



River Thames Alliance

The New River Thames
Waterways Plan
2015 - 2021

Consultation with
River Thames Alliance members

Please read this consultative document and respond to the consultation.

The River Thames Waterways plan 2015-2021 will be drafted on the basis of the responses from RTA members. The new Waterways Plan will have considerable influence on the way in which the River Thames and its corridor are developed during the next 5 years.

INTRODUCTION

The New River Thames Waterways Plan Consultation with River Thames Alliance members

Members of the River Thames Alliance (RTA) have decided that our most important task in the coming year is to develop a new River Thames Waterways Plan for the period to 2021. The Waterways Plan, when decided and agreed will determine the future policy of RTA and give RTA the necessary authority to lobby and influence the relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies in the interests of RTA members. The Plan will also form a good basis for effective cooperation between RTA members on matters of common concern.

To ensure that the new Plan has the full-hearted support of RTA members, a programme of consultation and discussion is being implemented. This Consultative Document is the first stage in this process. We ask all RTA members to study it carefully and to respond to the questions which we pose throughout, and are listed at the end of this document. **The closing date for comment is 3 April 2015**, after which a draft Waterways Plan will be produced for discussion at a special conference.

The first River Thames Waterways Plan, produced in 2006, was a wide-ranging piece of work, covering all aspects of the river, its environment and its use. Preliminary discussion with members has indicated that it would be inappropriate in present circumstances to produce a Plan on this scale. The aim should rather be to concentrate on the most challenging problems and on those aspects of the river where real progress is possible. At the RTA AGM earlier this year it was agreed that the new Plan should focus on:

- **Flood Risk Management**
- **Environment**
- **Planning Policy**
- **Tourism and Marketing**
- **Navigation and Moorings**
- **Sport and Recreation**
- **Education**

This Consultative Document contains a section on each of these seven subjects. Each section is brief and no attempt is made cover every issue. The focus is sharply on how to solve problems and how to make the most of opportunities. Each section lists actions that, if agreed, RTA will take and includes questions which we hope RTA members will address. The last section explains how to respond to this consultation.

In adopting this approach we have had to make certain assumptions. For instance, we have assumed that the Environment Agency will, for the period of the Plan, continue to be the navigation authority for the non-tidal Thames and that navigation funding will continue at about its current level. If those or any other assumptions prove to be incorrect, the Plan will of course be revised.

RTA members will also note that less attention is given to longstanding Thames activities like power boating and angling than in the first Waterways Plan. This change of emphasis should not be taken to mean that these activities have declined or should decline in importance. Instead the new approach is intended to indicate that we should build on our current strengths by developing new recreational activities alongside those that are expected to attract strong support into the future. The aim is not substitution but enhancement. RTA members may wish to comment on this approach.

The Thames is an iconic river but, compared to other rivers across the world, the Thames basin is quite small. Nevertheless it is home to nearly 20 million people with many more millions passing through each year. So inevitably the river is subject to conflicting demands from residents, users, tourists, industry and the need to maintain a good environment for nature as well as for humans. Many of these conflicts can be resolved or mitigated by good planning and by the goodwill of the various authorities and interests working together. Developing a good Waterways Plan is an important part of that process and the RTA will work hard to ensure its success.

John Edmonds

Chair of RTA

On behalf of the RTA Management Committee

CONTENTS

Section A	Flood Risk Management	page 6
Section B	Environment	page 10
Section C	Planning Policy	page 17
Section D	Tourism and Marketing	page 19
Section E	Navigation and Moorings	page 22
Section F	Sport and Recreation	page 26
Section G	Education	page 29
Section H	Questions for RTA members	page 31
Section I	How to respond to this Consultation	page 34

SECTION A - FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Strategic Objectives:

To ensure that the best possible flood risk management procedures are being followed and that resources for flood risk management are sufficient.

A1. INTRODUCTION

- A1.1 In recent years the River Thames suffered extreme flooding in 2003, 2007 and 2012 with the longest and most damaging flooding taking place during January, February and March 2014.
- A1.2 Climate change predictions for the south-east of England indicate that winters will become wetter, with an increased frequency of extreme rainfall events.
- A1.3 Local communities have expressed concerns about the impact of past flood risk management schemes on unprotected areas and about the likely impact of the newly proposed schemes.
- A1.4 Government policy is for the cost of flood risk management to be shared by all UK citizens through their central and local taxes.
- A1.5 In the current economic climate, there are serious concerns about whether current and future flood risk management programmes will be effectively funded.

A2. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE ON THE RIVER THAMES?

The table below shows the responsibility of the various bodies:

No.	Flood risk source	Responsible body
1	The sea, estuary and tidal Thames	Environment Agency (EA)
2	Main rivers	Environment Agency (EA)
3	Reservoirs	Environment Agency with water companies
4	Ordinary watercourses	Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs)
5	Surface water	Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs)
6	Groundwater	Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs)
7	Sewers	Water companies

Questions for RTA members:

- **(A2) Q1 - Is this best way to allocate the responsibilities?**
- **(A2) Q2 - If not, how should these arrangements be changed to work more effectively?**

A3. MAJOR FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

A3.1 The Environment Agency (EA) is the body responsible for developing and implementing major flood risk management projects in the Thames River basin.

