

The Tidal Thames - A Guide for Users of Recreational Craft

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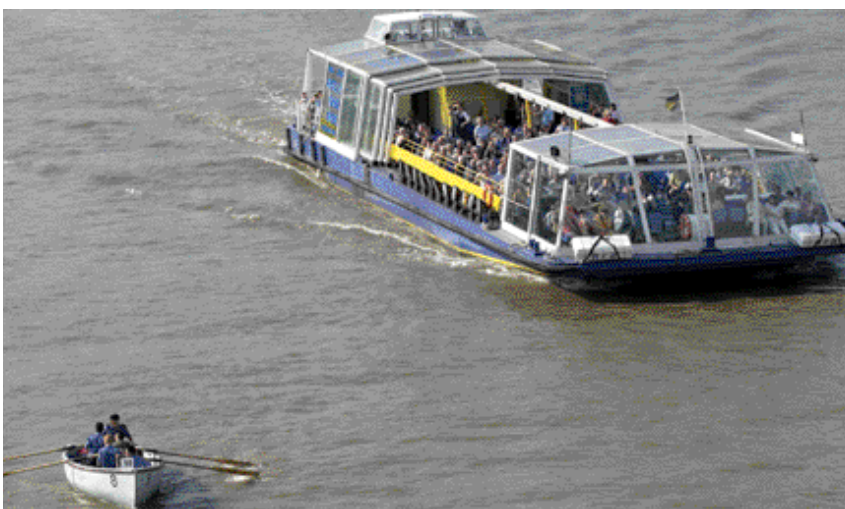
Introduction

This booklet provides recreational users with essential navigational and safety information about the tidal Thames. However, it is only an introduction to the regulations that affect all those navigating on the Thames. Those taking to the water should also familiarise themselves with the Port of London Authority's River Byelaws, General Directions, current and Permanent Notices to Mariners, tidal and other relevant navigational information published by the Authority.

All these documents and other useful information for recreational users can be found on our website at www.portoflondon.co.uk

Please remember that much of the tidal Thames is a busy commercial port with a wide variety of ships and craft of every size. It is important that those using the River for leisure clearly understand the constraints under which those in larger commercial vessels have to operate and manoeuvre. Conversely, it is equally important that those in working vessels have consideration for the sportsman and leisure user. Only by courtesy and consideration for others will safety be enhanced and the River used to the maximum benefit of all.

Rear Admiral Bruce Richardson
Chief Harbour Master



1. REGULATION OF NAVIGATION

The Port of London Authority (PLA) is the navigation authority for 95 miles (150 km) of the tidal Thames from the outer limits of the Thames Estuary through central London to Teddington Lock. The PLA monitors navigation and enforces its rules and regulations for navigation in a number of ways.

HARBOUR SERVICE

Because the PLA's area of jurisdiction is so large, the PLA has two operational Harbour Masters. The Lower District Harbour Master, based at Gravesend, is responsible for the area between the outer limits and Crossness (Dagenham). The Upper District Harbour Master is responsible for the area between Crossness and Teddington Lock. He is based in central London. Both Harbour Masters maintain Harbour Service patrols, which provide information, advice and assistance to river users as required. The crews also enforce PLA regulations on behalf of the Harbour Master.



VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES

The PLA Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) centres at Gravesend (Port Control Centre) and Woolwich (the Thames Barrier Navigation Centre) monitor vessel traffic movements on the Thames. They operate continuously and broadcast navigational information and advice every half-hour. All river users should be aware that VHF radio conversations, telephone calls, CCTV and radar images are recorded in both VTS Centres.

Port Control Centre

This VTS Centre monitors the area from Crayfordness to the seaward limit.

Call Sign: "London VTS"

Primary VHF Working Channels:

- Channel 69 (from the seaward limit to Sea Reach No. 4 Buoy). Navigational broadcasts are made at 15 minutes and 45 minutes past each hour.
- Channel 68 (from Sea Reach no 4 Buoy to Crayfordness). Navigational broadcasts are made on the hour and at 30 minutes past each hour.

Other Working Channels: 14, 16, 18 and 20

Telephone: 01474 560311

Radar Coverage: Crayfordness to the Seaward Limit

Tidal Information: Issued as part of the half-hourly navigational broadcast, or upon request. Information available for Walton-on-Naze, Margate Shivering Sands, Southend and Tilbury.

Thames Barrier Navigation Centre

This VTS Centre monitors the area from Crayfordness to Teddington Lock.

Call Sign: "London VTS"

Primary VHF Working Channel:

- Channel 14 (from Crayfordness to Teddington). Navigational broadcasts are made at 15 minutes and 45 minutes past each hour.

