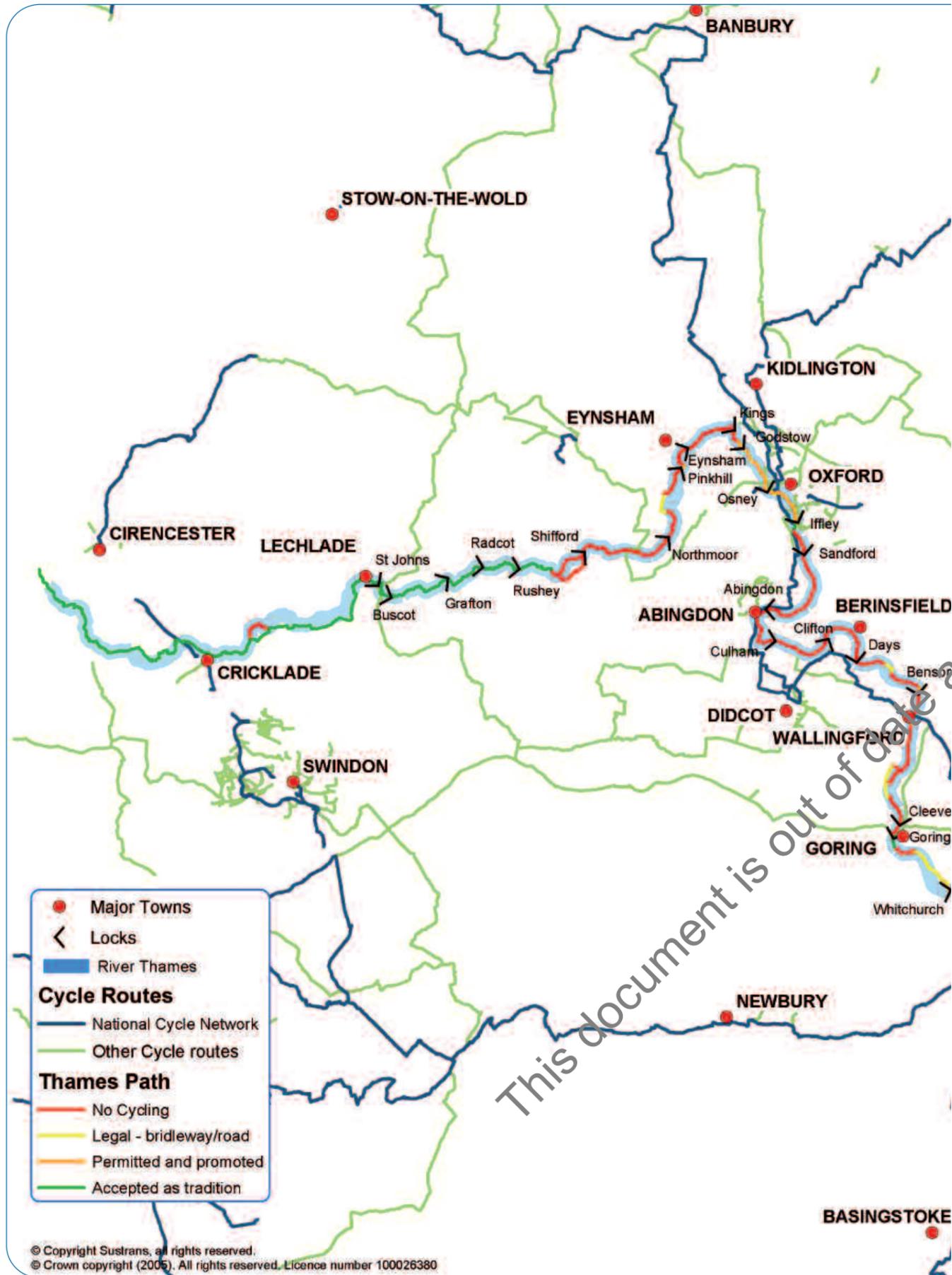
We will encourage cycling alongside the river where it is appropriate**Possible actions**

- 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 Cycling Policy
- 3 sign cycle routes, particularly where they join/leave the Thames Path
- 4 make improvements to the path surface
- 5 improve access to cycle routes, including consideration of new bridge crossings

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

¹ Thames Path National Trail Cycling Policy, 2005 - 2010

² The Thames Path. A study of possible access improvements for walkers, cyclists and people with limited mobility. Sustrans November 2003



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9.6 Angling

The average distance travelled by someone going fishing is 32 kilometres.¹ Over 168,000 holders of rod licences live within 32 kilometres of the river.²

Lake fisheries, however, have grown in popularity and are now the most popular venue being fished by 79 per cent of licence holders compared to 61 per cent fishing rivers (and 21 per cent canals).³

Although half those who fished rivers thought that there had been positive changes over the last 20 years, just under one third felt river fisheries had actually become worse. The issue of non-native invasive species, particularly crayfish, was of greatest concern.³

The economic value of angling is significant, with Thames Region rod licence holders spending, on

average, £534 a year for licences, permits, day tickets, bait and tackle.³

Getting more people into fishing brings significant economic and social benefits⁴. Angling can contribute to social inclusion and reduce crime. A national *Get Hooked on Fishing* scheme, supported by the police, specifically targets young people at risk of offending and has achieved:

- zero offending
- 80 per cent reduction in truancy
- increased literacy and general education performance.

Angling is also one of the most popular sports for people with disabilities.



Policy 15 - angling

We will encourage angling along the river

Possible actions

- 1 support taster sessions with free block licences and reduced price for beginners licences
- 2 provide improved access and facilities, particularly for anglers with disabilities
- 3 promote fishing permits for use at locks and weirs
- 4 provide up-to-date information on free and day ticket lengths
- 5 promote angling on the Environment Agency's 'free' towpath length below Staines
- 6 research ways to manage crayfish

Fishing is an outdoor sport, readily accessible at a number of levels, with the potential to be totally inclusive.

¹ 1994 National Angling Survey, National Rivers Authority

² 2003 Environment Agency rod licence holders

³ Thames Region Fisheries Strategy and Newscast Research, ADAS for Environment Agency, January 2005

⁴ Angling 2015 Getting more people into fishing, Environment Agency, December 2004

9.7 Rowing

The Thames is by far the most significant river for competitive rowing in the UK. 45 per cent of the Amateur Rowing Association's (ARA) 20,000 members are registered in the Thames Region. (Some are based on the tidal Thames.)

On the non-tidal Thames, 54 clubs, 6 universities and 29 schools are registered (plus over 30 Oxford colleges).

Participation has been growing and the ARA has two development offices working on the Thames. Successful initiatives include a scheme to link schools new to rowing with existing clubs on the river.

Several thriving clubs (who otherwise might be taking a lead in encouraging increased participation) are hampered by inadequate facilities. This needs addressing in accordance with Sport and Recreation Policy 7.

The river does not always provide ideal conditions, particularly for novices. In summer, there is potential conflict with other users, and in winter strong streams present problems. Growth in rowing, especially if accompanied by increases in powered boating, will need careful management. Off channel provision being developed at Dorney Lake (between Windsor and Maidenhead) and at Caversham Lake, near Reading, is desirable.

Dorney Lake is already changing patterns of activity. For example, Marlow and Wallingford Regattas, two of over fifty traditionally held on the river each year, have now relocated to the purpose-built course. Nevertheless, the river will continue to be a venue of international importance for events such as Henley Royal Regatta.

The river also has a tradition of distance and recreational rowing, epitomised by Jerome K Jerome's classic *Three Men in a Boat*. The ARA is promoting recreational rowing, with five clubs on the river specifically welcoming non-competitive members.



45 per cent of the Amateur Rowing Association's 20,000 members are registered in the Thames Region.

9.8 Canoeing

There are 21 canoe clubs on the Thames. Based on a 1995 average of 147 members, this suggests club-based participation of 3,087¹.

The British Canoe Union (BCU) has an individual membership of over 25,000, 469 affiliated clubs and 145 approved centres. The BCU currently pays the Environment Agency so that each BCU member is allowed to register a canoe for use on the river as part of the yearly membership fee.

The river provides a facility for novices, training, casual and competitive canoeing, including the annual Devizes to Westminster race.

Water flowing over some weirs (notably Hurley, Hambleden and Shepperton) can create good conditions for white water canoeing. Hurley is an important venue for rodeo and freestyle competitions.

Case study 5



© Andrew Jackson

White water canoeing at Hambleden Weir

Using advice from local canoe groups and George Parr, an expert in white water design, the sluices at Hambleden Weir were modified to allow optimum conditions for white water paddling to be created at any flow. The design also reduced erosion of banks and islands around the weir.

Relevance to plan policies:

- creates a traction to take up low-cost boating
- encourages participation in sport

¹ Space to live, space to play. A Recreation Strategy for the River Thames. Eileen McKeever, National Rivers Authority, 1995.

9.9 Sailing

Sailing is a popular pursuit in the region with 21 clubs on the Thames. Based on a 1995 average membership of 175, this suggests a total participation of 3,675.¹ Stillwater sites, such as reservoirs and lakes/gravel workings, principally serve its needs. In particular, reservoirs in the Thames Valley support active sailing clubs with at least one having developed into a 'centre of excellence' for the sport.

9.10 Motor cruising

There are 32 motor boat cruising clubs between Teddington and Lechlade, the earliest dating back to 1930. Several commercial marinas incorporate club premises. Some clubs are affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association and many also belong to the Association of Thames Yacht Clubs, which have an approximate combined membership of 2,500. These clubs provide training and in some cases moorings, as well as providing a social programme. (See section 10 for further information on powered boating.)

9.11 Swimming

The policy of the Environment Agency is to recommend against swimming in the river. There are many risks. For example: the water is often surprisingly cold; there can be strong currents; boaters can find it hard to see and avoid swimmers; there are unseen underwater obstructions; the depth of the water is often uncertain; swimmers may be vulnerable to waterborne diseases.

Nevertheless, swimming does take place. There are organised activities such as the Windsor Triathlon and even commercially promoted adventure swimming holidays that use the upper reaches. The River and Lake Swimming Association promotes responsible open water swimming, giving safety advice and warning of the dangers. On the other hand, there are frequent occasions when children and youths jump and dive off bridges, causing danger to themselves and other users.

Policy 16 - boating

We will make it easier to take up low cost boating

Possible actions

- 1 provide canoe portage points above and below all locks
- 2 provide campsites or budget accommodation at 16 kilometre intervals (a day's paddle/row)
- 3 improve slipways and car/trailer parks
- 4 provide white water for canoeists at existing weirs where feasible

It is important that people with low incomes are able to enjoy boating.



10.0 Powered boating

10.1 Trends on the river

The River Thames is one of the oldest and most important waterways in Europe. Its heyday as a commercial transport route was during the late 19th century.

It grew in popularity as a leisure destination, reaching a peak in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Since then there has been a dramatic decrease in the use of the Thames as a waterway. 43 waterside boatyards have closed and the sites put to other uses since Stanfords Map of the River Thames was published in 1960.¹

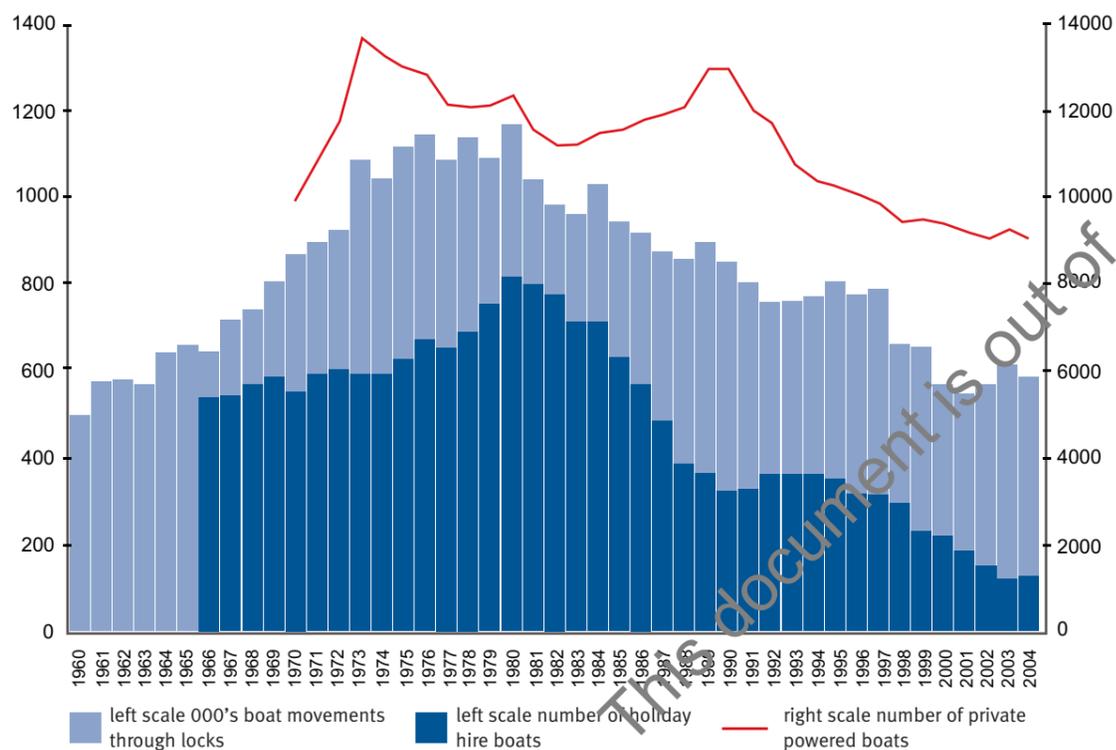
Since 1980, the number of holiday hire boats registered on the Thames has fallen by 85 per cent, from 815 to 123 in 2004.

The number of privately-owned powered boats has dropped 30 per cent since 1990, from 12,993 to 9,049 in 2004.

The decline in boats since 1990 has reduced Environment Agency income to spend on the river by £7.2 million and resulted in a further £111 million being lost to the local economy.²

Notwithstanding this decline, the river is home to 16 per cent of all the privately-owned powered boats on Britain's inland waterways.³

Figure 2 Thames traffic related to boat numbers 1960 - 2004

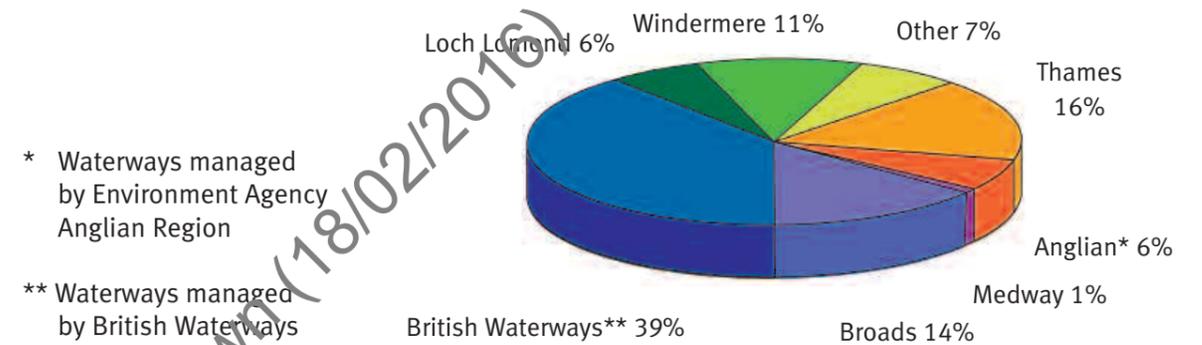


¹ Thames Boating Trades Association Boatyard Survey.