A3.2 The Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) is a statutory committee appointed by Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and approves EA flood risk management projects and their budgets. Local Authorities are represented on this Committee, along with independent experts.

A4. THE SIX YEAR PROGRAMME (2015-2021)

Defra announced in December 2014 that there is to be a Six Year Programme (2015-2021) to deliver 162 Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) schemes across the Thames region. The expected funding of £297m from Defra will provide 70% of the cost with the remainder coming from Lead Local Flood Authorities and from third parties.

A4.1 The two major schemes within this programme are:

- the **Oxford & Abingdon Relief Scheme**
- the **River Thames Scheme** (Originally the Lower Thames Flood Relief Scheme)

Memoranda of understanding have been signed (or are in the process of completion) between all partners involved – EA, Local Authority and third parties, where appropriate.

Funding for both schemes has been announced by Government but concerns remain about whether the allocated funding is sufficient to ensure completion.

A4.2 Issues of concern to RTA about these schemes:

- Is the funding sufficient, including funding for specialist staff?

- Is a partnership approach the best way to fund and manage schemes?
- How will local Consultation be undertaken?
- Is the design of the schemes sufficiently robust?
- How serious will be the environment and conservation impact?
- How will the schemes affect properties below the point where the flood water returns to the main river?
- Will new initiatives be developed to manage the remaining risk along the middle and upper reaches of the Thames?
- Will the Thames Barrier have the capacity to ensure that flood waters can escape into the tideway at high water?

A5. OTHER RELATED MAJOR ISSUES ACROSS THE RIVER BASIN

- Are current levels of Flood Defence maintenance adequate?
- Is sufficient work being done to:
 - (a) increase the capacity of the Thames floodplain to hold water in ways and places that reduce risk to people, property and infrastructure?
 - (b) retain water higher up the catchment, utilising the floodplain and slowing discharge into watercourses?
 - (c) recognise the needs of agriculture and rural communities?
 - (d) improve agricultural practice and develop a coherent plan for land drainage?
 - (e) prevent unsuitable development in the flood plain?
 - (f) promote Sustainable urban drainage (SuDs)?
 - (g) develop robust emergency planning during flood events?

Question for RTA members:

- **(A5) Q1 - Can the current government funding formula for Flood Defence be improved?**
- **(A5) Q2 - Are the other issues correctly identified?**
- **(A5) Q3 - Should other concerns be added?**

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- *encourage its members to participate in local consultations or public meetings about Flood & Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) schemes to ensure their acceptability to the community;*
- *promote the EA Flood Warning services and encourage everyone in flood risk areas to sign up for them;*
- *promote awareness of local 'Flood Forums' and 'Resilience Forums' and encourage communities to participate in them.*

Questions for RTA members

- ***(A5) Q3 Are these the right action points for RTA to pursue?***
- ***(A5) Q4 Are there additional or alternative actions?***

SECTION B - ENVIRONMENT

Strategic objective:

To conserve, improve and restore a natural and biodiverse river environment wherever possible for the benefit both of nature and people, as well as maintaining the character of the urban landscapes and countryside within the River Thames corridor.

B1. THE CURRENT STATE OF THE THAMES

B1.1 The Thames and its tributaries drain an area of land covering about 16,000 square kilometres. All rain that falls in this basin drains into the Thames system and out to sea via the estuary. All land use and human activities over this land area have an impact on the drainage (surface water, agricultural run-off, industrial effluent and household waste water) and the water that enters the Thames system. To protect the river, all these issues must be taken into account.

B1.2 There is evidence that the River Thames and its tributaries are not meeting the water quality standards set by the European Union (EU). The EA estimates that some 73% of water bodies in the Thames region do not meet the 'Good ecological status' standard set by the EU Water Framework Directive (see B4.1).

B2. STATUTORY PLANS

There are three significant statutory plans that will shape the nature and quality of the Thames environment over the next five years or more:

B2.1 River Basin Plan

The major driver for environmental improvement in water quality is the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) which has the objective of achieving good water quality in all surface and ground water by 2027. This will be delivered by river basin plans (RBPs).

The second Thames RBP for the period 2015–2021 was published for consultation in October 2014. The EA is the “competent authority” for delivery of the WFD in England. The first Thames RBP (2009–2014) was widely criticised by environmental NGOs as lacking ambition and resources for implementation, and that too many actions were left for the subsequent plans up to 2027.

B2.2 Catchment Partnerships

It is accepted that the targets in the Thames RBP can only be achieved in partnership with a wide range of organisations and one means of achieving this has been the setting up of Catchment Partnership Groups. There are now groups established for all sections of the main River Thames and on each of the tributaries. Each group is charged with producing a Catchment Plan and assisting in its implementation. There are 36 Catchment Partnership Groups in the Thames River Basin.