Other Working Channels: 16 and 22

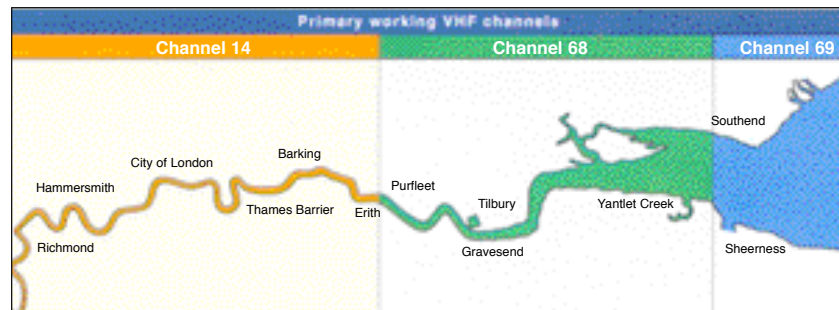
Telephone: 020 8855 0315

Radar Coverage:

Crayfordness to Greenwich

Tidal Information:

Issued as part of the half-hourly navigational broadcast, or upon request. Information available for Woolwich (Silvertown), Tower Pier and Richmond.



Port radio frequencies

Other Marine Contacts:

Harbour Master (Lower District)

London River House
Gravesend DA12 2BG

Telephone: 01474 562200

Harbour Master (Upper District)

Bakers' Hall
7 Harp Lane
London EC3R 6LB

Telephone: 020 7743 7900

PLA Harbour Service Patrol Launches

VHF Channels: 69, 68, 14 (as appropriate for area in question) and 16.

Call sign: 'Thames Patrol'

Coastguard

VHF Channels: 16 & 67.

Call sign: 'London Coastguard' (west of Canvey Island)

Telephone: 020 8312 7380

Call sign: 'Thames Coastguard' (east of Canvey Island)

Metropolitan Police Launches

VHF Channel: 14.

Call sign: 'Thames Police'

Medway Ports

Primary VHF Working Channel: 74.

Other Working Channels: 16 and 22.

Call sign: 'Medway Radio'

Telephone: 01795 663025

Radar Coverage: River Medway and approaches (Medway buoy inwards).

USE OF VHF RADIO

Whenever possible have your vessel fitted with VHF. When navigating on the tidal Thames, recreational craft should monitor the appropriate VTS area VHF channel at all times. In addition to fitting a VHF, recreational boat users are also urged to carry a well-charged mobile phone whenever they are afloat. Mobile phones, however, cannot be regarded as a substitute for marine VHF.

Legal Requirements

Under PLA General Directions for Navigation, vessels of 20 metres or more in length, irrespective of vessel type, **must** carry a VHF radio capable of communicating with the PLA VTS Centres. Each such vessel must maintain a continuous listening watch on the VHF channel appropriate for the part of the Thames in which it is navigating. Except in emergencies where it may not be possible, the person operating the VHF must be suitably trained and qualified, or under the supervision of a qualified person. Additionally, vessels of 40 metres or more in length and vessels of above 50 gross tons, must report their arrival, departure and passage through the port, at the designated reporting points.

VHF and Narrow Boats

Special arrangements are in place for narrow boats over 20 metres in length, which are in transit between the Grand Union Canal and the non-tidal Thames via the Brentford and Teddington Locks. These vessels should monitor London VTS on VHF channel 14 as described above. However, if no VHF is carried, such vessels should telephone London VTS (Thames Barrier Navigation Centre) to report immediately before, and again on completion of, their transit of the tidal Thames.

Note: The Environment Agency (EA) is the navigation authority for the non-tidal Thames above Teddington Lock. If you are planning to use your craft above Teddington you must contact the EA direct. Contact details are included at the back of this booklet.

2. NAVIGATION RULES

Anyone navigating a vessel without due care and attention, or in such a manner as to cause injury to persons or other vessels or property, including the river banks, commits an offence under the Port of London Act 1968 and may be prosecuted.

All vessels must comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (the Colregs) as modified by the '**Port of London River Byelaws**'. Those in charge of vessels must also comply with the '**General Directions for Navigation in the Port of London**'.

The following basic navigational rules are of particular relevance to recreational users:

- Keep to Starboard - All vessels should keep as far to the right of the river as they can, given any draught limitation and navigational constraints.
- Obey the Colregs - Including the requirements for the display of navigation lights.
- Right of Way - Any vessel approaching or passing under any bridge or bend when going *against* the tide should give way to vessels approaching *with* the tide.
- Large Vessels - Small craft must not hamper the passage of vessels, which can navigate only within a main navigation channel or through a marked bridge arch.
- Crossing the Channel - Small craft and other vessels must not enter or cross a fairway so as to impede a vessel that can only proceed along that fairway.
- Wash - Be aware of what your wash is doing, both to other users and the banks and foreshore. If necessary, reduce your speed.
- VHF Radio - Vessels over 20m in length must carry and use a VHF radio.
- Novices - Novices should first enrol a training course for their chosen activity.