² Estimated loss up to the end of 2004, based on Environment Agency Thames Region Registrations Statistics and spend data from Extended Economic Valuation of the Thames, Ecotec Research and Consulting Ltd., February 2002

³ Figures from the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities estimates, August 2002

Figure 3 Inland boating share of the market 2001



* Waterways managed by Environment Agency Anglian Region

** Waterways managed by British Waterways

The Environment Agency commissioned research into the boating market, both current and potential, to identify why private boat registrations are in decline.¹ The research showed:

- The reasons that people gave up boating were the same as on waterways generally (cost, time and change of personal circumstances).
- Boaters would like to see better moorings and facilities. Again, this is also the case on competitor navigations. Quality of product on the Thames does not explain the decline in boating.
- The primary reason for the decline in boating is that there is not enough active communication, encouraging people to consider boating on the Thames. (The research revealed greater awareness of the canals and Broads.)
- More and better advertising and promotion is therefore the key to attracting more people to boat on the Thames, which in turn will increase revenue through licences.
- Boating was seen to be a particularly therapeutic and appropriate antidote to today's stressful environment. The Thames is therefore well placed to attract new customers from the large and prosperous population in the South East.

- Encouraging trial is crucial: 'If you just get people out there trying it, some of them will just fall in love with it – the product will do the rest for you.'

The Environment Agency began marketing actions in 2001 as part of the Thames Ahead initiative. This appears to have arrested the decline in the number of privately-owned boats on the river.

The Environment Agency has a national policy to increase participation in boating on all its rivers, with a target of a 5 per cent increase between 2002 and 2007 in the number of boats registered.²

The increase in boat movements on the River Thames in 2003 is a consequence of the Environment Agency's *Summer on the Thames* campaign and the Inland Waterways Association National Festival held at Beale Park near Pangbourne, which attracted over 600 boats.

The Environment Agency also introduced new flexible visitor licences in 2003 that encourage boats from adjoining waterways to make more use of the river.

¹ Environment Agency. The attitudes and opinions of new registration holders and 'considerers'. Jackson Research Associates, March 2001

² 'Making it Happen', The Environment Agency's corporate strategy: 2002-2007

Policy 17 - boating

We will encourage more boats to use the river

Possible actions

- 1 resist loss/support provision of facilities like dry docks and boat repair yards
- 2 provide facilities for boaters (toilets, water points, refuse disposal etc.)
- 3 marketing to raise awareness of the river
- 4 run courses in boat ownership and boat-handling skills
- 5 promote events on the river

The number of privately-owned powered boats has dropped 30 per cent since 1990, from 12993 to 9049 in 2004.

The sustainability assessment looked at the possibility of defining carrying capacity for the river in terms of number of boats. It concluded that this was not an appropriate measure. Therefore, at the same time as taking actions to attract more boats, it is also important to monitor adverse impacts and continue initiatives to minimise them, such as:

- Provision of information to boaters via different mechanisms (e.g. through boat clubs, boatyards, licence application process, website, leaflets) to minimise negative effects and maximise the positive effects of boating.
- Promotion of good boat design and low-impact boating (e.g. electric boats, non-powered).
- Enforcement of the speed limit. (Whilst wash and its effects will depend on a range of factors including the boat type, width and depth of the river, research has shown that speed is a significant factor.) Mechanisms to consider include initiatives to educate boaters, marker posts, quoting acceptable times between locks and more policing.
- Promotion of bioengineering and good practice approaches to bank protection.
- Conserving sensitive parts of the waterway.

Although there is a right of navigation wherever Thames water flows, there are backwaters with highly valuable habitats that we will protect and enhance by discouraging powered navigation. This will be achieved by education (see Policy 27, action 5).

10.2 Pattern of boat movement

The upper reaches have only one quarter the volume of boat traffic compared to the busiest downstream reaches. The Cotswolds Canals restoration when completed will introduce more boat movement to the upper reaches.

Activity is concentrated in the summer. This will be significant in considering the impact of climate change.



Figure 4 Average locks made and boat movement through all locks 2003-2004

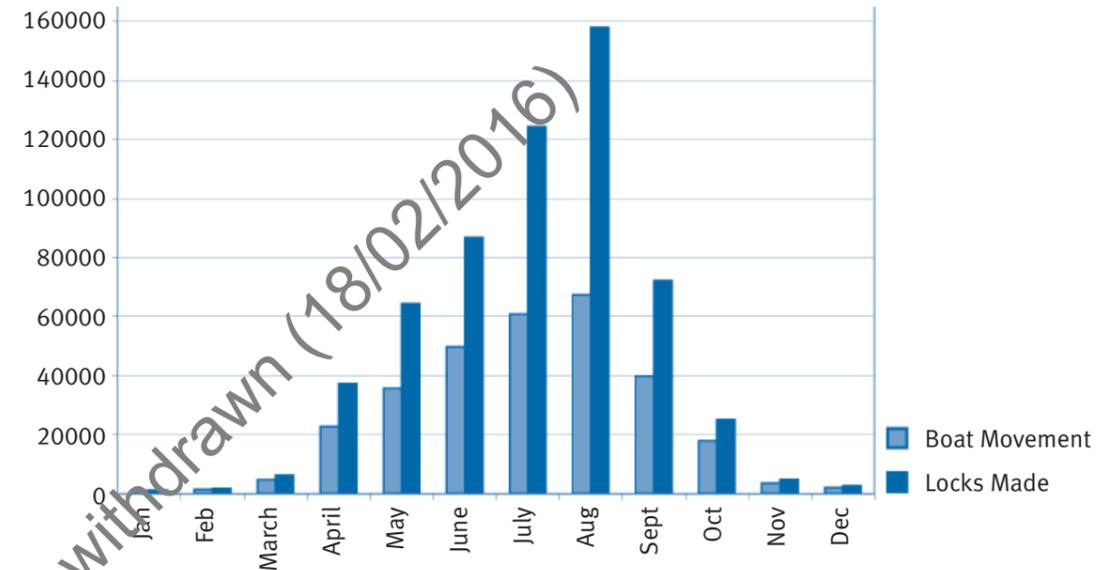
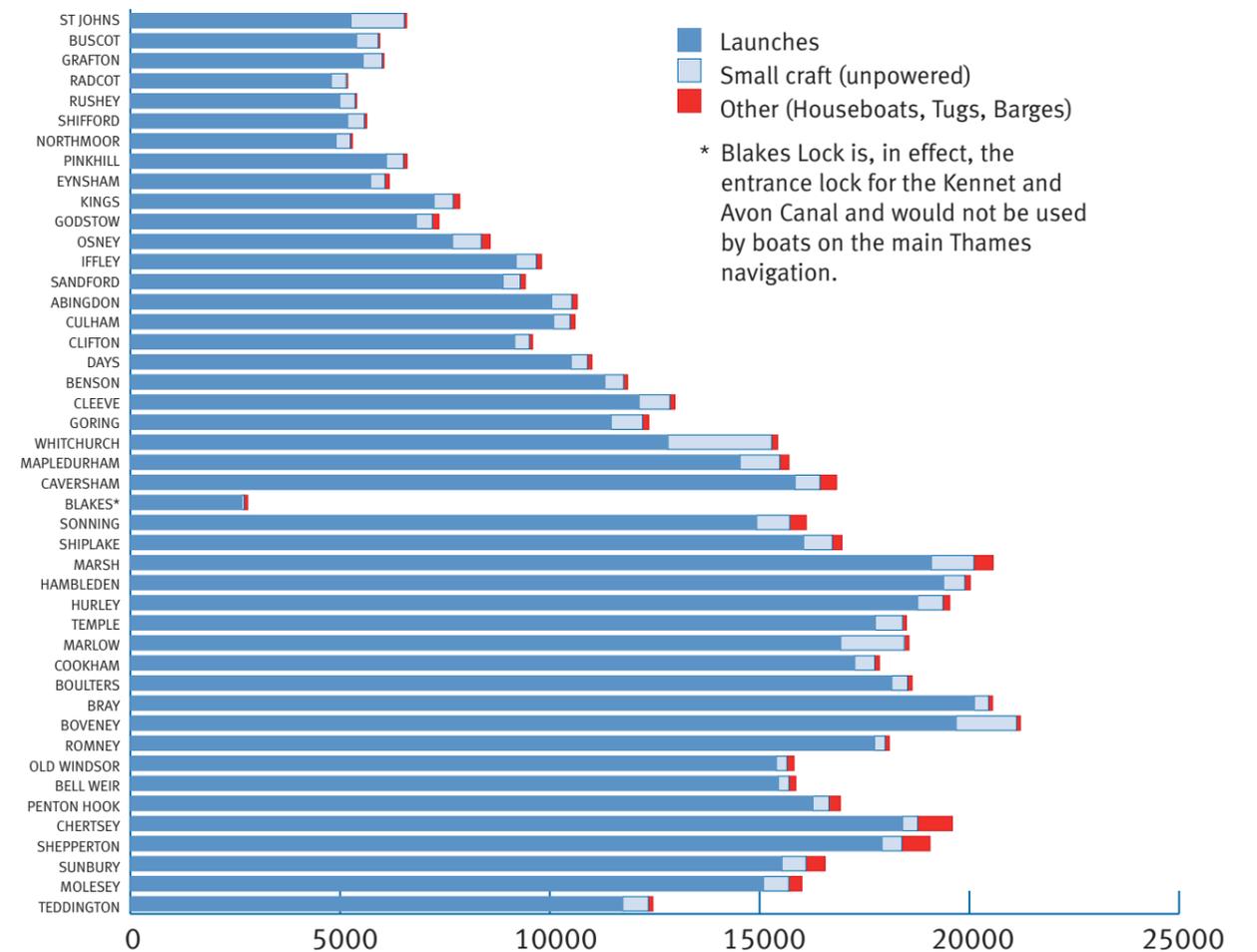


Figure 5 Average annual lock traffic by type 2003-2004



* Blakes Lock is, in effect, the entrance lock for the Kennet and Avon Canal and would not be used by boats on the main Thames navigation.

10.3 Permanent mooring

There are currently 5,600 permanent berths available to the public in marinas and other commercial moorings. This represents capacity for 62 per cent of the 9,049 private-powered boats registered. (2004 figures)

The remaining boats are moored on private berths, for example at the end of gardens. These may account for up to a third of the permanent moorings on the river (between 2000 and 3000 berths). Because of the large number and individual nature of private moorings, it is difficult to give precise occupancy levels. However, there appears to be between 300 and 1000 more boats registered than the total number of moorings. Some or all of these will be trailable craft, not permanently moored on the river. Many commercial moorings are full and most report occupancy levels over 75 per cent.

The number of berths available on the river has fallen. There is little historic data, but comparisons with a 1993 survey suggest that there has been a decline of around 12 per cent to 18 per cent. Interestingly, annual private powered boat registrations have fallen 17 per cent over the same period.

Commercial operators perceive continued demand for moorings with several increasing the number of berths available at existing sites or planning to do so. New marinas have also been investigated at a number of locations. Clearly additional permanent moorings are necessary if more boats are attracted to the river.

They also need to be able to cater for different types of craft in comparison to earlier years. There has been significant growth in the number of narrow boats in recent years. Many existing moorings are unable to cater for this type of boat because of their length.

We will not normally allow the creation of new commercial sites for permanent mooring on the river itself or on its backwaters. This is to protect the character of the river and help prevent the loss of natural bank. Off-channel moorings are preferable because they do not obstruct the navigation and are safer when the river is in fast flow. Well designed new marinas can incorporate soft edges and undisturbed margins that can offer environmental benefit.

However, we would not like to lose the services provided by existing boatyards that are already located on the river itself. So we would consider applications to improve or extend moorings at such sites.

An individual resident is normally allowed to moor a boat on his or her river frontage, as long as it does not impede navigation. Any works to the bank or watercourse require the prior consent of the Environment Agency.

Policy 18 - permanent mooring

We will encourage the creation of new permanent moorings

Possible actions

- 1 promote creation of off-river basins with soft edge treatments
- 2 encourage improvement of existing moorings on the river supporting their extension where appropriate
- 3 examine capacity of reaches to accommodate more boats (with particular reference to lock use generated)

Adequate provision of moorings is the key requirement for boating. Existing moorings are at or near capacity.

10.4 Visitor moorings

Visitor moorings are, by far, the most requested area for improvement by boaters on the river.¹

The draft waterway standard is for 24 hour/overnight moorings to be provided within 30 minutes cruising. (See section 18.) This, however, is a rather crude measure. For example, there is greater demand than availability at many existing sites, particularly those providing access to towns and villages with pubs, restaurants, visitor attractions and other facilities. (The money that boaters spend can make an important contribution to the local economy.) Such sites often already have modified banks that facilitate the provision of mooring rings or bollards. It may often be possible to extend them to meet demand with minimal loss of natural habitat.

The increasing number of steel narrow boats has affected visitor moorings. Narrow boats are often longer than the average length of traditional craft on the river so reduce the number of boats able to moor. They also have larger water tanks and so occupy water points for longer. These issues need to be addressed.

The creation of new visitor moorings should be in accordance with the following guidance:

- When choosing sites to fill gaps in provision, we will avoid environmentally sensitive sites.
- There will be a presumption against choosing sites that require dredging, unless absolutely essential. Offshore jetties would be considered as an alternative.
- Unmodified banks will be left in a natural state, with mooring posts provided where possible to avoid damage from repeated use of mooring stakes.

Policy 19 - visitor mooring

We will provide visitor moorings to meet boaters' needs

Possible actions

- 1 provide sufficient value for money visitor and overnight moorings at all riverside towns and attractions
- 2 create moorings at new sites where required to meet the waterway standard
- 3 encourage boaters to welcome other boats to moor alongside
- 4 examine possibility of overnight moorings on part of, or adjacent to, lock landings

Better provision of visitor moorings is the most requested improvement by boaters.

There are more gaps in provision of visitor moorings than any other facility needed on the river. (see section 18.2 Facility gap analysis)

¹ Test Research (2003). Navigation licence survey, report for the Environment Agency (June 2003).

10.5 Passenger boats

For the past twenty years the number of passenger boats based on the non-tidal Thames has been consistently around 50. In addition, boats based on the tideway are often registered to operate on the river above Teddington. There are currently seven such boats, although there were as many as 15 in the mid 1990s.

The passenger boats have an average maximum carrying capacity of around 125 and are usually offered for party hire.

Passenger boat services are distributed along the river on the non-tidal Thames with a heavy concentration near Windsor and Kingston (when the boats from the tideway are included).