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- *take a strategic view across the river basin and, in the absence of the EA regional tier, it will try to ensure that the Thames RBP is of high quality and is resourced to deliver its targets;*
- *ensure that the catchment plans produced by others are compatible and coordinated;*
- *identify any overlaps and omissions and try to ensure that these are rectified;*
- *ensure that the Thames RBP is inclusive of the issues identified by catchment plans, identify any omissions and encourage members to assist in the implementation of the issues identified.*

B2.3 Flood Risk Management Plan

The major driver for flood risk management will be the First Thames Flood Risk Management Plan (FRMP) for 2015-2021, prepared in response to the EU Floods Directive. That plan will set out the flood risk management projects and a budget for six years rather than annually. This is a big change and has many ramifications which will require careful management and monitoring by the EA and others such as Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs). The LLFAs now contribute financially to many flood risk management projects across the river basin and they introduce a further element of democratic representation into the decision making process around flood risk management.

Proposed Actions

- *The implications for flood risk should be dealt with under the Flood Risk section of the Thames Waterways Plan, but the RTA should work to ensure that the FRMP does not have an adverse environmental impact and that any opportunities for environmental and recreational enhancement are maximised.*
- *RTA should try to ensure that the objectives of the FRMP are consistent with those of the RBP and that wherever possible joined up actions are undertaken to achieve projects with multiple benefits for managing flood risk, improving ecological status and delivering social benefits.*

B2.4 Water Resources Plan

Private water companies are responsible for providing water to all of the homes and businesses in the Thames river basin. The largest water company is Thames Water Utilities (TWU), which is also the largest operator of a sewer network to take away and treat waste water from homes and businesses. TWU takes most of the water it uses from the River Thames and from its major tributary the River Lee. TWU is therefore an important player in keeping the river healthy.

B2.6 All water companies must produce a 25 year Water Resources Plan, which is reviewed by the EA as Environmental Regulator and approved by the government regulatory body known as OFWAT. TWU's investment planning is in five-yearly cycles called Asset Management Plans, or Periodic Reviews. The current plan (PR14) covers the period 2014 – 2018. A major project during this period is the Tideway Tunnel, designed to prevent combined sewer outfalls emptying untreated sewage into the Thames tideway during periods of heavy rain. The Water Resource Plan attempts to balance supply and demand, and includes targets for metering, leakage and important resource questions around the need for a new reservoir in Oxfordshire against alternative water transfer from the Severn catchment. All these factors contribute to an investment programme which ultimately has to be paid for by consumers, with the final water bills regulated by OFWAT.

B2.7 In addition, there are long-standing environmental issues around the abstraction of water from the main river via the lower Thames operating agreement and abstraction from groundwater supplies which can adversely impact important tributaries like the Kennet. Abstraction is reviewed and licensed by the EA. These issues, particularly the balance between the demand for water from a growing population and the environmental impact of excessive abstraction are often complex and difficult to resolve.

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- *Monitor policies on water resource supply issues to put RTA in the position to influence future water resource plans.*
- *Monitor policies on abstraction licensing so that it can comment on future applications, or advise and/or support members who intend to comment.*

B3. SUPPORTING ISSUES

B3.1 Water resources

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- *Monitor policies on discharge permitting, particularly on the levels of key pollutants such as phosphate and ammonia;*
- *lobby for their implementation;*
- *encourage members to promote Sustainable Urban Drainage schemes and Catchment Sensitive Farming schemes where appropriate Campaign for better funding to support these initiatives.*

B3.2 Biodiversity

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- *Promote the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity dependent on the river, its banks, the river corridor and associated floodplain habitats through all planning processes.*
- *Work with Catchment Partnerships wherever possible to develop Catchment Plans which secure the integrity of high quality sites and enhance floodplain and riparian habitats to improve wetland biodiversity.*
- *Work with local authorities and riparian landowners wherever possible to ensure that existing natural aquatic and bankside habitat and ecologically important features are safeguarded through regulatory and land-use planning controls.*

- *Work with local authorities and developers wherever possible to ensure that environmental improvements are secured for river corridors in urbanised reaches through re-development, as required by the NERC Act 2006 and the National Planning Policy Framework.*
- *Work with and through Catchment Partnerships to achieve landscape-scale habitat improvement wherever possible, such as at associated gravel workings, to provide diverse wetlands which can contribute to flow regulation, flood risk management and improved water quality. Side-channels, backwaters and weir streams must be retained and protected for their inherent ecological value.*

B4 FISHERIES

- B4.1 The EA has a fundamental duty laid down in the Environment Act 1996 to maintain, improve and develop fisheries.

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- *Work to ensure that this fundamental duty pervades the work of the EA and is recognised in the catchment planning process and River Basin Plan.*
- *Wherever possible, work with anglers, river trusts, riparian landowners and other catchment partners in pursuit of common objectives for healthy aquatic environments.*
- *Adopt policies on hydropower and other developments impacting on aquatic ecology and apply them in the consultative process for future planning applications.*

B5 LANDSCAPE AND HERITAGE

- B5.1 The River Thames flows through a richly varied landscape encompassing farmland, built-up city centres, parks and royal palaces reflecting both the underlying geology and human influence over the centuries. The built landscape is highly valued by residents and visitors alike and contributes to tourism, the largest industry in the Thames valley.