- Person in Charge - A competent person must be in charge of a vessel at all times. No person under 16 years of age is to be in charge of a powered vessel capable of exceeding 8 knots or having an engine rated at over 10hp.
- Anchoring - When not underway all vessels must be securely moored, or anchored given the prevailing or forecast conditions.
- Anchors - All vessels must be equipped with one or more anchors and have working lights (unless less than 7m in length or a rowing boat).
- Drink and Drugs - Do not navigate under the influence of drink and/or drugs.
- Name of Vessel - The name of your vessel must be clearly displayed.
- Tidal Stream - Bear in mind that the river can flow at a speed of up to 4 knots.

Speed

Your craft must proceed at all times at a safe speed when navigating on the tidal Thames. Whilst there is no specific speed limit downstream of Wandsworth Bridge, your speed must be appropriate for the prevailing conditions, the size and type of your vessel, the tidal conditions, your location in the river and, importantly, the safety of others navigating in the area or working or lying alongside. You should err on the side of safety when determining your speed so that there is no risk of injury to persons or damage to property.

There is a speed limit of 8 knots in the following places:

- above Wandsworth Bridge;
- in all creeks linked to the tidal Thames;
- off Southend (in the inshore area)
- at Coryton and Thurrock when gas tankers are berthed

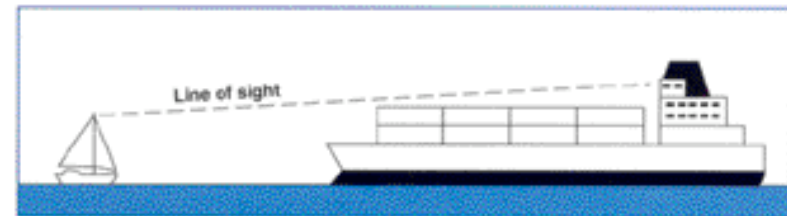
Even at 8 knots many vessels can create an unacceptable amount of wash and you may need to reduce speed further in the vicinity of piers, smaller craft or river works.

Collision Avoidance

The tidal Thames is a commercial highway and the Port of London is one of the busiest ports in the UK. There are ships of every size visiting the many different terminals along the river and they operate at all states of the tide. Make yourself aware of impending vessel manoeuvres by listening to the appropriate VHF channel and regular navigational broadcasts. Keep a sharp lookout, both ahead and astern. In addition:

- if you find a situation developing, use the VHF and report your position and intentions to London VTS;
- do not overestimate your manoeuvrability; or that of other vessels;
- know your position in relation to deep water channels;
- be seen - use a radar reflector and coloured sails; and
- check regularly for overtaking vessels.

Large commercial vessels cannot take rapid avoiding action. In narrow channels they may not be able to take any action at all. If you are near a large vessel be aware and be vigilant. Know and obey the Colregs. Stay well clear. A small craft cannot always be seen from a ship's bridge. This 'blind arc' can be up to one mile ahead and half a mile on either bow. If you cannot see the bridge, he cannot see you.



Large ships have restricted visibility

The Thames is used by many tugs and tows. These vessels, and others such as dredgers and survey vessels, may be limited in their ability to manoeuvre. Be aware of their presence and keep clear.

Damaged Vessels

Any vessel suffering damage which might affect her seaworthiness, must inform the relevant PLA Harbour Master immediately. If the vessel is greater than 12m in length, do not proceed above Lower Hope Point (or move the vessel if already above Lower Hope Point) without the permission of the Harbour Master. This limit extends to down to Sea Reach No. 1 Buoy.

Disposal of rubbish, sewage, oil and other pollutants

It is an offence to throw any waste overboard. It is also an offence to spill, discharge or allow to flow into the tidal Thames any oil or other pollutant. Persons in charge of recreational craft are strongly urged to take a socially responsible attitude to discharging from toilets. Facilities are available at certain locations for owners to pump out holding tanks.



There are barges along the river for driftwood and other flotsam. Please do not use them for domestic refuse. They are not there for that purpose and such action encourages vermin and other pests. Marinas, piers and yacht clubs have details of how and where to dispose of wastes including garbage, sewage and oil.

River Closures

Occasionally sections of the river may be temporarily closed to navigation. Except in the case of emergency responses, Notices to Mariners giving reasons and details are normally issued prior to the closure. Information

regarding them is broadcast by the relevant PLA VTS Centre ahead of and whilst the closure takes place.

Exclusion Zones

For a variety of reasons, exclusion zones may be established from time to time. No vessel shall enter such a zone except in an emergency.

Events

Any individual or organisation contemplating organising an event on the river must contact the appropriate PLA Harbour Master for written permission. The notice period required depends on the scale and nature of the event.

Angling

When angling, do not obstruct the fairway, or other shipping or designated anchorage areas. It is strongly recommended that fishing is only carried out clear of the fairways. This is for your own safety. On no account should vessels moor to navigation buoys. Above Dagenham fishing must only be carried out clear of the fairway.