Policy 20 - passenger boats

We will support scheduled passenger boat services along the river

Possible actions

- 1 create landing stages at all major towns and attractions
- 2 resist loss/support provision of facilities like dry docks and boat repair yards
- 3 integrate timetable with bus and train links
- 4 if necessary give priority at locks to passenger boats for them to keep to a published timetable
- 5 advertise and promote services (including timetables on web sites)
- 6 build river bus stops with shelter and timetables
- 7 evaluate possible urban commuter services

Passenger trip boats provide low-cost access onto the river.

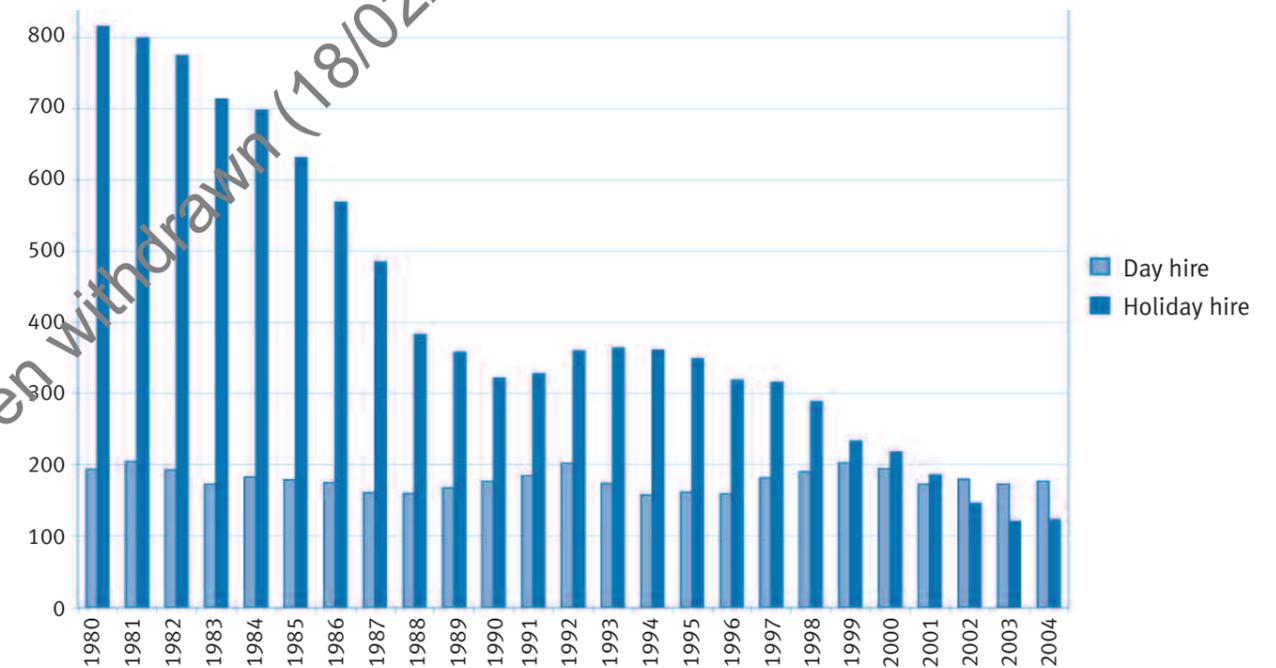


10.6 Hire boats (map 11)

Hire boats provide an accessible way to try boating. Daily hire, in particular, offers a relatively low-cost option.

Whilst there has been a dramatic decline in live-on-board holiday hire boats, the number of boats for daily hire has remained fairly constant.

Figure 6 Thames day and holiday hire boats 1980-2004



Policy 21 - hire boats

We will encourage a thriving, high quality hire boat sector on the river

Possible actions

- 1 provide value for money visitor and overnight moorings at all riverside towns and attractions
- 2 provide facilities for boaters (toilets, water points, refuse disposal etc.)
- 3 support quality grading scheme for boats on the river
- 4 work with trade bodies¹ to support the hire boat industry
- 5 market the river as a tourism destination
- 6 support the creation of new hire boat bases

Since 1980, the number of holiday hire boats registered on the Thames has fallen by 85 per cent, from 815 to 123 in 2004.

¹ For example, the Thames Boating Trades Association and the Thames Hire Cruiser Association.



This document is out of date and has been withdrawn (18/02/2016)

10.7 Freight transport

It is Government policy to promote alternatives to road transport for both passenger and freight movements. This is partly to reduce congestion and partly to reduce the environmental impact of road transport. Inland waterways have the potential to assist in both these objectives.

Most of the freight traffic carried on the inland waterways is high bulk, low value, and non-urgent. Examples include coal, fuel oil, aggregates, steel, timber, grain and waste. In addition to this traditional freight there is occasional transport of heavy or large loads.

Transport of waste has stimulated the most recent interest. The tidal River Thames is the only inland waterway in the country presently carrying significant quantities of waste materials. On average, 2,500 tonnes per day of municipal waste is loaded onto barges and taken to landfill sites in Essex. One tug and barge convoy journey is the equivalent of 40 to 50 lorry journeys.

Freight on Water: A New Perspective identifies freight traffic with most potential on a number of waterways.¹ For the tidal Thames, waste and recyclables, aggregates, construction materials, scrap and containerised traffic were listed. The potential for such traffic to continue onto the non-tidal river should be investigated. On the non-tidal Thames, aggregates (sand, gravel and stone) and domestic refuse are the most likely cargoes.

The Association of Inland Navigation Authorities commissioned a study, *Planning for Freight on Inland Waterways, Transport Energy Best Practice, April 2004*, on behalf of the Department for Transport and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, in consultation with The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

This recommends that full consideration for freight transport by water should be given in the Regional Spatial Strategy. (The report also provides a valuable, succinct explanation of the relevant planning guidance, and an outline of the Freight Facilities Grant (FFG). The grant is available from the Department for Transport to assist with the extra costs generally associated with moving freight by water by offsetting the capital costs of providing waterside freight handling facilities.)

The *Draft South East Plan* includes a specific policy (T12) on freight transport that encourages the movement of freight by water by safeguarding wharves, depots and other sites that are or could be critical in developing water transport. The South East England Regional Assembly is preparing a Regional Freight Strategy for the South East, and it is anticipated this will be completed in spring 2006.

Policy 22 - freight

We will encourage commercial transport of freight on the river

Possible actions

- 1 give full consideration to waterway freight opportunities in 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.

10.8 Residential boats

There is a distinction between:

- houseboats that have no means of propulsion and are therefore permanent residences and
- residential boats that can be navigated but are lived on for all or most of the year.

99 houseboats were registered on the non-tidal Thames in 2004, down from 146 in 1990. However the registration is for a category of boat so some will not be in use for permanent residence. (They could be summer homes or used as a clubhouse, for example.)

We do not know how many other boats are permanently lived on.

There is demand for moorings that have suitable facilities for residential boats. Some consider that boats may provide affordable housing. However,

the responsibilities of the navigation authority, local authority and landowner can be confused. To clarify this and ensure that those living on boats can do so legitimately and safely, the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) has established a Residential Boating Issues Group to produce guidance.

There is a long tradition of houseboats and residential boats on the Thames and people living on boats can provide security for moorings, boatyards and other premises. There is some concern that the potential demand for residential moorings in existing or new marinas would reduce space for recreational boat mooring. This could be resolved by limiting residential occupancy to a percentage of total marina capacity.

Policy 23 - residential boats

We will support the creation of new residential boat moorings in off-river basins with suitable facilities

Possible actions

- 1 consider the AINA guidance and adopt as appropriate



¹ Freight on Water - A New Perspective: The Report of the Freight Study Group: Defra, 2002

11.0 Landscape

11.1 Geology (map 12)

The source of the Thames is in the Jurassic Limestone of the Cotswold Hills. Below the Cotswolds, it flows on to an extensive area of Oxford Clay. This is the start of the wider, upper Thames flood plain. Between Somerford Keynes and Latton, the clay is covered with extensive deposits of limestone gravel. This mineral has been excavated over large areas, leaving the environmentally diverse Cotswold Water Park.

Below Cricklade, right through to Oxford, the river corridor continues on Oxford Clay. Below Oxford, the Thames flows over more clays before cutting through the chalk escarpment at the southwestern end of the Chiltern Hills at Goring Gap. It continues on chalk right through Reading to Maidenhead.

Below Maidenhead, at Dorney, the river moves on to the London Clay. From here on, the Thames continues flowing on this clay until it reaches the Tideway at Teddington.

11.2 Landscape character (map 13)

The landscape character of the River Thames changes to reflect both the underlying geology and man's influence over the centuries. The river flows through richly varied rural and urban settings encompassing farmland, built-up city centres, parks and royal palaces. In combination, this gives the river its unique appeal.

The river itself and the activities upon it vary in scale. The upper reaches are narrower and more winding. At 2.28 metres, the headroom of Osney Bridge in Oxford is by far the lowest on the river. This means that the larger motor cruisers common on the lower reaches of the river are unable to cruise above Oxford. This is an important factor in the character of the river above Oxford.

The Thames often exhibits crystal clear conditions. In shallower locations, the bed of the river, patterns of water currents, gravel runs, underwater plant communities and even fish, become part of the natural landscape.

Islands in the river, particularly those with large mature trees, are important landscape features which provide a dramatic visual impact. Without positive action, many of the islands may disappear through erosion, taking with them the wildlife they support and changing the local landscape.

11.3 Landscape designations (map 14)

For over a quarter of its length the river runs through designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty¹ (AONB).

The river joins the southern and southwestern edge of the Chilterns AONB and the eastern end of the North Wessex Downs AONB. Goring Gap cuts the chalk ridge, with the wooded reaches of the Thames linking the two AONBs at this point.

AONB management plans and landscape assessments will therefore have a significant impact on the river corridor.

The river is also the northern boundary of the Great Western Community Forest.² It is one of 12 community forests in England where local people and organisations are working together to create a better environment.

The project aims to create a rich mosaic of woodlands, green spaces and areas for wildlife over 140 square miles around Swindon and the surrounding towns and villages.

Case study 6



Upper River Thames Heritage Project

willows, water meadows and William Morris

The project is a partnership of public sector and charitable bodies, led by the Great Western Community Forest and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It will implement a variety of projects to bring a range of community, cultural, landscape and biodiversity benefits. It has identified a number of key attributes that contribute to the character of this part of the river. They include:

- the influence the upper River Thames had on the work of William Morris (whose home was at Kelmscot)
- the value of water meadows today and as historical landscape features
- the importance of riverside willow trees

- the role that the fortified line of the river played in the defence of Britain in World War II

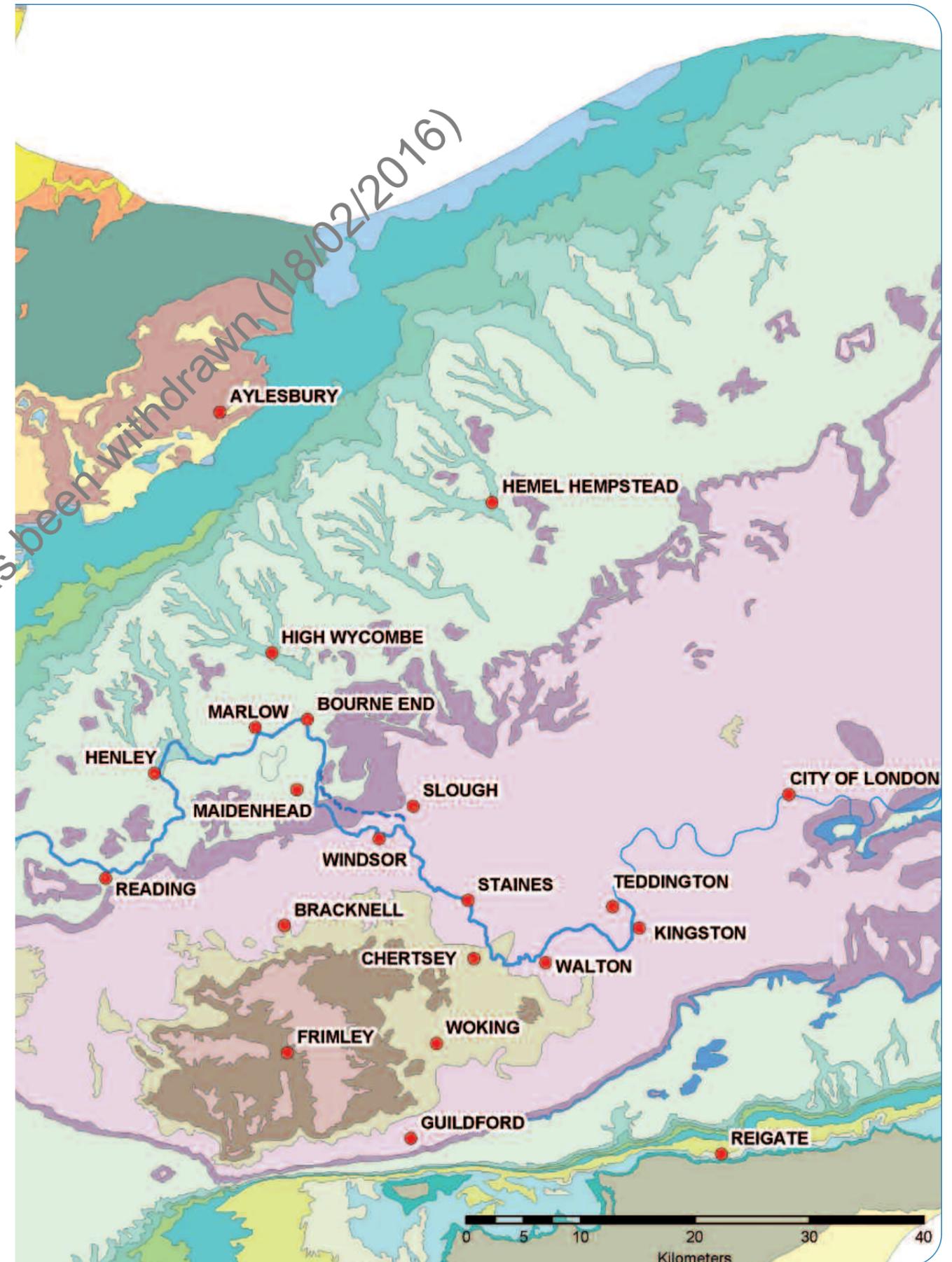
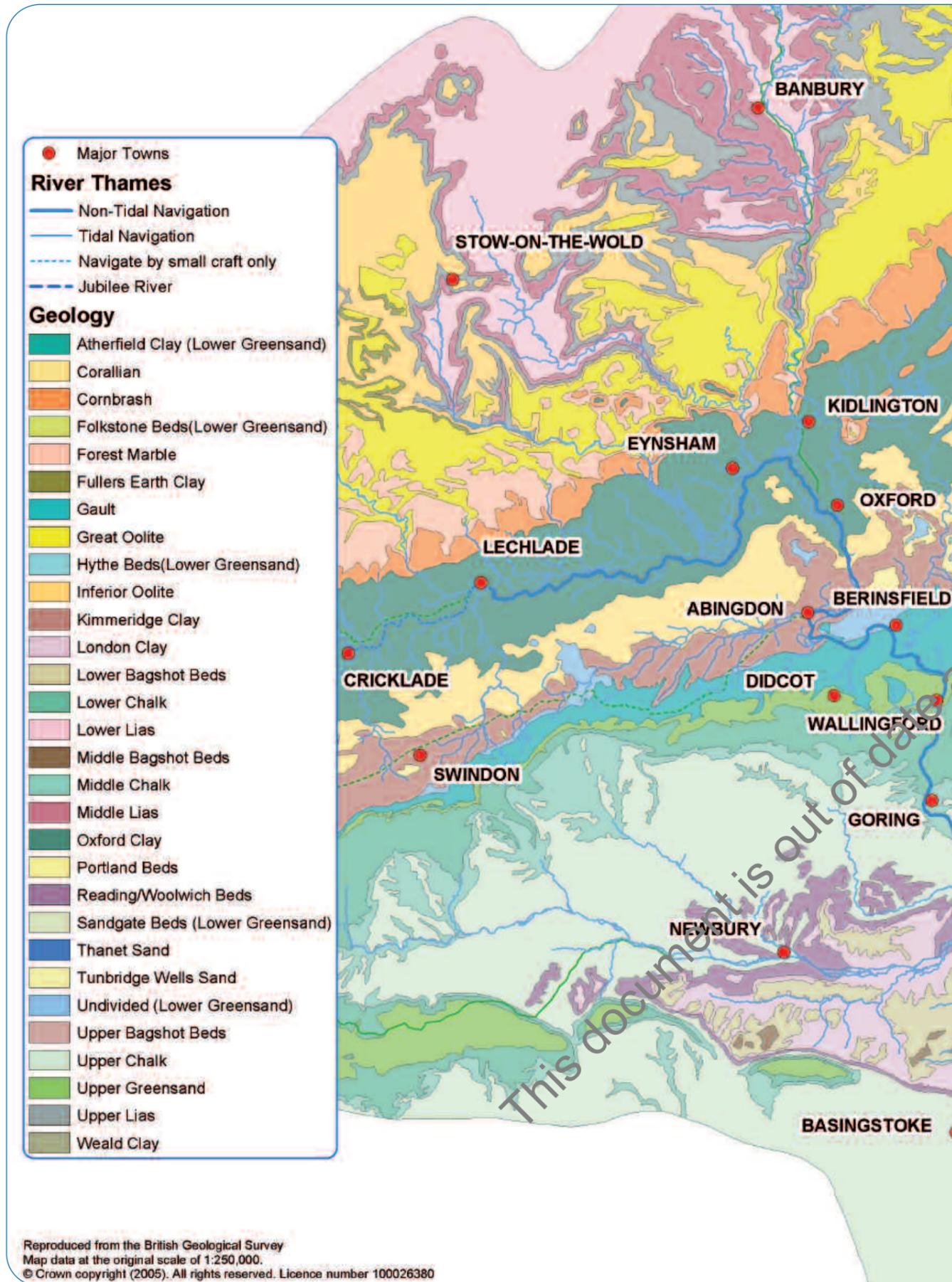
The project will ensure that local communities have the necessary skills to play an active role in the management, protection, enhancement and promotion of the upper River Thames landscape. It will promote inclusive access to an inspirational landscape for the enjoyment of local residents and tourists.