The Thames region has one of the highest concentrations of historic buildings, registered parks and scheduled ancient monuments in the country. The diversity and wealth of these places are key to the unique landscape character of the Thames, providing powerful reminders of the past and creating places of enjoyment for local people and visitors today.

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- *Wherever possible, support Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and landscape partnerships which have a positive impact on the river corridor.*
- *Where there are gaps, additional landscape strategies based on definable reaches should be produced by partnerships of riparian organisations.*

B6. NAVIGATION (see also section E)

The River Thames is home for many boating interests. There has to be a balance between boat use and other river uses such as biodiversity, water abstraction or flood risk management for example.

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- *As proposed in section E below, strive to ensure that navigation policies improve the quality of recreational boating and river transport without having any adverse or untoward impacts on other uses of the river.*

B7. SPORT AND RECREATION (see also section F)

Many water based sporting interests can be found on the Thames, and the river is a source of enjoyment for the quiet recreation of many thousands of people.

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- *as proposed in section F below, strive to improve access to and the quality of sport and recreation without any adverse or untoward impact on other users of the river.*

Questions for RTA members:

- **(B) Q1 - Is the strategic objective set out in the first paragraph appropriate and correct for RTA?**
- **(B) Q2 - Should the RTA co-ordinate a response on behalf of all or some members? If so, who would these be?**
- **(B) Q3 - Do any RTA members have particular expertise in any of the topics listed and are able to assist other RTA members by advising on particular topics?**
- **(B) Q4 - Are the supporting issues and other actions correctly stated?**
- **(B) Q5 - Are there other environmental issues that RTA should address?**

B8. THE TIDAL THAMES

The remit of the RTA is currently restricted to the non-tidal Thames.

In river basin terms, the tidal Thames and estuary make up an important part of the whole catchment and clearly their environmental status depends very much on the management of abstraction from and discharges into the non-tidal river and tributaries.

The navigation authority on the tideway is the Port of London Authority. The EA retains flood risk management and fisheries duties up to one mile, interweaving with the Kent and Essex Sea Fisheries Committee in the estuary (from Mucking Creek). The Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP) already exists to co-ordinate activity on the tideway. TEP and Thames 21 share management of the Tidal Thames Catchment Partnership. All these organisations are members of RTA.

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- *RTA should work in partnership with existing organisations that have a remit on the tidal Thames.*

Question for RTA members:

- **(B8) Q1 – Should this be a priority for RTA?**

SECTION C - PLANNING POLICY

Strategic objective:

Riparian Local Authorities should work together, consulting with other stakeholders, to establish a co-ordinated planning policy framework for the river and its valley corridor through their local development frameworks to reflect their environmental, heritage and recreational value through both urban and rural areas.

Proposed Action

RTA should:

- *provide a consultative forum for this process of coordination;*
- *work closely with RTA member local authority planning departments under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

C1. BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- C1.1 Secure high quality development on the river and riverside which is appropriate to its context and give proper protection to the flood plains.
- C1.2 Protect and enhance historic building sites, structures, landscape, skylines and views of importance.
- C1.3 Make the best use of the river's potential attraction or a range of uses, including regeneration of redundant land and buildings and promotion of recreational opportunities to protect important archaeological remains

C2. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- C2.1 Conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the river.
- C2.2 Respect designated green belt, and designated areas of ecological, conservation and landscape importance.
- C2.3 Improve the quality and provision of open space along the river.

C3. PROMOTE, PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE USE OF THE RIVER

C3.1 For transport use.

C3.2 For recreation and water-related sport.

C3.3 For public access.

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- *ensure policy is developed in the context of the relevant statutory plans;*
- *ensure policy takes account of the Thames River Basin and Thames Flood Risk Management Plans;*
- *ensure that existing relevant plans like the Thames Landscape Strategy are also considered.*

Questions for RTA members:

- ***(C) Q1 - Is it appropriate and worthwhile for riparian local authorities to produce a co-ordinated policy framework for the river?***
- ***(C) Q2 - Is RTA the right organisation to provide a consultative forum to enable this process?***
- ***(C) Q3 - Are the policy principles listed in P1, P2 and P3 the right ones?***
- ***(C) Q4 - Are there any additional or alternative action points that RTA should consider?***

SECTION D - TOURISM AND MARKETING

Strategic objective:

The River Thames and its corridor should be promoted effectively as a visitor destination for the benefit of visitors and the local economy.

D1. INTRODUCTION

D1.1 Tourism and Leisure activities are of enormous importance for the well-being of the River Thames and the economy of the south-east of England, providing a recreational resource for millions of residents and millions of visitors from home and abroad.

- There are more than 500 sites of tourism interest within 1km of the non-tidal Thames, including several world-class visitor attractions like Kew Gardens and Windsor Castle.
- There are more than 100 nature reserves within 1km of the non-tidal Thames.
- The 184 miles of the Thames Path makes it the longest riparian public footpath in the UK.
- The non-tidal Thames is an important navigable waterway, supporting a vibrant boating community.
- The non-tidal Thames is an important fishery providing an angling resource for nearly a quarter of a million anglers.