Noise

Noise from engines or from entertainment sources (music/loud speakers etc) must be reduced or contained to a reasonable level to avoid annoying other river users or local residents.

SIGNALS USED FREQUENTLY ON THE TIDAL THAMES

Bridges

An inverted triangle of three red discs or three red lights hanging from the arch of a bridge mean that the arch is closed to navigation. A bundle of straw or a white light hanging from the arch of a bridge indicates that the arch has restricted headroom. When navigating bridges, use the navigation arch furthest to the starboard side showing a pair of fixed amber lights arranged horizontally.

Special Signal Lights

In addition, all bridges from Tower Bridge to Wandsworth Bridge (except the Millennium Footbridge), have special signal lights on the main navigational arch on both the up and downstream sides. These are high intensity white lights and are in addition to the normal bridge navigation lights. They are visible by day and by night. When the lights are flashing it indicates that one or more large vessels (or one or more tugs engaged in towing) are about to navigate through the arch displaying the light.

The light will show an isophase light (i.e. 2 seconds on and 2 seconds off) to indicate the presence of a single large vessel. When an additional large vessel is in the same vicinity, the light will show very quick flashes (i.e. 90 flashes per minute).

Small vessels should keep clear of the arch displaying the light and its approaches whilst the light is flashing.



Divers

The 'A' flag means that divers are down. The flag is illuminated at night. It is also often flown by the support craft, or on a nearby jetty with a smaller red flag flown where the diver is actually down.

Reduce speed

Another flag signal commonly seen on the Thames is 'RY' displayed on working craft or river works. It means "pass my vessel or works at slow speed." Men may be working on or close to the waterline.

Vessels engaged in underwater works or survey

Vessels working in the tideway will display 3 black shapes in a vertical line namely *ball/diamond/ball* and by night 3 lights vertically *red/white/red*. Keep clear of dredgers - they may have mooring and breast wires extending well out from the vessel.

Lights on Jetties and Piers

The extremities of jetties, piers and other port facilities are marked on the south shore by 2 red lights placed vertically and on the north shore by 2 green lights.

Temporary works

On the south shore these are marked by 2 or more red lights placed horizontally. On the north shore these are marked by 2 or more green lights placed horizontally.

Wrecks

Wrecks (and underwater obstructions) are marked in accordance with IALA buoyage system.

SOUND SIGNALS

These signals can be used by power driven vessels to indicate their intended actions to other vessels. The use of VHF to clarify intentions on movements does not absolve anyone in charge of a vessel from making the appropriate sound signal. Small craft should however be extra careful and be aware that not all vessels comply.

Sound signals and their meaning

1 short blast - I am altering course to starboard

2 short blasts - I am altering course to port

3 short blasts - My engines are going astern

5 or more short blasts - You are taking insufficient action to keep clear of me or I do not understand your intentions.

4 short blasts then 1 short blast - I am turning round to starboard

4 short blasts then 2 short blasts - I am turning round to port

1 prolonged blast - I am about to get underway, (i.e. depart from moorings, jetty or pier) Or I am approaching a blind bend.

2 long blasts then 1 short blast - I am about to overtake on your starboard side

2 long blasts then 2 short blasts - I am about to overtake on your port side

Reply by vessel being overtaken - 1 long blast, 1 short blast, 1 long blast and 1 short blast

Note: The term 'short blast' means a blast of about 1 second duration. The term 'long blast' means a blast of about 4-6 seconds duration.

3. NOTICES TO MARINERS

These local notices provide important navigational information, mostly of a short term nature. They are issued routinely to port and river users including local yacht and boat clubs and can also be viewed or downloaded on the PLA website (www.portoflondon.co.uk) or obtained by e-mail or post from the PLA at its Gravesend office. Some Notices are issued as '**Permanent Notices to Mariners**' and provide information regarded as remaining valid over the longer term. These are reviewed on a regular basis.

4. NAVIGATING IN THE ESTUARY AND LOWER THAMES

Large vessels are confined to the deep water part of the navigation channel. Recreational users should keep to the correct (starboard) side of the channel, in the shallower water and not hinder commercial vessels proceeding along the channel.

Be aware of vessels boarding and landing pilots. These operations can result in both the vessels and the pilot cutters serving them undertaking some unexpected manoeuvres. Extra care is needed when passing through the following areas:

- The Ooze and Warp;
- Medway Approach Channel;
- Coryton and Canvey Island;
- Gravesend Reach;
- Tilburyness and Tilbury Lock Entrance;
- Northfleet Hope;
- Broadness;
- Stoneness;
- Long Reach.

In the estuary, large vessels are severely restricted by width of channels. Do not underestimate the speed of ships. If your boat is slow it is more difficult to take effective evasive action.