Relevance to plan policies:

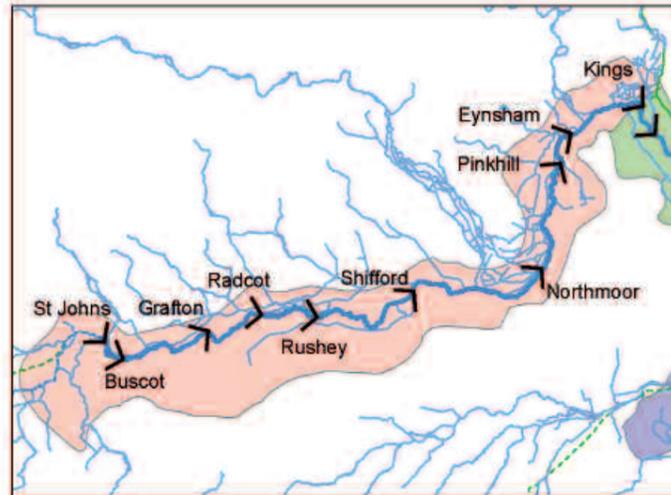
- environmental education
- landscape
- biodiversity
- partnership
- tourism

¹ Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) were created by the legislation of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. There are 41 AONBs in England and Wales.

² The Great Western Community Forest was founded in 1994 in part as a result of priorities for environmental protection and sustainable living, established in the Rio Earth Summit Agreement of 1992.



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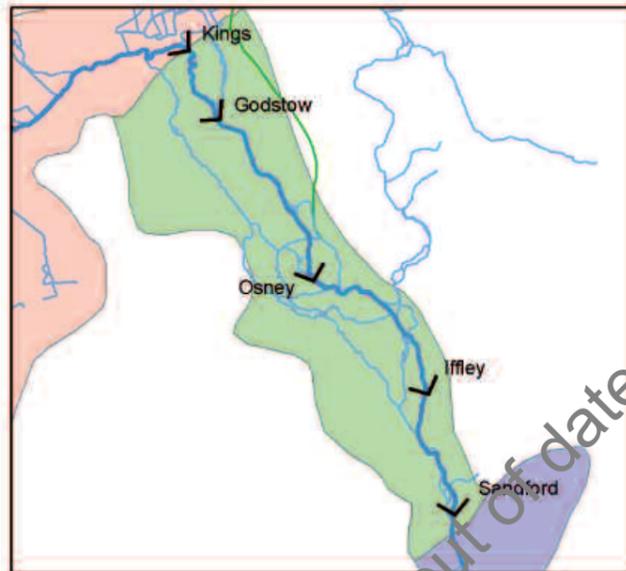
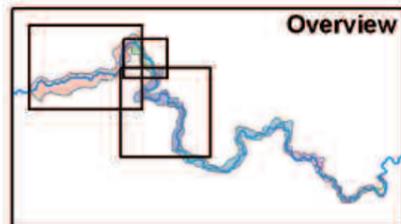


Zone 1 - Lechlade to Kings Lock

Broad low lying basin underlain by Oxford clay, with land rising north and west to the Cotswolds and views south to wooded ridges. Many sections have an attractive pastoral quality, whilst in others there is a featureless arable backcloth to the river scene. The river is a narrow meandering channel with natural edges, flowing through open low-lying farmland. Generally extensive views of a rural, working landscape. The river corridor varies from open and broad scale to small scale and intimate depending on the extent of the hedgerow, tree, woodland cover and field size. Poplar plantations and pollarded willows close to river are characteristic. Pasture is particularly important as a traditional river floodplain landscape. It is relatively rare within the Upper Thames catchment as a whole. Pylon routes traversing the valley are visually intrusive in the more open landscapes, and there is intrusive road noise from Oxford bypass. Settlements are generally set back on river terraces, with the lock and weir sites isolated within flood meadows. Public access is mostly at busy recreation sites with facilities, clustered at key bridge points (e.g. Ha'penny Bridge, Tadpole Bridge).

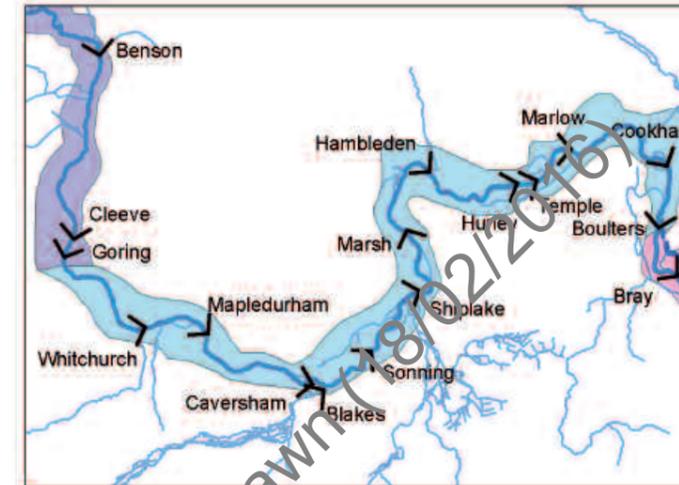
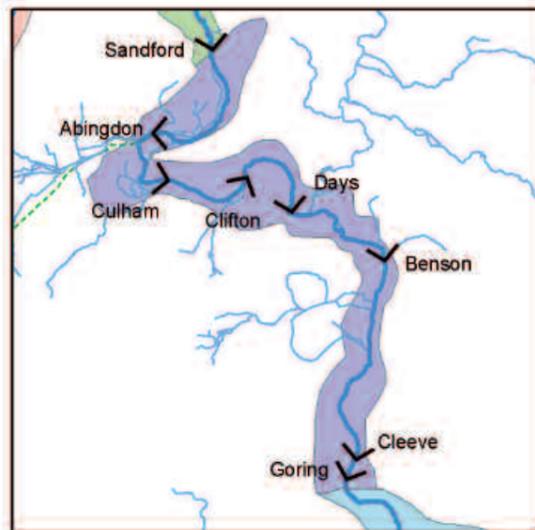
Zone 2 - Oxford to Sandford

An interesting stretch varying from rural character to historic cityscape. Open pasture flood meadow (important historically and ecologically) such as Port Meadow and Pixey Mead, and enclosed pasture between Binsey and Iffley with trees lining the riverbanks. Extensive views to Wytham Woods and Oxford City. Built up frontages of architectural interest between Osney and Folly Bridges, at the junction with Oxford Canal at Jericho, and the line of boathouses below Christ Church Meadow. The quality of the zone is spoiled by some pockets of disturbed landscape and poor urban fringe areas, as well as visual and noise intrusion from the Oxford Bypass. Established walks integrate lock, bridge and historic sites of interest.



Zone 3 - Sandford to Goring

Broad valley zone of Oxford Clay Valley with featureless open arable landscape as seen from the river, sometimes with narrow tracts of open pasture adjacent to the river's edge. Long views to the Chiltern and Sinodun hilltops, with wooded valley sides closing in towards the "Goring Gap" are positive features, whilst open views sometimes contain visually intrusive features (i.e. pylons, Didcot Power Station). Interesting built-up frontages at historic settlements (e.g. Abingdon and Wallingford), gardens and landscaped parkland of prestigious housing at Burcot, Benson, Moulsoford and Nuneham House. The few tree belts are confined to the river corridor and hedgerows are restricted to large field boundaries. Public access is sometimes restricted (as the Thames Path diverts along main roads for some stretches in this section).

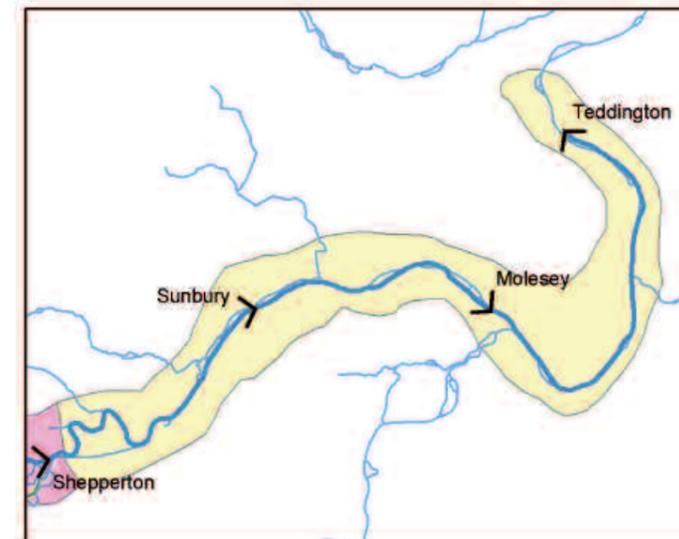
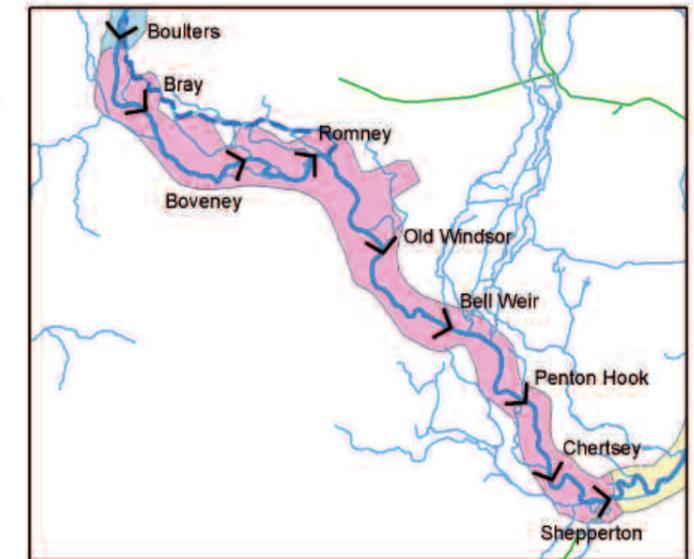


Zone 4 - Goring to Maidenhead

A zone of mixed character, largely tranquil and rural, but with urban and disturbed landscapes from gravel extraction such as at Reading. Post-war urban development has in some cases eroded the strong rural qualities of this section. Well-defined river corridor enclosed by the steep wooded scarp slopes of the Chilterns of intimate scale with riverside trees and long views to wooded hilltops. Important views of Thames winding through Goring Gap from the nearby National Trust owned hilltops of Lardon Chase and the Holes. Distinctive riverside villages and large historic buildings set in extensive picturesque landscaped grounds (for example Cliveden) are characteristic through the zone. Prominent garden frontages of high-value housing are a feature of Marlow, Cookham and Maidenhead. Intensive agriculture in some places has left narrow tracts of open pasture confined to the riverside and surrounded by open arable rising up valley sides. Built-up frontages of historic settlements at Reading, Henley and Marlow are characterised by local materials. Popular for informal water and riverside recreation, there is well-established public access linking key sites at locks and settlements.