D2. TOURISM AND RECREATION ON THE WATER

D2.1 The river has to be projected as a pleasant and relaxed environment with sufficient controls to minimise health and safety risks.

D2.2 The navigation must be kept dredged and overhanging trees removed.

D2.3 River users require efficient lock services.

D2.4 Visitor access to the water, car parking and public conveniences should be available and well-maintained with well-designed signs in prominent positions.

D2.5 Existing slipways should be maintained and kept clear for private boat access.

- D2.6 Marketing can be improved by partnership between hire boat and hospitality businesses.
- D2.7 Cooperative involvement by hotels, pubs and restaurants helps to make the river an inclusive visitor destination.
- D2.8 Boat registration and mooring charges should be affordable.

Question for RTA members:

- **(D2) Q1 - Are these the right issues?**
- **(D2) Q1 - Should other issues be given prominence?**

D3. ANGLING

D3.1 **The River Thames as a recreational fishery**

Angling is the largest recreational activity in the UK and anglers help to preserve and restore the fish populations in many miles of river and associated waterbodies, with benefits to many other species and overall river health. The funds raised from angling are an essential part of river management and without anglers our rivers would be much poorer. The River Thames is vitally important to the region as a recreational fishery where it has hosted anglers of all ages over hundreds of years.

- D3.2 Grassroots consultative groups such as the Thames Anglers Conservancy, Thames Valley Angling Association and Upper Thames Fisheries Consultative provide a creative forum for diverse angling interests striving to maintain and improve the Thames as a fishery for coarse and game anglers. These groups help drive the fisheries agenda on the Thames in conjunction with the EA.

D4. PROMOTING THE THAMES AS A VISITOR DESTINATION

- D4.1 The River Thames requires active promotion as a visitor destination.
- D4.2 The Tourism and Marketing Group (TMG) of the RTA have been undertaking this role, currently through the vehicle of the Visit Thames website. Since the EA withdrew funding for the RTA, TMG have been operating independently, including funding the Visit Thames website.

Proposed Action

- *It is important for RTA and TMG to reach an agreement on the future of the Visit Thames website and RTA should give priority to this issue.*

D4.3 Proposed specification for the website:

1	The website must be a living and vital tool, capable of being regularly updated.
2	It must be easily accessible through Google and other search engines.
3	It must have compelling content.
4	Every RTA member should have a listing and a description of their activity
5	Rates for display advertising for members should be set following consultation with members.
6	The site should also contain information about RTA activities that is of use to RTA members.

Questions for RTA members:

- ***(D4) Q1 - Do you agree that the Thames requires active promotion as a visitor destination?***
- ***(D4) Q2 - Is the Visit Thames website a valuable vehicle to promote the Thames?***
- ***(D4) Q3 - Is the proposed specification for the website appropriate and should RTA proceed on this basis?***
- ***(D4) Q4 - Should RTA give priority to reaching agreement with TMG on the future use of the Visit Thames website?***

SECTION E - NAVIGATION and MOORINGS

Strategic objectives:

To ensure that the non-tidal River Thames remains as navigable as possible for commercial and recreational boats; the rules around navigation are enforced and the supporting infrastructure, facilities and staff are maximised

To develop a Thames-wide Moorings strategy that will resolve the problems created by unauthorised boats occupying recreational and public moorings.

E1. NAVIGATION

E1.1 The EA is the navigation authority for the non-tidal Thames. It is important that the EA is resourced to perform this role adequately. A complication arises from the government aim to transfer the Thames navigation to the Canal and River Trust (CRT). The EA has stated that until any transfer it will continue to deliver the high level stewardship the Thames requires and deserves. So, for the purposes of this consultation it is assumed that current levels of service will be maintained.

Question for RTA members:

- ***(E1) Q1 - Should RTA take a position on whether EA should remain as the navigation authority for the Thames or whether the responsibility should transfer to the Canal and River Trust?***

E1.2 The navigation uses of the River Thames are of importance to many businesses and private users, both on and off the water. A large number of commercial boat hire companies rely on the navigation to continue their businesses. Directly and indirectly these companies make a major contribution to the local economy each year. In addition there are over 20,000 recreational boat users who use the river.

E2. MOORINGS

E2.1 At many points along the river, mooring by unauthorised individuals has created problems that range from 'mooring blocking' to, in a few cases, significant health and safety problems and environmental damage.

A working group was set up by RTA to develop a plan to resolve these problems. The group considered moorings on each side of the Thames, on private land, under the control of local authorities or the EA from Lechlade to Teddington.

E2.2 The group also discussed 'off line' moorings for example in marinas, residential moorings on the main river, temporary moorings and 24 hour moorings specifically available for the cruising boat mainly in towns and villages but also in the country.