Large vessels have little room to manoeuvre in narrow channels

Recreational craft should use channels most suited to the size of their vessel.

- When navigating to or from the north use the Middle Deep, Swin and Warp. Barrow Deep and Warp.
- When navigating to or from the south, use the Horse and Gore and Four Fathom Channels.
- Foulger's Gat should be used in preference to Fisherman's Gat.

Recreational craft are also advised to avoid the Princes Channel, the Black Deep and Fisherman's Gat, which are used extensively by large commercial vessels.

Small vessels should also keep well clear of the Yantlet Channel. This is marked by centre line buoys to provide deep draught vessels with a suit-

ably marked deep-water channel. Small craft crossing routes are marked on Admiralty charts as detailed below.



Canvey Island and Shellhaven Area

Recreational craft passing the Canvey, Shellhaven and Coryton areas should adhere to the following procedure whenever possible:

- Inward from the North – Keep close to starboard hand buoys and beacons. At the West Leigh Middle, cross to the south side to be clear of the Yantlet Channel, having first made sure that the fairway is clear. Make for East Blyth Buoy before turning onto the inward track. Remember outward vessels will pass close to the port hand buoys. As indicated on navigational charts, there is safe water for small vessels to the south of the Mid Blyth, West Blyth, and Lower Hope Buoys. When it is safe, cross to the starboard side in Lower Hope Reach as rapidly as possible.
- Outward to the North – As above in reverse, but crossing to the north between Sea Reach No. 4 & 5 buoys.
- Inward from the south – Keep well clear of the Yantlet Channel to the south, crossing to the north side in the Lower Hope as described above.

Dangerous Underwater Obstructions – Gravesend Reach

There are a series of 6 groynes, only exposed at low tide, on the north side of the river in the vicinity of East Tilbury. The southern end of each groyne is marked by a green beacon carrying a green conical shape and a green light flashing 2.5 seconds. The northern end of each groyne is marked by a yellow beacon carrying a yellow St Andrew's Cross. Do not attempt to navigate between the north shore and the green marks or lights.

Oil and Gas Jetties

The fire, pollution and security risks at oil and gas jetties require additional care by river users when navigating near these installations. All vessels must maintain a minimum clearance of 60 metres from an oil or gas jetty or berthed tanker.

5. NAVIGATING IN THE UPPER THAMES

Restricted Areas

- Houses of Parliament (Lambeth Reach): No vessels, including recreational craft, are to go within 70 metres of the northern bank of the River Thames between Westminster Bridge and a point 200 metres below Lambeth Bridge.



- Albert Embankment (Lambeth Reach): No vessels, including recreational craft, are to go into the exclusion zone which extends from the upstream side of Vauxhall Bridge to the lower side of Lacks Dock and from the embankment for a distance of 15 metres into the river.

Navigating Above Cherry Garden Pier

A vessel of less than 40 metres length or a sailing vessel shall not impede the passage of a vessel of 40 metres or more in length or a vessel engaged in towing.

Navigating Above Westminster Bridge

Vessels of less than 20 metres in length and sailing vessels shall not impede the passage of a vessel of 20 metres or more in length.

Kew Road Bridge and Pier

Visibility on the bend near Kew Bridge is particularly restricted and passenger boats regularly manoeuvre on and off Kew Pier. All craft are to navigate with extreme caution in this area. Powered vessels are reminded to sound one prolonged blast when approaching the bridge from either direction and when leaving Kew Pier. All vessels should listen carefully for – and be guided by – the sound signals.



Navigating Richmond Lock and Weir

A half-tide lock and rising sluice gates operate at Richmond. The lock is 76m long and 8m wide. Use of the lock, which has a Lock Foreman on duty 24 hours a day, is free to most recreational craft.

When the sluice gates are down and the weir closed, the following signals are in operation:

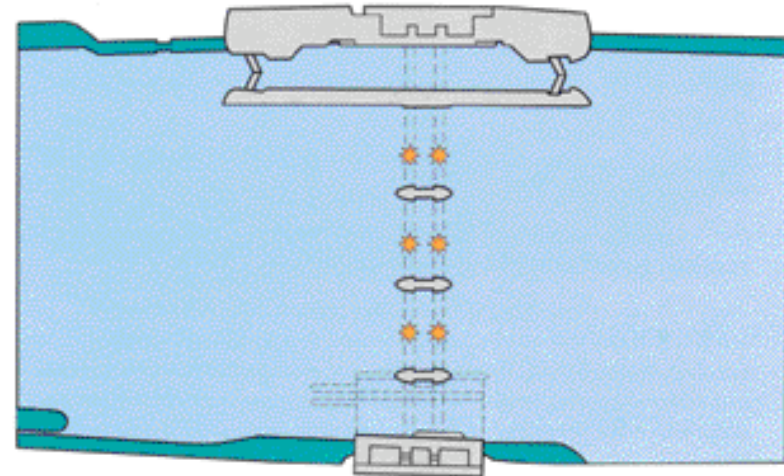
- By Day - 3 red discs in the form of an inverted triangle shown at each arch.
- By Night - An inverted triangle of 3 red lights at each arch.