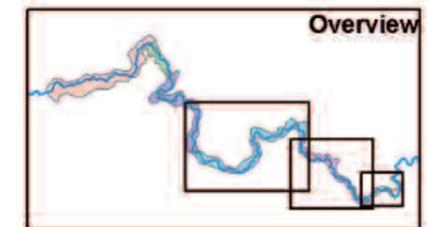
Zone 5 - Maidenhead to Walton

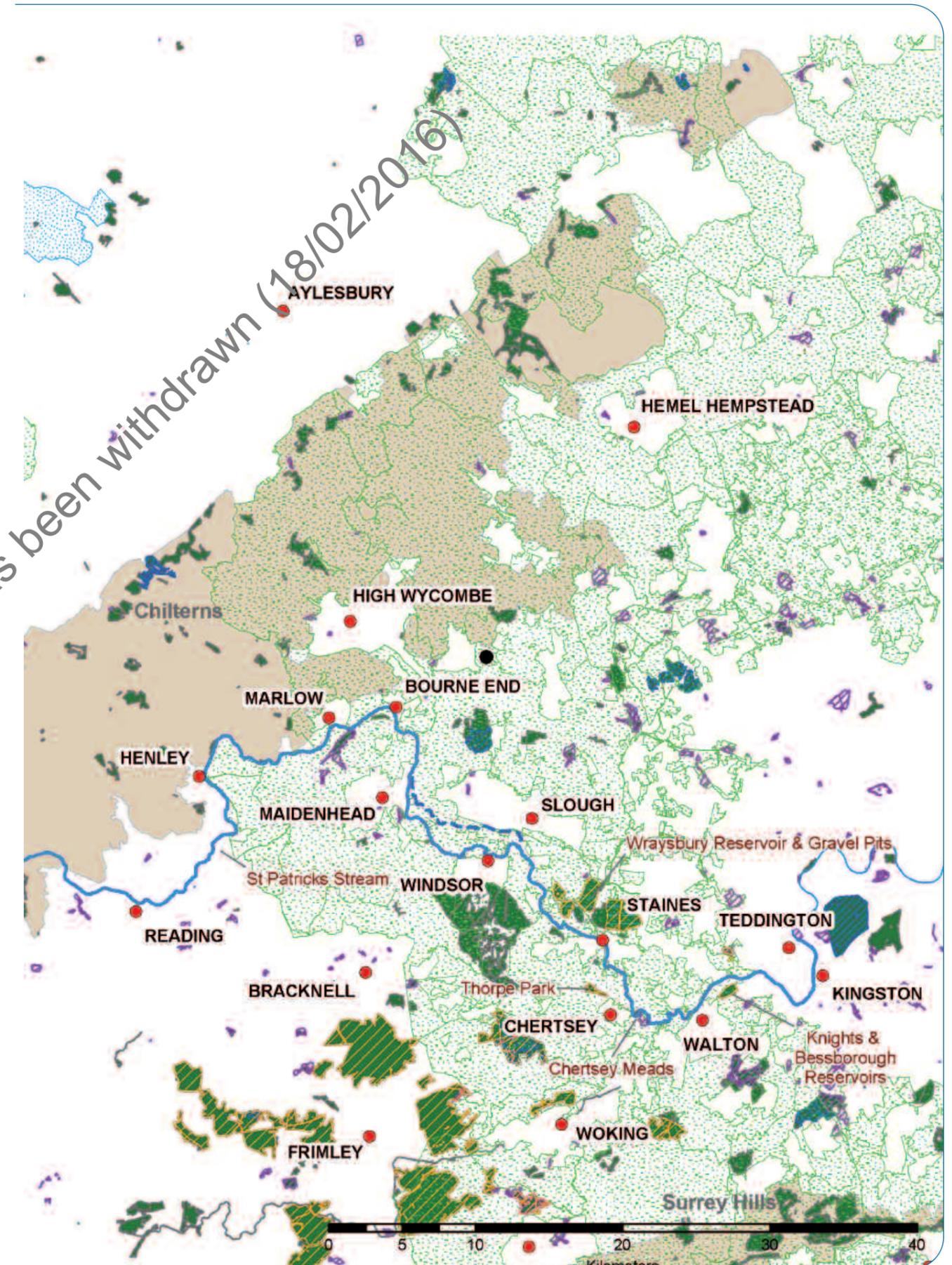
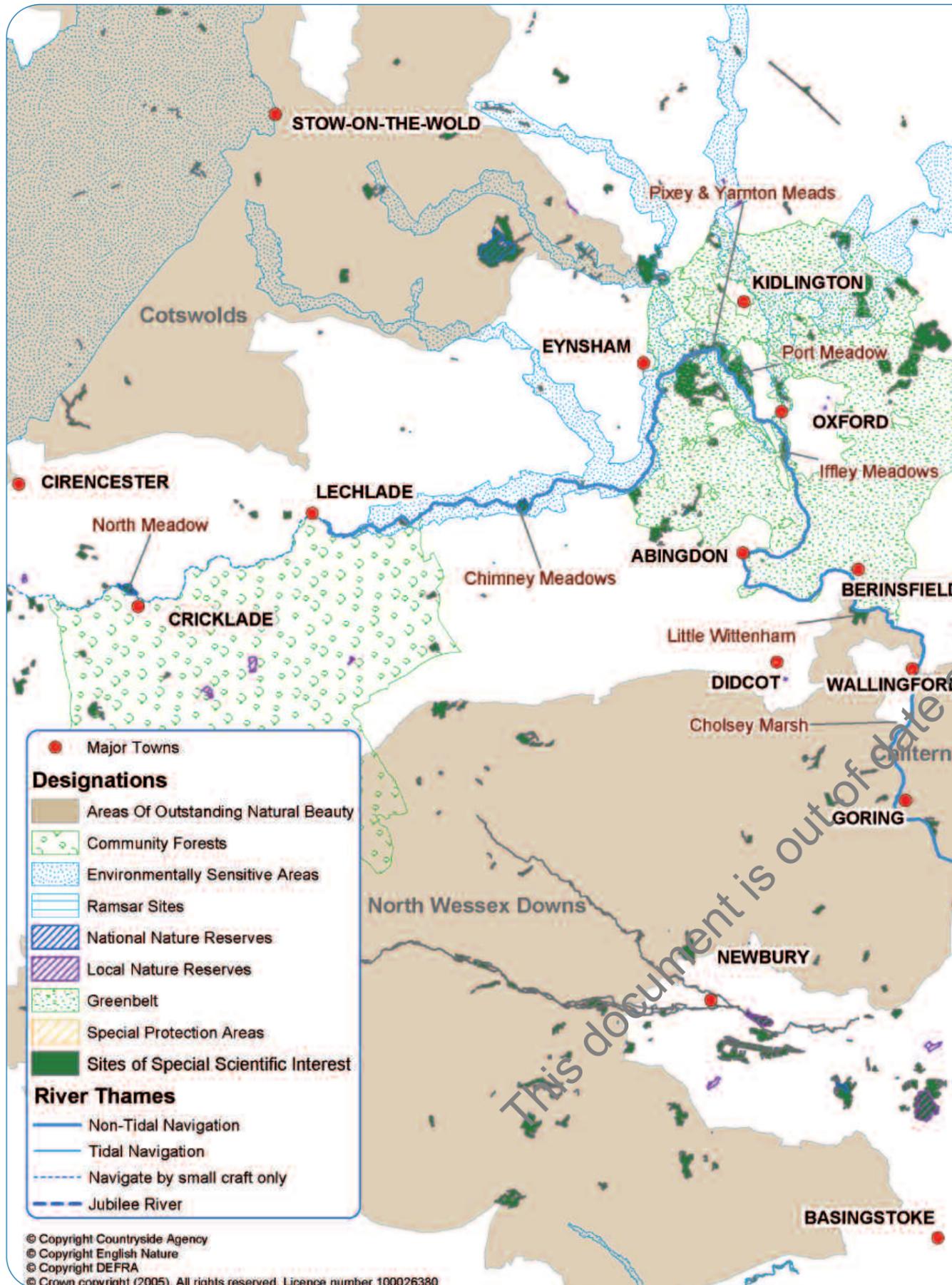
A transitional zone with a fragmented character. The expansive river flood plain landscape becomes more intensively developed and suburban, with a degraded character from gravel extraction, sewage treatment, busy transport corridors and urban development. There is 'backland' and residential ribbon development throughout the zone, with 'plotland' development at Penton Hook and Thames Mead. A more rural character survives with the historic, picturesque, open pasture landscapes of Runnymede, Laleham, Chertsey Meads, Windsor and Eton bordering the river. There are enclosed pasture pockets adjacent to the river at Ankerwycke Farm and Desborough Island and mature vegetation on islands and throughout riparian landscapes. Intensively farmed agricultural land, reservoirs and flooded gravel pits form important areas of open land between settlements. Open arable land forms extensive areas of denuded landscape in the Datchet area. Open views south to distant hills. Major traffic routes traverse the zone (M4, M25, and M3) creating visual and noise intrusion. Pylon routes are visually intrusive.



Zone 6 - Walton to Teddington

A broad, open river channel provides extensive views of the diverse riverside frontages in the urban landscape towards London. These include prestigious housing with distinctive boathouses, garden frontages of plotland development and boathouse moorings (as on Tagg's Island). Historic parkland at Hampton Court occupies a significant section of the river, and there is mature vegetation throughout the river corridor and on islands (aits). Urban 'backlands', gravel pits and enclosing banks to reservoirs encroach on the river scene at intervals. There are substantial lengths of hard edge to the riverbanks. High profile lock and weir sites provide 'set piece' views from public access points.





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Policy 24 - landscape

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) 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 views¹
- 9 reinstate grassland and water meadows and introduce or regenerate woodland and scrub habitats on marginal land¹
- 10 review, update and promote wide adoption of the *Thames Environment Design Handbook*
- 11 restore river infrastructure using traditional construction materials and appropriate designs as 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.

¹ Care should be taken to ensure that planting does not create a wind shadow on reaches used for sailing.

12.0 Built heritage (map 15)

The River Thames provides a richly textured heritage landscape, with one of the highest concentrations of historic buildings, parks and scheduled ancient monuments in the country.

The diversity and wealth of these built heritage sites are key to the unique landscape character of the Thames, providing powerful reminders of the work and way of life of earlier generations and providing places of enjoyment for local people and visitors today.

The scheduled ancient monuments range in scale from Windsor Castle and Hampton Court Palace to Godstow Abbey and Halfpenny Bridge. Many other bridges over the non-tidal river are scheduled, including those at Radcot, Wallingford, Abingdon and Chertsey. Major historic parks and gardens include Cliveden and Taplow Court.

The river itself also provides an unparalleled collection of built river heritage, from the remains of the 1630's stone pound lock at Iffley Lock to many locks, weirs, and lock houses that remain in use today.

Policy 25 - heritage

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

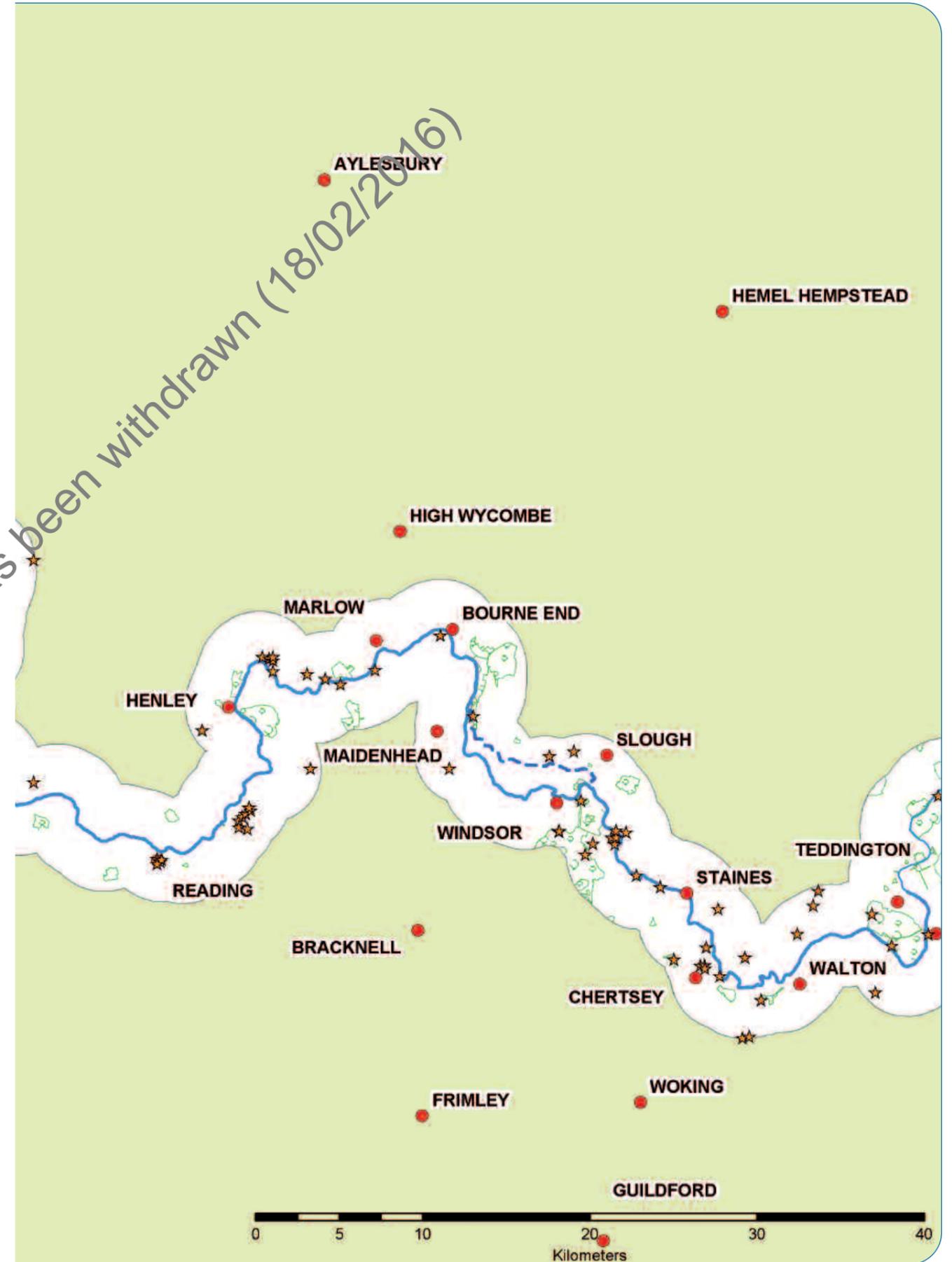
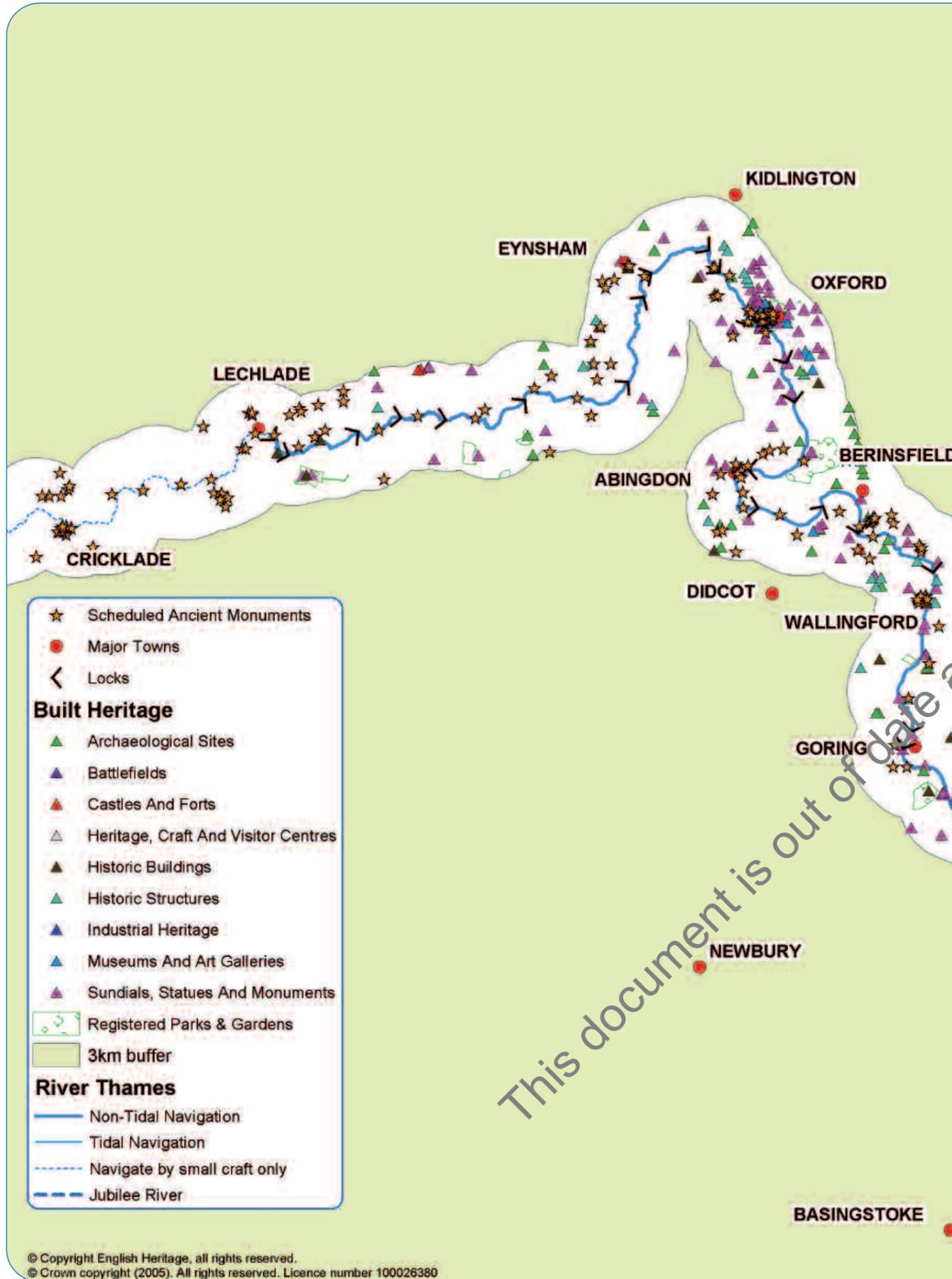
Possible actions