E3. THE IMPORTANT ISSUES

E3.1 The questions raised during the discussion of a plan for moorings were:

- What moorings are required for the cruising boater: where they should be, and what ideally should be the facilities available on these moorings?
- How should these moorings be managed and by whom and how they should be financed?
- How many of these moorings are required?
- Where might overnight moorings be best developed - in open land, outside hospitality venues or elsewhere?
- What is the requirement for residential moorings? How should they be provided, funded and who is responsible for the provision?

E3.2 On Canal and River Trust (CRT) navigations there are so-called 'continuous cruisers', defined as the growing number of craft that do not have a 'home' mooring, which is becoming a major concern to navigation authorities. It is reported that many such boats do not comply with CRT regulations but take up valuable moorings made available for cruising boats. CRT is tackling the situation which leads to craft emigrating onto the Thames where control of the moorings is fragmented. This increases the problems on the Thames.

E3.3 Close to travel hubs on the River Thames there are 'hot spots' and some have become major settlements of boats on public moorings. The growth of unauthorised mooring is harming the riparian environment, and sometimes involves anti-social behaviour and pollution.

E4. MAJOR POINTS OF CONCERN

- Boats moored without permission on public moorings.

- Boats moored without permission on popular moorings and on towpaths.
- Shortage of moorings for residential moorings, particularly at affordable prices.
- Enforcement, Policing and Control of public moorings

E5. CURRENT SITUATION

- E5.1 A review in September, 2014 showed that the overall situation appears to be worsening. Where enforcement had taken place the evicted boats move to another site many times increasing the number of boats that had already taken up moorings. Despite enforcement action more boats continue to arrive on the Thames.
- E5.2 More boats have taken unauthorised mooring or become boats moored without permission. These boats at times take up prime visitor moorings. The problem is expanding. Reports include the cutting down of bushes and the use of the towpath as dumping ground for rubbish. This has to lead to the fear of pollution from the disposal of raw sewage and other environmental issues.
- E5.3 Initial moves are taking place to work with commercial enforcement companies using civil law to move on those who moor on their land. However until there is joined up enforcement throughout the non-tidal Thames the likelihood is that boats will move to areas where there is no enforcement.

E6. MOORING ISSUES TO BE COVERED IN WATERWAYS PLAN

- E6.1 Recreational boating has become more expensive. If twenty-four hour mooring sites are congested with itinerant moored craft, and if it becomes too difficult for recreational boaters, some will cease boating on the Thames with a consequential financial loss to the local economy.
- E6.2 Those who chose to take a life style choice to live afloat can be expected to bear the cost. Local authorities might be encouraged to provide more affordable moorings but it is unreasonable to expect them to provide moorings that are free.
- E6.3 However, it must be recognised that there seem to be a significant number of unauthorised moorers who overstay on many occasions without paying registration charges and with no adequate provision for disposal of their waste.

- E6.4 Enforcement to control the moorings is essential if the river-length problem is to be resolved but a solution is not straightforward because control of moorings is devolved to local authorities, land owners and the EA.
- E6.5 An encouraging start has been made by the EA working with the RTA and civil enforcement agencies to run a policing trial in 2013. That initial trial was successful. A local authority is working with a company using civil law to evict squatting boats. Thames Water served an injunction in August 2014, working with the Metropolitan Police were also successful in evicting squatting boats. These are useful developments but a more comprehensive strategy is necessary. The aim should be to use the Waterways Plan as the means of producing such a strategy.

Proposed Actions

RTA should:

- The new Waterways Plan should give high priority to resolving the moorings problem, identifying the key objectives with regular reports to members.
- The plan must recognise the challenge of squatting and itinerant moorings. During the tenure of the plan RTA will continue to monitor enforcement: this implies continual cooperation with the EA River Managers especially those responsible for enforcement.
- The plan must show how management of casual moorings can be organised so that all providers follow the same control procedures although working directly for their own electorate or management.

Questions for RTA members:

- ***(E6) Q1 - Should RTA give a high priority to developing a Thames wide strategy for the provision, charging and maintenance of temporary recreational moorings?***
- ***(E6) Q2 - Given the disparate ownership of moorings how can RTA agree and promulgate active and effective enforcement measures to ensure that moorings are occupied in accordance with local regulations and byelaws?***
- ***(E6) Q3 - There are social and economic issues underlying the whole problem of itinerant moorers. Would be sensible to commission a multi-agency report into this problem?***

SECTION F - SPORT and RECREATION

Strategic Objective:

To increase the use of the Thames for water-based sport and recreation, focussing particularly on better access for those groups of people whom Sport England identifies as particular priorities. These groups include disabled people, young people under 25 and older people over 50 years of age.

F1. INTRODUCTION

F1.1 The Thames is a wonderful asset for water sports.

F1.2 The Sport England priorities for the period 2015-2020 are:

- to increase youth participation;
- to increase facilities for disabled people;
- to expand multi-water sports facilities;
- to take due account of the widening range of minor water sports.

F1.3 There is a need to learn from water sport clubs whether they think these objectives are achievable and what they can deliver in meeting these Sport England priorities.