In addition an illuminated sign on the upper end of lock entrance reads 'Weirs are closed please use Lock'. The lock must be used in these circumstances.

For approximately 2 hours either side of high water the weir sluice gates are raised allowing free passage. At these times the following signal is displayed by day and night:

- 2 amber lights shown at each arch - weir open, free navigation.

Mooring trots along the Deer Park bank are expressly for the use of those craft waiting to use the lock. Small craft rollers in the Isleworth bank arch are available for canoes and skiffs instead of locking. At low water the depth below the weir is restricted and care should be taken when approaching from downstream. The maintained level of water above the weir is 1.72m above OD Newlyn.



Richmond Lock and Weir

☀ = Navigational light

6. NAVIGATING THE THAMES BARRIER

Thames Barrier Control Zone

A permanent Control Zone, encompassing the Thames Barrier, is established between Margaretness and Blackwall Point. All vessels navigating within the Zone are subject to the requirements of current General Directions as summarised below.

The Thames Barrier consists of nine piers numbered 1 to 9 from north to south and ten spans lettered A to K from south to north:

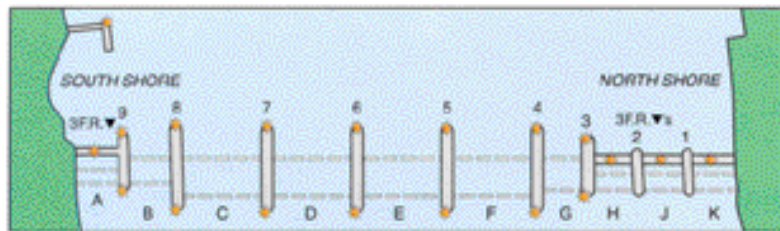
Spans B to G are open to navigation subject to the restrictions described in current General Directions.

Spans C, D, E and F are 61m wide with a depth of 5.8m below Chart Datum.

Spans B and G are 31.5m wide with a depth of 1.2m below Chart Datum and have depth boards on Piers 3 and 9.

Spans A, H, J and K are permanently closed to navigation.

Under normal circumstances, and subject to the requirements of partial closures, the northern spans E, F and G are used for inward bound traffic and the southern spans B, C, and D are used for outward-bound traffic.



Navigation through the Thames Barrier

● = Navigational light

Light Signals

Each navigational span of the Barrier has an array of traffic signals on the ends of the adjacent piers to indicate the spans open to navigation and those that are closed. The light signals will be displayed both by day and by night. Spans are open only to traffic in a single direction at any one time.

Spans Open to Navigation

Green Arrows will be exhibited from the ends of piers either side of the span(s) open to navigation. The arrows point inwards towards the span open to navigation from a particular direction.

Spans Closed to Navigation

Red Crosses will be exhibited from the ends of the piers either side of span(s) closed to navigation from one or both directions.

Spans Permanently Closed to Navigation

Span A to the south and spans H, J and K to the north are permanently closed to navigation and display at their centres the signals prescribed in the River Byelaws for closed bridge arches, namely:

- **By day**, three red discs 0.6m in diameter at the points of an equilateral triangle, with the apex downward and the base horizontal.
- **By night**, three red lights in similar positions to the discs displayed by day.

Thames Barrier Notice Boards

In addition to VHF radio, London VTS communicates with river traffic through illuminated Thames Barrier Notice Boards, fitted with flashing red and amber warning lights, situated on the embankment at the western and eastern limits of the Control Zone.

When either the red or amber lights are flashing, the Notice Board will display a message directing vessels to call London VTS on VHF Channel 14 for more information and instructions.

Navigation through the Barrier Control Zone

Under normal conditions navigation is through one span in each direction as indicated by the appropriate signals. Depending upon circumstances it may be possible to make an additional span available. Vessels wishing to use an additional span need to make a request in good time to London VTS.

Vessels passing through the Barrier must use only spans indicated as being available by the traffic signals and/or allocated by London VTS. Information regarding spans available for navigation will be broadcast in routine broadcasts.

Persons in charge of vessels navigating through the Thames Barrier are advised that at certain states of both flood and ebb tides, eddies caused by the presence of the structure may have an adverse effect. Effects are particularly marked for slow moving craft including those being towed.

Navigation between piers exhibiting red crosses or the red lights and shapes is prohibited.

Overtaking and Manoeuvring Restrictions

Any vessel wishing to overtake another vessel, or any vessel wishing to carry out manoeuvres in the Thames Barrier Control Zone, may only do so with the express permission of the Harbourmaster at London VTS.