- 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.



¹ Scheduled Ancient Monuments are sites of national importance designated by English Heritage as particularly significant and vulnerable to change. English Heritage also maintains a register of parks and gardens of particular historic interest.



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13.0 Water quality and resources

13.1 Water quality

Both the chemical and biological water quality of the Thames have improved dramatically over the last 30 years. Generally, the Thames and its tributaries are graded as A or B (very good or good), although two sites have been classified as grade C (fair). Water quality in the Thames is influenced by discharges from sewage works, agricultural run-off, urban run-off and accidental or deliberate pollution. The predicted need for new housing in the region is likely to require significant investment to provide additional capacity for sewage treatment to ensure that improvements in water quality are continued. Consideration should be given to the need for bacteriological monitoring in lengths where water contact sport is popular.

13.2 Water resource management

The Environment Agency aims to manage water resources sustainably, recognising the needs of abstractors, river users and the environment.

Using fisheries and angling survey data, physical river corridor surveys, biological sampling and the experienced judgement of its staff, the Environment Agency has assessed how the environment is affected by low river flows.¹

Map 17 on page 90 shows how sensitive different reaches of the river are to low flows on a scale from A to E. These ratings give a good indication of the ecological and fishery value of the river (A having the most value and E the lowest). The lower reaches of the Thames have less natural banks and greater water abstraction. As a result, less sensitive coarse species of fish such as roach and perch predominate.

Thames Water, who are responsible for meeting future demands for water in London and the Thames Valley, predict that current water resources will be insufficient to support increased demand arising from:

- population growth (a predicted 1 million extra in the Thames Water Region by 2026)
- climate change (hotter and drier summers)

Thames Water is considering the construction of a new reservoir in the upper Thames valley (with a possible phased construction starting in 2010 with completion by 2019). This would store water taken from the Thames in periods of high flow to be released back into the river in drier periods for re-abstraction further downstream to support the lower Thames reservoirs. This could be of benefit in sustaining boating and wetland habitats against the threat posed by low river flows.

13.3 Flood risk management (map 16)

Flood risk management is an important part of the Environment Agency's business. Awareness of this element of waterway use is essential in producing sustainable and fully-integrated policies for the River Thames.

The capital value of assets in the Environment Agency's Thames Region that could be flooded by rivers amounts to approximately £28.9 billion. (Out of a total value of £81.7 billion at similar risk in the whole of England and Wales.)² There are approximately 272,000 properties within the floodplain of Thames Region. Of these, 144,900 are within the Thames basin above Teddington.

Within the Thames Basin, there are concentrations of high flood risk in major towns (namely Reading, Oxford and Swindon), but these tend to be separated by large areas of rural floodplain where there are comparatively few properties at risk.

Widespread floods tend to occur when there is heavy and prolonged rainfall when the catchment is either frozen or saturated. However, because of the size of the Thames catchment, storms may affect only part of the region and flooding is more localised as a result.

Localised storms can also lead to flooding, particularly in urban areas, which have a higher level of response to rainfall and are generally at greater risk from surface water and sewer flooding.

Case study 7



The Jubilee River

created by man with nature in mind

The Jubilee River is a flood relief channel designed to protect 5,500 homes at risk in Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton. Flood flows are put into the channel at Taplow Weir when water in the adjoining River Thames approaches a critical level.

It is 11.6 kilometres long and opened in 2002 after five years of major engineering and landscaping works. These included taking the channel under the M4 motorway, the A4 and the main western railway lines.

Extensive new habitats have been created along the length of the new river. Dorney Wetlands provides a breeding and feeding habitat for many birds, such as reed bunting, little grebe, great crested grebe, skylark and meadow pipits. In winter, large flocks of wintering birds such as golden plover and lapwing visit. The Jubilee River is being developed as a fishery. It provides a spawning and nursery area that will also help fish stocks in the River Thames.

Designated areas are provided for anglers, with a length leased to the Thames Valley Angling Association. Day tickets are available from local tackle shops. There are platforms for anglers using wheelchairs immediately adjacent to the car park at Dorney.

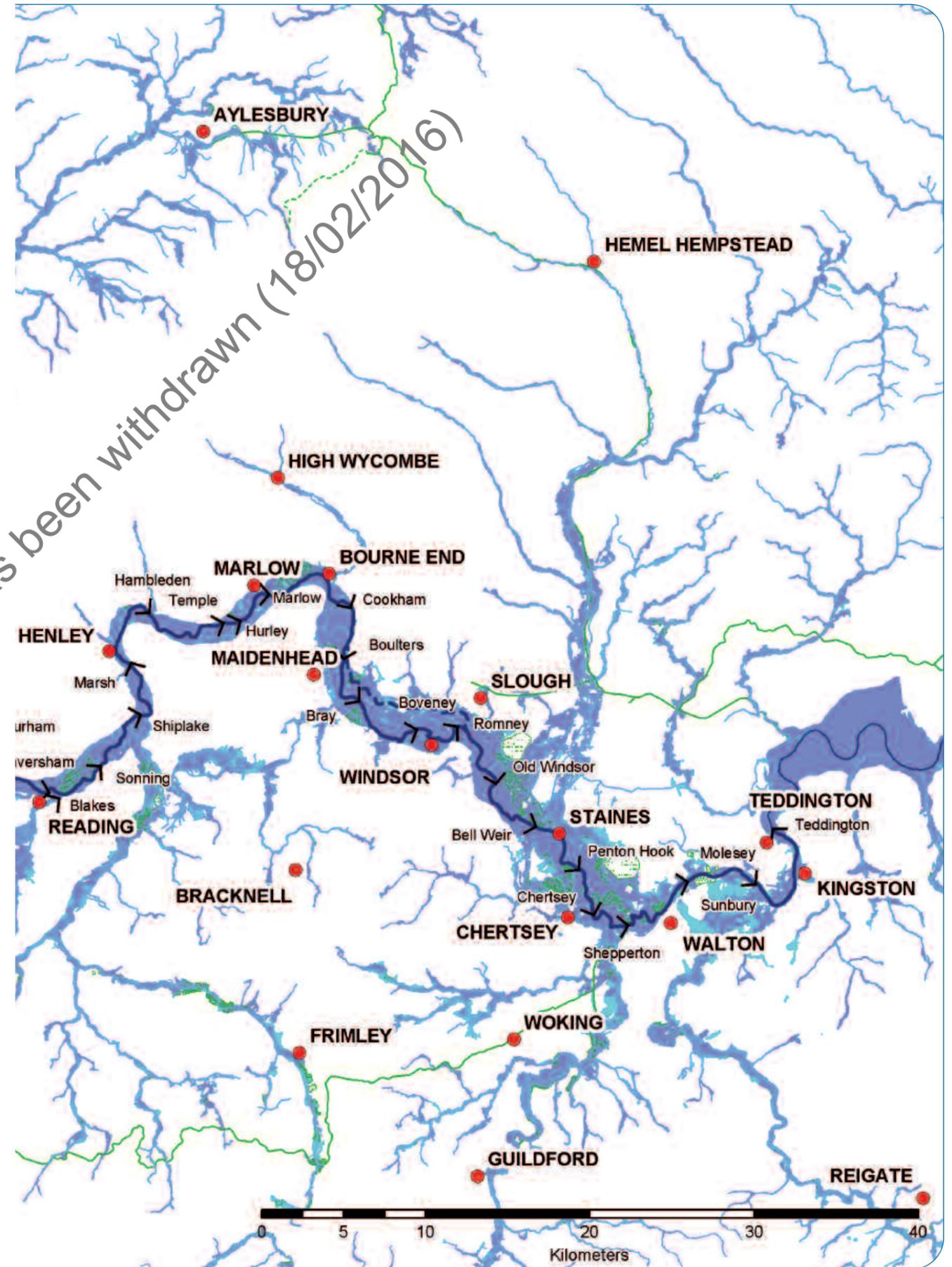
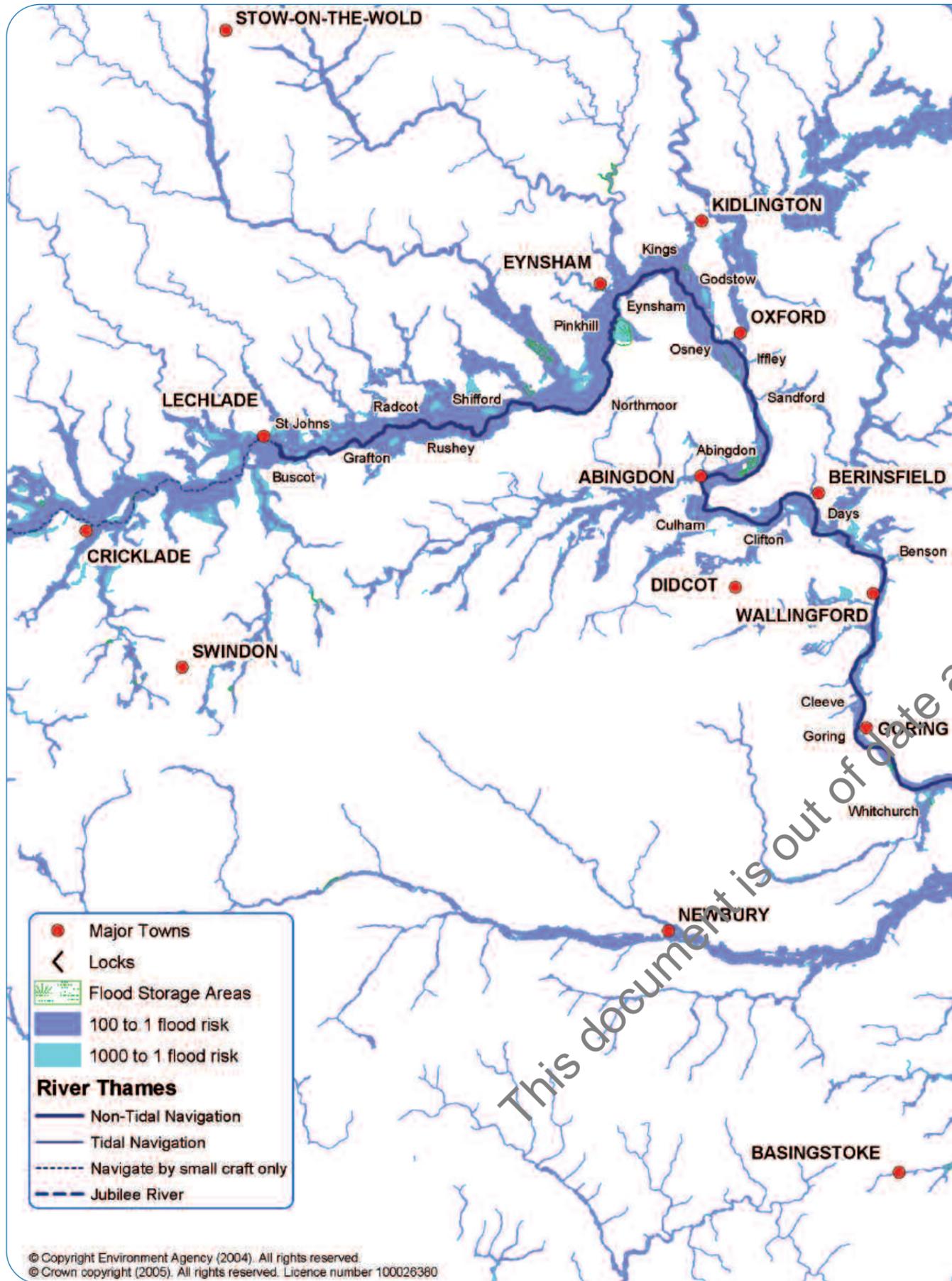
The single-track pathway along the river is designed for wheelchair users, walkers and cyclists on a shared basis. It is part of route 61 of the National Cycle Network. Small unpowered boats can be used on the river.

Relevance to plan policies:

- enhanced biodiversity and fisheries quality
- access for people with disabilities
- provision of facilities for active recreation
- creation of open space

¹ Thames Corridor Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS) Technical Document, Environment Agency November 2003

² National Appraisal of Assets at Risk from Flooding and Coastal Erosion. Halcrow Group Ltd, 2001



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14.0 Climate change

Global warming is likely to have an increasing effect upon our climate. The severity will depend on the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere from now on, and how the climate system responds.

However, we are likely to experience:

- more frequent and dangerous extreme weather events
- heavier winter rainfall
- warmer summers.