Questions for RTA members

- **(F1) Q1 - Are these objectives reasonable?**
- **(F1) Q2 - If so, how can local authorities assist clubs to achieve these priorities?**

F2. THE CURRENT SITUATION

F2.1 There are many diverse clubs on the non-tidal Thames serving their specific sport in the main. It must be recognised that within these are good examples of multi-sport delivery giving a good range of water sport events. However, there are certain challenges to be considered.

F3. CHALLENGES

- F3.1 There are clubs not working to full capacity during the opening hours.
- F3.2 Many clubs are not used during the day because of a dearth of staff and volunteers.
- F3.3 More general expansion can be prevented by the shortage of volunteers and coaches.
- F3.4 In many clubs facilities need expansion and improvements.
- F3.5 Infrastructure on the river may not be adequate (particularly for canoe touring).
- F3.6 Public transport access can be poor.
- F3.7 Some communities living near the Thames have no experience of participation in water sports.

F4. WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Worthwhile initiatives might include:

- F4.1 Facilities might be improved to suit a wider range of ethnic groups.
- F4.2 Partnership between clubs, sharing facilities, coaches and resources.
- F4.3 Creating a virtuous circle where greater use produces more income to pay staff to service increased membership
- F4.4 Would major water sports be 'big enough' to give young people experience in more than one water sport, i.e. rowing, canoeing and sailing?
- F4.5 Would the major water sports take under their wing minor or new sports, and include them in their club facilities?
- F4.6 There is a plethora of different organisations involved with the non-tidal Thames sports. Is there a case for more co-ordination, and if so, who by?
- F4.7 Is it possible to capitalise on the national Water Sports month of 'May' to encourage new initiatives?
- F4.8 Should there be a common code of behaviour for all Water sports on the water?

Proposed Actions

The Waterways Plan 2015-2021 should encourage clubs:

- *to provide more opportunities for participation by the young, over 50s and by wider range of ethnic groups.*
- *to improve facilities for physically disabled and also cater for people with learning difficulties.*

Questions for RTA members:

- ***(F4) Q1 - Looking ahead to 2015–2021, which issues limit the possibility of clubs increasing membership amongst Sport England’s target groups?***
- ***(F4) Q2 - There has been considerable success in broadening the entry to water sports on the Tideway and in East London. Should RTA publicise the lessons from that expansion?***
- ***(F4) Q3 - Are clubs able to increase their catchment area for example by adopting an inland school and offering help with ‘indoor rowing’ as an introduction to water sports?***
- ***(F4) Q4 - Could there be expansion of existing facilities to encompass other sports?***
- ***(F4) Q5 - Are we able to identify the black spots on the River referred to in S3.7?***
- ***(F4) Q6 - Is planning a problem? A modest extension to an existing club for an additional water sport seems to have a better chance of approval than a new stand-alone club.***
- ***(F4) Q7 - Should RTA bring together local authorities and clubs to discuss the planning issue?***
- ***(F4) Q8 - Is there a need for co-ordination of the different organisations involved?***

SECTION G - EDUCATION

Strategic Objective:

To determine what part RTA should play in using the Thames for educational purposes and, if so, what the RTA role should be.

- G1. RTA is aware that there are numerous existing education initiatives taking place throughout the Thames corridor.
- G1.1 *Action for the River Kennet (ARK)* organises a programme of water saving measures with local schools in the Marlborough area, sponsored by Thames Water; it is planned to export this initiative to Swindon. ARK also runs the “Trout in the Town” (in co-operation with the *Wild Trout Trust*) and “Eels in the Town” initiatives in schools.
- G1.2 The *Thames Explorer Trust* runs educational programmes with London schools which concentrate on the history and use of the river through the ages.
- G1.3 The *Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP)* is planning an educational programme covering all aspects of the Thames Tideway.
- G1.4 The *River Thames Society* and *Thames Rivers Trust* have published a “Guide to the Thames Wilderness” (Bloomsbury) which lists 134 wild places to explore within one kilometre of the main river. This paperback contains a very useful bibliography which lists the majority of organisations in the River Basin and what they do. Work is in hand on a sequel covering the Thames Tributaries.
- G1.5 The *Henley River and Rowing Museum* has a dedicated education department. The Museum used to co-ordinate RTA education initiatives, but is now focussing on internal promotion. Nevertheless it provides a valuable resource to visiting children, giving them an overview of the Thames and all aspects of the history, ecology and use of the river for industrial and recreational use.
- G1.6 RTA proposes to seek assistance from RTA membership to:
- Report any education initiatives so that we can build up a comprehensive database for use by both members and the general public.
 - Report any education initiatives so that we can build up a comprehensive database for use by both members and the general public.

- G2 Because of pressure on resources it would be very difficult for RTA to develop specific educational initiatives of its own. However a possible role might be for RTA to maintain a register of existing initiatives so that members can be fully aware of the opportunities.