Vessels Under Sail

Vessels proceeding under sail between the Woolwich Ferry Terminal and Hookness must keep to the starboard side of the fairway and are not to impede any other vessels. Whenever possible, such vessels should take in their sails and use motor power to navigate through the Thames Barrier.

Small Vessels (under 20 metres in length)

All small vessels and craft such as yachts, dinghies, power boats, sculls, rowing boats and canoes not fitted with VHF radio are to:

- a) comply with any signals exhibited on the Thames Barrier Notice Boards; and
- b) navigate inwards through the northern most span and outwards through the southern most span open to navigation and having sufficient depth of water.

Further information about navigation through the Thames Barrier, including information on procedures for Barrier Closures is included in the PLA publication: '**Permanent Notices to Mariners**'.

Other Flood Barriers (Head clearances above MHWS)

Barking Creek - 33.5m
Dartford Creek - 12.2m
Easthaven Creek - 3.3m
Fobbing Creek - 9.3m
Benfleet Creek - 1.6m

All Barriers show red flashing lights when closed.

7. ROWING

All rowing boats on the tidal Thames must comply with the Port of London River Byelaws, which incorporate the Colregs. In particular:

- a proper lookout must be maintained at all times;
- rowing boats shall, whenever possible, navigate outside the main channel or fairway;
- a rowing boat which for any reason has to navigate within the main channel or fairway, shall not impede the passage of a vessel which, because of draught or size, can safely navigate only within the main channel or fairway; and
- a rowing boat proceeding along the main channel or fairway shall also comply with Rule 9(a) of the Colregs and "keep as near to the outer limit of the channel or fairway which lies on her starboard side as is safe and practicable".

Further information about rowing rules and regulations is included in current PLA Notices to Mariners.



8. WATER SPORTS

Personal Water Craft

Except in specially defined areas (see below), the use of Personal Water Craft (PWC) – i.e. jetskis, jetbikes etc, water-skiing, aquaplaning, and parakiting are not allowed on the tidal River Thames in a fairway or within 200 metres of any public beach, bathing place, residential property, wharf or jetty.

The only authorised areas for PWC are:

1. Fobbing Creek - Launch at Pitsea Hall County Park
2. West Beach, Southend - Contact Southend Council Pier and Foreshore Office

For further information please check with Southend Foreshore Office at Pier Hill, Southend on Sea (telephone 01702 611889 / 215620). Participants must manoeuvre at moderate or slow speed appropriate to the local conditions when proceeding to or from the authorised areas through the designated access routes.

Water-skiing

The authorised areas for water-skiing are:

1. Marsh End Sands - Launch at Two Tree
2. Tewkes Creek - Launch at Two Tree Causeway
3. Holehaven Creek - Launch at Pitsea Hall County Park

Participants must keep well clear of the Fobbing and Easthaven Tidal Barriers and manoeuvre their boats at moderate or slow speed appropriate to the local conditions when proceeding to or from the authorised areas.

The person in charge of a craft towing a person water skiing or parakiting shall ensure:

- a lifebuoy or other means of protecting life is on board;
- at least one other person is aboard and able to take charge of the vessel and to give such assistance as may reasonably be required during the towing; and
- there are always two 'look-outs' on the towing boat, one to control and watch the boat and one to watch the participant.

Board Sailing

The tidal Thames is extremely hazardous for boardsailing. The PLA therefore advises that boardsailing be restricted to the following areas:

- Westward of Putney Bridge; and
- Areas clear of the navigable channel and approaches to commercial berths in:
 1. Erith Rands
 2. Mucking Flats
 3. Blyth Sands/ All Hallows
 4. Southend Pier to Canvey Island (Thorney Bay)

Be aware that sailboards are subject to the same byelaws and collision regulations that apply to all small vessels. Also remember that when a board sailor falls off their board they cannot see or be seen. Always wear a life jacket or appropriate buoyancy aid.

General guidance for all water sport activities

The following points apply to all those taking part in these types of activities:

- you **must** wear a lifejacket or appropriate buoyancy aid;
- you should hold adequate third party insurance cover against accidents, injury, damage etc; and
- you should join a recognised Club or Association for the activity.

Training courses for personal watercraft and powerboating are held at the Southend Marine Activities Centre, Eastern Esplanade, Southend SS1 2YH. Tel: 01702 612770. (www.southendmarineactivitiescentre.co.uk)

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) also has courses on personal watercraft, powerboating, windsurfing and sailing at all levels. Tel: 0845 345 0400 or 0845 345 0384 (www.rya.org.uk)

9. OTHER RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Swimming

Swimming in the tidal Thames is not safe. Powerful currents, undertows, underwater obstructions, deep mud and passing vessels all present very real dangers. Furthermore, even during hot weather, cold water can weaken a strong swimmer. Swimming also presents a hazard to other river users - not least by impeding the navigation of vessels and by presenting a potential additional hazard, especially near bridges, piers, barriers, etc. The PLA does not permit swimming activities in the tidal Thames.