Warmer, drier and sunnier summers could benefit domestic summer tourism. But they could also result in low river flows hampering recreation and damaging wetlands and aquatic habitats. A reduction in dilution of effluents could cause poor water quality and increase the likelihood of harmful algal blooms.¹

Hotter weather will lead to increased importance of green spaces as people seek open-air recreation. Heavier rainfall would increase the risk of flooding and make dangerously strong stream conditions more frequent.

The South East Regional Plan sets out a framework for addressing climate change. It suggests that mitigation, through reducing greenhouse gas emissions, will primarily be addressed through greater resource efficiency. One measure is of particular relevance to this plan:²

‘Reducing the need to travel and ensuring good accessibility to public and other sustainable modes of transport.’

If this plan is successful in attracting greater use of the Thames, it could contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. This would be the case if recreation and tourism in the Thames corridor was an alternative to overseas travel or longer trips, for example to the coast.

Policy 26 - climate change

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 a significant impact on river levels.

15.0 Biodiversity and fisheries (map 14 and map 17)

15.1 Biodiversity

The non-tidal Thames, particularly in its lower reaches, is heavily modified and impounded by weirs. Nonetheless, the river and its immediate corridor include a diverse range of habitats including meadows, wetlands and reed beds that contain rare and protected species. These include sites designated for international and national importance, as well as areas afforded a regional or local status.

The presence of locks and weirs protect some important sites that are water flow and/or level dependent. The richest areas are the shallow margins where plants like the yellow water lily and the common reed are established and provide habitats for invertebrates, fish and birds.

The river is a vital corridor for wildlife, linking fragmented habitats, and providing a route for migration.

The upper Thames flood plain supports a number of key habitats. These include a number of unimproved and semi-improved meadows with a high variety of plant species, the most outstanding of which are North Meadow, Cricklade (Wiltshire) and Chimney Meadows (Oxfordshire). Both are designated National Nature Reserves.¹

North Meadow, is a traditionally managed hay meadow, internationally important for its many different plants, including the largest British population of snake's head fritillaries, a flower which is now mainly restricted to a small number of unimproved flood meadows.

Chimney Meadow is one of the largest surviving areas of unimproved grassland in the Thames valley. The grassland is very species-rich, with large populations of characteristic plants such as adder's tongue fern, pepper saxifrage and meadow rue. The meadows are important for waders, including curlew, snipe and redshank.

The river itself provides a habitat for a range of plants and animals, including priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAPS). These include the otter (now spreading from the upper part of the catchment), water vole (restricted to very few sites on the main Thames), and depressed river mussel. The birdlife of the Thames is a more accessible component of its wildlife, including the mute swan and moorhen, the kingfisher, great crested grebe, reed warblers and sedge warblers, which nest in marginal vegetation.

In addition, the upper Thames and its Cotswold tributaries support rare species such as dippers and the river water-dropwort.



¹ The most common and visible are the cyanobacteria (often referred to as blue-green algae) that form a toxic scum on the surface of the water.

² Policy CC2: Climate Change, Draft South East Regional Plan, South East England Regional Assembly, July 2005

¹ There are 200 National Nature Reserves in England. Each represents a nationally important example of a particular habitat. They are either owned or controlled by English Nature or held by approved bodies such as Wildlife Trusts.

Further downstream, the flood plain contains a number of internationally important herb-rich meadows at Oxford such as Iffley Meadows, Pixey Mead and Yarnton Mead. In addition, Port Meadow, an extensive area of pasture on the edge of Oxford, is the last remaining British site for the rare creeping marshwort plant. The reach of the Thames in the vicinity of Oxford is a particularly important length ecologically, because of the flow-dependent watercourses fed from the Thames. There are a number of other important flow-sensitive sites elsewhere, such as St. Patrick's Stream and Sunbury Creek. Wetland creation schemes have been undertaken adjacent to the Thames at a number of sites, including at Iffley, near Oxford, and Cholsey Marsh, downstream from Wallingford.



From Wargrave to Maidenhead, the river corridor is well-defined by wooded scarp slopes, which are rich in woodland species (such as at Bisham Woods). In areas of wet woodland adjacent to these reaches, the nationally rare summer snowflake (Loddon Lily) is found. Further downstream, the river corridor broadens and contains traces of old flood plain meadows such as Chertsey Meads. This part of the river is also characterised by a large number of adjacent water bodies. Gravel pits such as Wraysbury and Thorpe Park, and Knights & Bessborough Reservoirs are important sites for wintering wildfowl, including gadwall, shoveller, golden-eye and smew.



Most of these sites are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In total, there are 58 within three kilometres of the river. Some, like Oxford Meadows, are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). These are the highest priority sites considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level that are designated for strict protection by the EC Habitats Directive.

Backwaters (such as those in the Little Wittenham SSSI)¹ often provide habitats for damselflies and dragonflies. The Thames valley is important for the club-tailed dragonfly and white-legged damselfly. Little Wittenham's ponds also support the UK's largest breeding population of great crested newt.

River gravels are important to habitats upon which many protected birds, invertebrates,

plant communities and fish depend. The Environment Agency will not normally permit removal of gravel from the river. Where it is essential to remove gravel shoals to maintain navigable depths, we will seek to re-deploy the gravel elsewhere within the catchment for the benefit of fisheries and wildlife.

15.2 Fisheries

From the source of the River Thames to Teddington Lock, a wide range of aquatic habitats supports over 25 species of fish. Over the last two decades, improvements in water quality in the river have contributed to an increase in fish abundance.

Despite these improvements, certain native fish species are still suffering from loss of habitat caused by the historical river management practices of dredging and impoundment, as well as possible impacts from water abstractions. Fish such as barbel, trout, dace, bullhead, and gudgeon rely upon clean gravel, shallow water and oxygenated, flowing water to spawn successfully. In many reaches, these conditions are only found in weir pools, weir streams, side channels, some tributaries or natural gravel shoals. Therefore it is important to protect, maintain and wherever possible, enhance or restore them.

Similarly, fish such as roach, bleak, pike, bream, tench and carp require weedy areas of the river to spawn. These often include backwaters, millstreams, marinas and channel margins.

These same areas provide a refuge for juvenile fish during high winter flows, when the force of the river would otherwise wash them downstream.

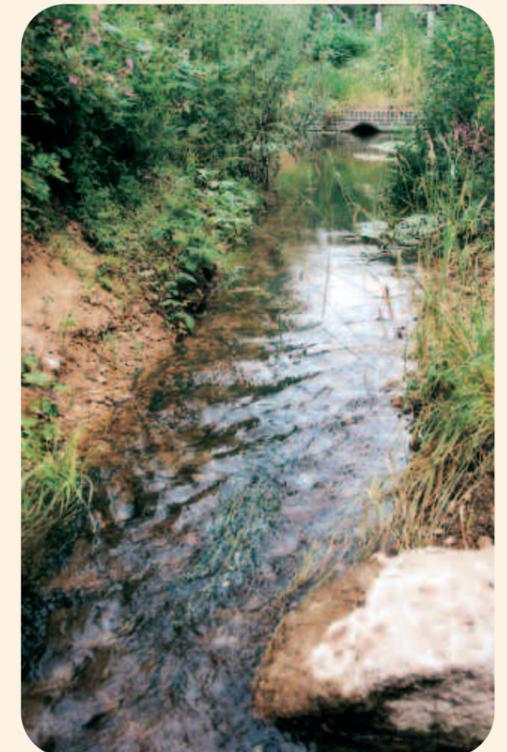
Almost all species of fish in the Thames require the presence of cover in the river channel at one or more of their life-stages. Weed, tree branches, roots and man-made structures can offer protection from predation and can also harbour food supplies such as invertebrates and zooplankton.

The numerous impounding structures on the river pose major obstructions to upstream fish movement. Between 1986 and 2000 fish passes were installed at most of the Lower Thames weir sites, but with few exceptions, these were aimed at providing passage to a single species, the salmon. It has since been accepted that the majority of Thames fish species have significant migratory requirements. There is a need, therefore, to reduce the impact of these barriers to fish movement through the provision of natural by-pass channels and appropriate fishways.

Case study 8

Penton Hook spawning channel

The Environment Agency has created a new channel near the western edge of the island at Penton Hook lock that provides a passage for fish around the existing weir. The channel is also designed to provide conditions for fish to spawn and to support the growth of newly hatched fish.



Relevance to plan policies:

- enhances sustainability of fish stocks by improving access to spawning areas and by restoring habitats lost as result of navigation and flood defence operations
- restores the natural river environment aiding the diversity of flora and fauna
- enhances the landscape value of the site

¹ These are sites designated by English Nature that are of particular conservation interest because of the wildlife they support or because of the geological features that are found there.

The lower reaches of the Thames are the most heavily impacted by physical modification and abstraction and therefore, less sensitive coarse species such as roach and perch predominate.

Detailed proposals to improve fisheries are developed through Fishery Action Plans. They are a partnership between the Environment Agency and angling, fisheries and conservation interest

groups, including the Thames Fishery Consultative Council.

There is a special Salmon Action Plan for the river, building upon the success of the recent introduction of improved fish passes that encourage adult salmon to return to their spawning areas in the River Kennet.

Policy 27- biodiversity and fisheries

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

Possible actions

- 1 minimise the potentially damaging developments to biodiversity interests and wherever possible, maximise opportunities for habitat enhancement and creation
- 2 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
- 3 conserve and enhance designated sites such as Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and County Wildlife Sites
- 4 conserve and enhance key features of particular wildlife importance including flood meadows, backwaters, islands, natural banks, weir streams and pools
- 5 raise awareness amongst users of the importance of such features and encourage behaviour that would avoid damage to them
- 6 identify key areas for habitat protection and enhancement and manage to promote biodiversity
- 7 use soft bank protection, with hard edge works introduced only when essential and that incorporate compensation for loss of natural habitat when possible
- 8 where possible, introduce bank enhancement to existing lengths with predominantly hard-edge treatments
- 9 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
- 10 protect and restore the natural river environment, including valuable in-stream features such as gravel shoals, emergent reed beds and islands
- 11 protect underwater plant and fish communities
- 12 balance the recreation needs with the need to protect key water-dependent sites when managing water levels
- 13 ensure that works and activities do not result in the transfer and colonisation of invasive non-native plant and animal species
- 14 raise wider awareness of the threat of invasive non-native plants and animals to the river's natural environment and character
- 15 produce site management plans, which include biodiversity and fisheries considerations, for every lock

Case study 9



Restoration of natural riverbank at Hampton Court Palace

The Environment Agency introduced new soft-edge treatments to recreate natural habitats opposite Hampton Court.

Two sections of old concrete walling were removed and the underlying earth smoothed back to form a gentle slope with a shallow margin.

New beaches have been created by bringing in river gravel. The beaches and lengths of earth bank were stabilised with willow. New plants were introduced to the river margin using coir fibre rolls to help them get established without being washed away.

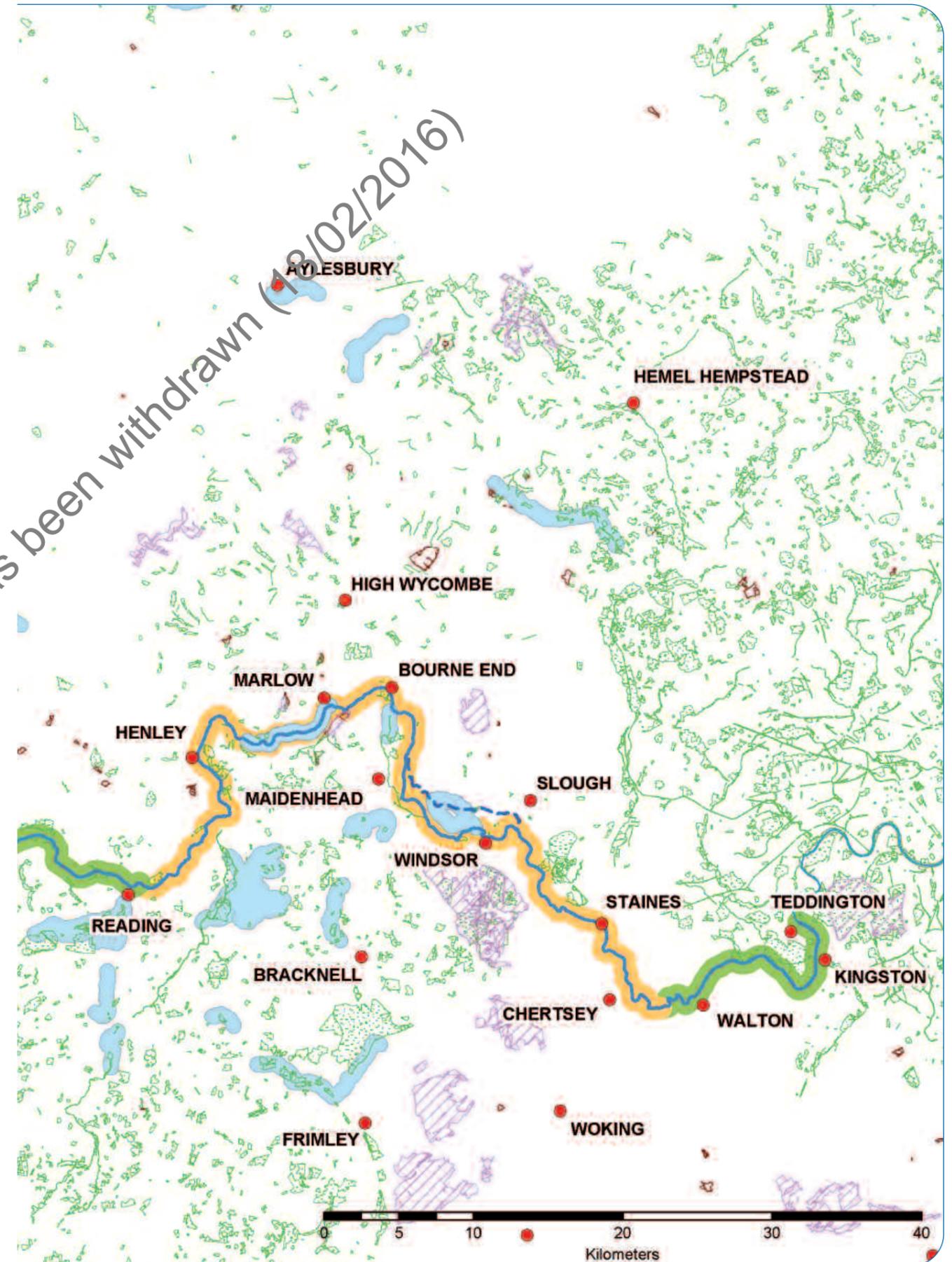
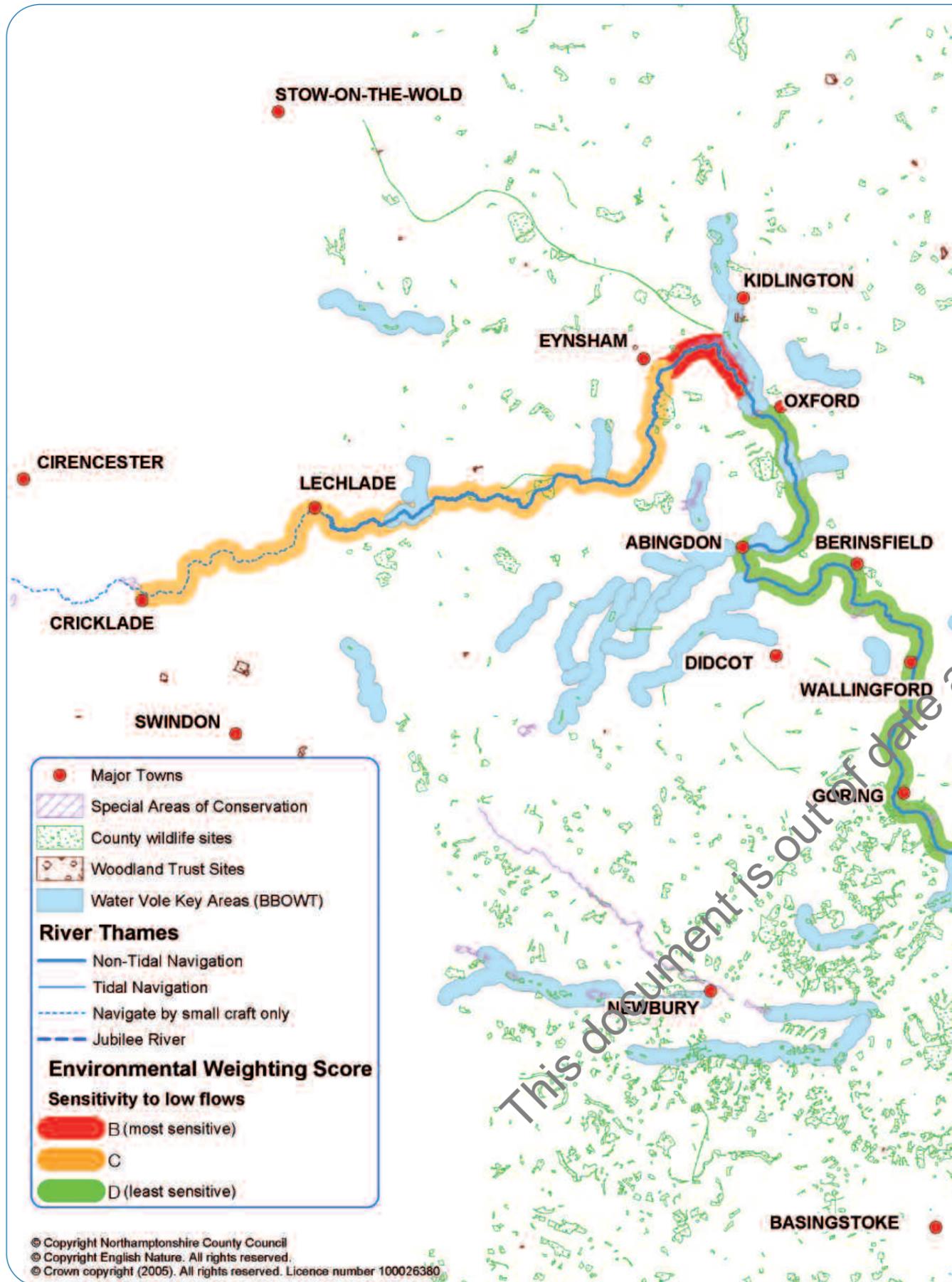
Relevance to plan policies:

- enhanced biodiversity and fisheries quality
- restoration of natural habitats including gravel shoals
- bank enhancement to previously hard-edge treatment

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.

There is a direct link between fisheries quality and the value of the Thames for angling.

This document is out of date and has been withdrawn (18/02/2016)



This document is out of date and has been withdrawn (18/02/2016)

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.

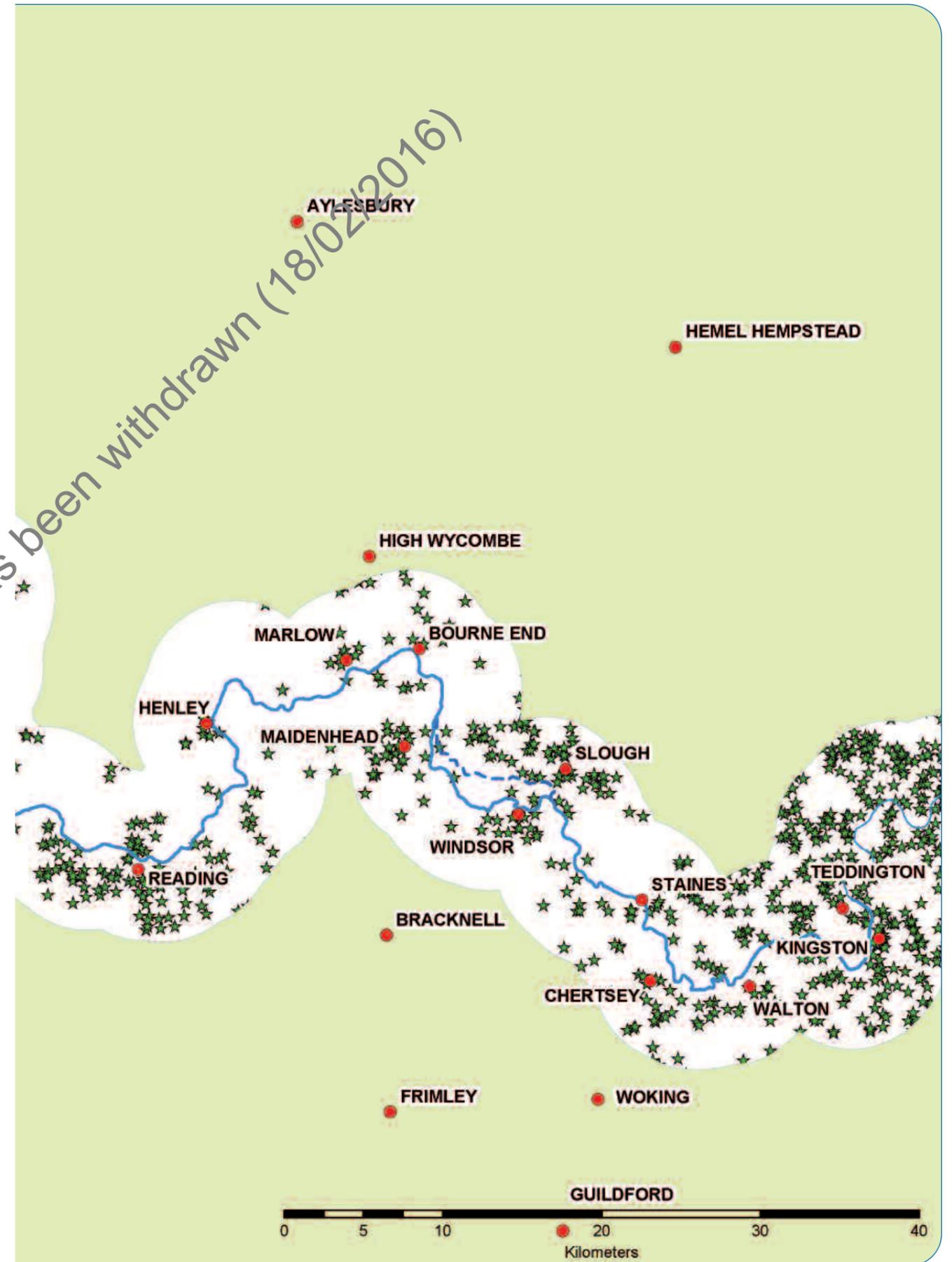
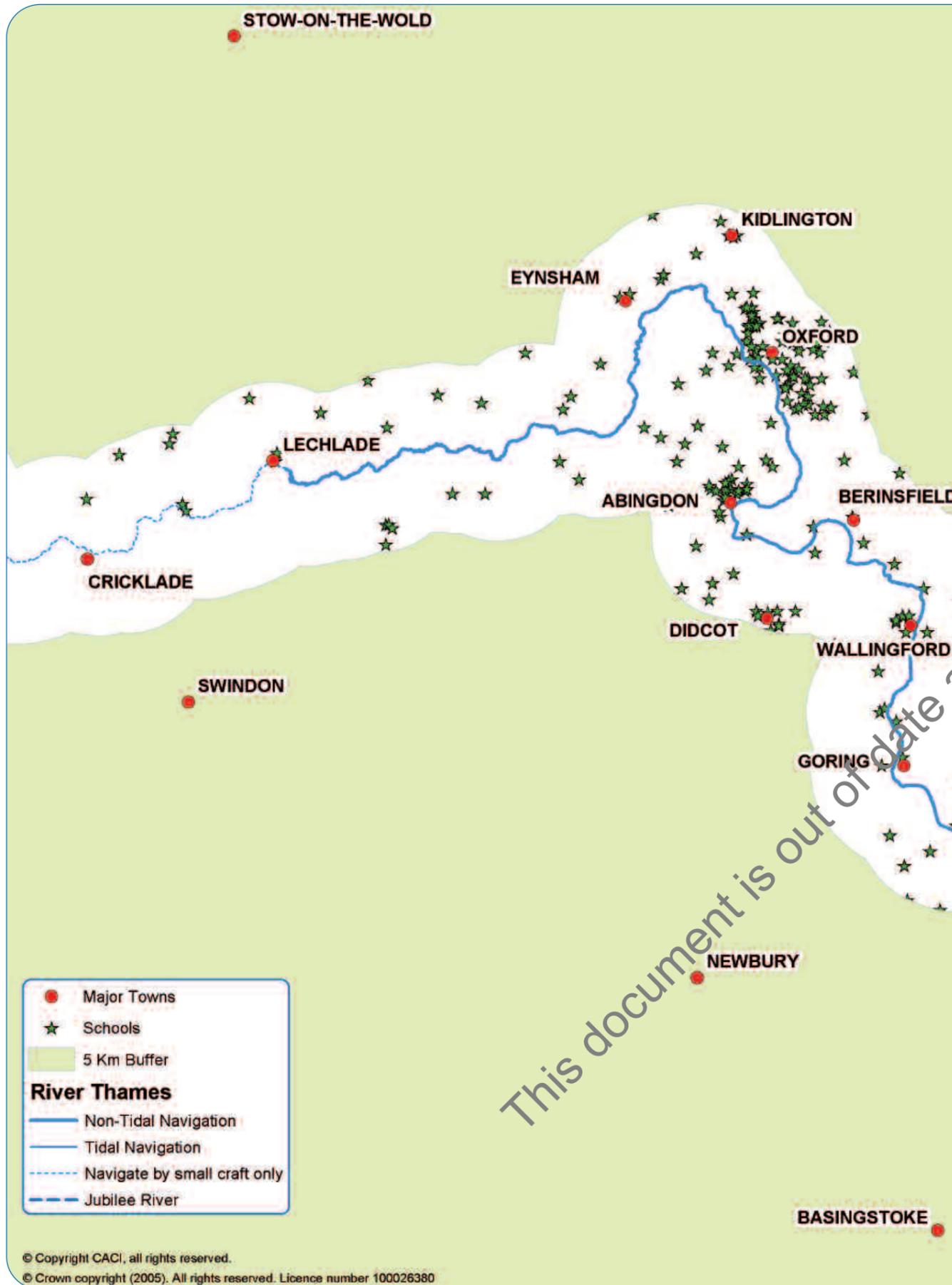
The museum runs a programme of out-of-school activities for young people and

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.

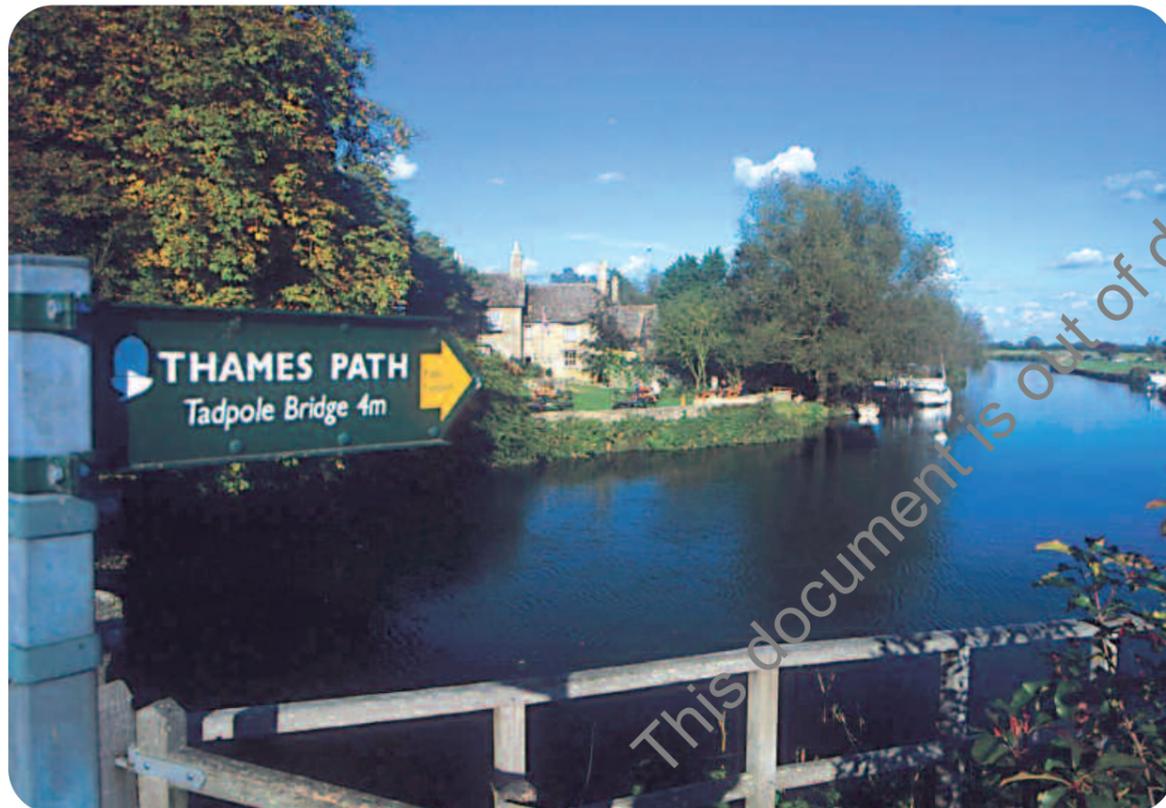
The standards relating to public rights of way next to the river broadly follow the *Quality Standards for National Trails in England* published by the Countryside Agency.

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

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

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

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 air draft.
- 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.

This document is out of date and has been withdrawn (18/02/2016)

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.



This document is out of date and has been withdrawn (18/02/2016)

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

This document is out of date and has been withdrawn (18/02/2016)

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 Group
- 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.

This document is out of date and has been withdrawn (18/02/2016)

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 Project	✓
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	

This document is out of date and has been withdrawn (15/09/16)

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

This document is out of date and has been withdrawn (16/02/2016)

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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