Questions for RTA members:

- **(G2) Q1 - Is the establishment and maintenance of a database of initiatives the right approach?**
- **(G2) Q2 - Are members able to suggest other education initiatives and possible funding sources?**
- **(G2) Q3 - What other role could be taken by RTA?**

SECTION H – QUESTIONS FOR RTA MEMBERS

(Listed in the order set out in the above Sections)

A. Flood Risk Management

- ***(A2) Q1 - Is this best way to allocate the responsibilities for flood risk management?***
- ***(A2) Q2 - If not, how should these arrangements be changed to work more effectively?***
- ***(A5) Q1 - Can the current government funding formula for Flood Defence be improved?***
- ***(A5) Q2 - Are the other issues correctly identified?***
- ***(A5) Q3 - Should other concerns be added?***
- ***(A5) Q3 - Are these the right action points for RTA to pursue?***
- ***(A5) Q4 - Are there additional or alternative actions?***

B. Environment

- ***(B) Q1 - Is the strategic objective set out in the first paragraph appropriate and correct for RTA?***
- ***(B) Q2 - Should the RTA co-ordinate a response on behalf of all or some members? If so, who would these be?***
- ***(B) Q3 - Do any RTA members have particular expertise in any of the topics listed and are able to assist other RTA members by advising on particular topics?***
- ***(B) Q4 - Are the supporting issues and other actions correctly stated?***
- ***(B) Q5 - Are there other environmental issues that RTA should address?***
- ***(B8) Q1 - Is it a priority for RTA to seek to work in partnership with organisations that have a remit on the tidal Thames?***

C. Planning Policy

- ***(C) Q1 - Is it appropriate and worthwhile for riparian local authorities to produce a co-ordinated policy framework for the river?***

- ***(C) Q2 - Is RTA the right organisation to provide a consultative forum to enable this process?***
- ***(C) Q3 - Are the policy principles listed in C1, C2 and C3 the right ones?***
- ***(C) Q4 - Are there any additional or alternative action points that RTA should consider?***

D. Tourism and Marketing

- ***(D2) Q1 - Are these the right issues?***
- ***(D2) Q1 - Should other issues be given prominence?***
- ***(D4) Q1 - Do you agree that the Thames requires active promotion as a visitor destination?***
- ***(D4) Q2 - Is the Visit Thames website a valuable vehicle to promote the Thames?***
- ***(D4) Q3 - Is the proposed specification for the website appropriate and should RTA proceed on this basis?***
- ***(D4) Q4 - Should RTA give priority to reaching agreement with TMG on the future use of the Visit Thames website?***

E. Navigation and Moorings

- ***(E1) Q1 - Should RTA take a position on whether EA should remain as the navigation authority for the Thames or whether the responsibility should transfer to the Canal and River Trust?***
- ***(E6) Q1 - Should RTA give a high priority to developing a Thames wide strategy for the provision, charging and maintenance of temporary recreational moorings?***
- ***(E6) Q2 - Given the disparate ownership of moorings how can RTA agree and promulgate active and effective enforcement measures to ensure that moorings are occupied in accordance with local regulations and byelaws?***
- ***(E6) Q3 - There are social and economic issues underlying the whole problem of itinerant moorers. Would be sensible to commission a multi-agency report into this problem?***

F. Sport and Recreation

- **(F1) Q1 - Are these objectives reasonable?**
- **(F1) Q2 - If so, how can local authorities assist clubs to achieve these priorities?**
- **(F4) Q1 - Looking ahead to 2015–2021, which issues limit the possibility of clubs increasing membership amongst Sport England’s target groups?**
- **(F4) Q2 - There has been considerable success in broadening the entry to water sports on the Tideway and in East London. Should RTA publicise the lessons from that expansion?**
- **(F4) Q3 - Are clubs able to increase their catchment area for example by adopting an inland school and offering help with ‘indoor rowing’ as an introduction to water sports?**
- **(F4) Q4 - Could there be expansion of existing facilities to encompass other sports?**
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- **(F4) Q6 - Is planning a problem? A modest extension to an existing club for an additional water sport seems to have a better chance of approval than a new stand-alone club.**
- **(F4) Q7 - Should RTA bring together local authorities and clubs to discuss the planning issue?**
- **(F4) Q8 - Is there a need for co-ordination of the different organisations involved?**

G. Education

- **(G2) Q1 - Is the establishment and maintenance of a database of initiatives the right approach?**
- **(G2) Q2 - Are members able to suggest other education initiatives and possible funding sources**
- **(G2) Q3 - What other role could be taken by RTA?**

SECTION I - HOW TO RESPOND TO THIS CONSULTATION

- I 1. RTA members are requested to send their responses to some or all of the questions in this consultation by **3 April 2015** to **Michael Shefras** at:

Email: newrta1@shefras.demon.co.uk

Michael Shefras
Executive Director
River Thames Alliance
3 Kingswood Creek
Wraysbury
Staines
TW19 5EN

I 2. WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

- I 2.1 The RTA Management Committee and the Waterways Plan Working Groups will consider all of the responses and take them into consideration in the production of a draft River Thames Waterways Plan 2015-2021. That draft will then be circulated to members and a conference of members will be held to discuss the key issues. The resulting draft will then be issued to members for final approval.
- I 2.2 After the Plan has been published, the RTA Management Committee intends to issue regular updates to report progress in achieving outcomes and to identify obstacles and problem issues.