Foreshore

Rapidly rising tides, soft mud, wash from vessels and slip and trip hazards make the foreshore a dangerous place. Anyone going on the foreshore should be aware of Weil's Disease. Infection is usually through cuts in the skin, eyes, mouth, or from swallowing contaminated water. Medical advice should be sought immediately if any ill effects are experienced after visiting the foreshore, particularly if 'flu like' symptoms become apparent, i.e. high temperature, aching muscles and joints. Tell your doctor you have been on the foreshore.

Avoid hypodermic needles on the foreshore. These can transmit serious diseases. If you are pricked by a needle, contact a doctor urgently for advice and treatment.

In summary, it is not recommended that you go onto the foreshore.

10. VESSELS ARRIVING FROM ABROAD

Infectious Diseases

It is the responsibility of the person in charge of a vessel due to arrive in the Port of London to report to the London Port Health Authority the presence of infectious illness on board or of the death (other than by accident) of a crew member or passenger.

Pets

The Port of London is not an approved place for landing animals from abroad. Landing an animal for quarantine is only permitted by prior arrangement with the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Guidance is available from the London Port Health Authority.

Any dog, cat or other animal on a vessel arriving from abroad must at all times be restrained and securely confined within a totally enclosed part of the vessel. It must not land nor come into contact with animals ashore. Failure to observe the rules is a criminal offence. Penalties include heavy fines and destruction of the animal. It is not an offence to have a pet aboard a UK based yacht or vessel, provided it is not taken outside the UK waters.

11. EMERGENCIES

Coastguard

London Coastguard is based at Thames Barrier Navigation Centre (London VTS). It is responsible for the co-ordination of all maritime search and rescue (SAR) incidents on the tidal Thames between Canvey Island (Holehaven Creek) and Teddington.

Thames Coastguard based at Walton-on-Naze, is responsible for the co-ordination of all maritime SAR activities to the east of Canvey Island.

Emergency Communications

If you get into difficulty (or see or hear anyone in distress) call for help by either:

- dialling 999 and asking for "Coastguard"
- broadcast a "MAYDAY" or "PAN-PAN" call on VHF Channel 16 or call Thames Coastguard, London Coastguard or London VTS.

Note: VHF Digital Selective Calling (DSC) alert on Channel 70 is not available at London Coastguard.

Distress Signals

Users of small boats or craft can also make use of distress flares, rockets, smoke floats and other recognised international distress signals, but only if they are in distress and need immediate assistance.

Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)

RNLI lifeboat stations are located at Teddington, Chiswick, Tower Pier, Gravesend, Southend-on-Sea, Sheerness, Whitstable, Burnham, Walton-on-Naze and Harwich. In an emergency, contact the Coastguard.

12. FURTHER READING

Considerable navigation, safety and other information is now available on the PLA website at www.portoflondon.co.uk. For example, you can view the latest Notices to Mariners and check tide times for the months ahead. The following PLA publications are also available:

- Tide Tables and Port Information Handbook
- Port of London River Byelaws
- General Directions for Navigation in the Port of London
- Permanent Notices to Mariners

Other Publications

Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson Ltd. publishes some useful publications. These include:

- Imray Yachting Chart C2: River Thames - Teddington to Southend
- London's Waterway Guide
- Inland Waterways Guide
- The River Thames

Contact:

Imray, Laurie, Norie and Wilson, Wych House, The Broadway, St Ives, Cambridgeshire PE27 5BT.
Telephone: 01480 462114 Website: www.imray.com

UK Hydrographic Office publishes:

- Admiralty Chart 3319 – Teddington to London Bridge
- Admiralty Chart 2484 – London Bridge to Holehaven
- Leisure Folio SC5606 – Ramsgate to Tower Bridge

Contact:

UK Hydrographic Office, Admiralty Way, Taunton TA1 2DN
Telephone: 01823 337900 Website: www.ukho.gov.uk

The RNLI publishes a very useful range of free booklets on different aspects of safe recreational activities on the water. Subjects include:

- motorboating
- dinghy sailing
- sailing
- personal watercraft safety

Telephone: 01202 663000/0845 122 6999 Website: www.lifeboats.org.uk

14. SOME USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES

Emergencies

Emergencies only Dial 999 (ask for 'Coastguard')

Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA)

Website www.mcga.gov.uk
General enquiries 0870 600 6505
London Coastguard (routine enquiries) 020 8312 7380
Thames Coastguard (routine enquiries) 01255 675518

RNLI (Lifeboats)

Website www.lifeboats.org.uk
In an emergency Dial 999 (ask for 'Coastguard')
General Enquiries 01202 663000/0845 122 6999

British Waterways

Website www.britishwaterways.co.uk
General Enquiries 01923 201200
London Regional Office 020 7286 6101
Bow Lock 020 7308 9930
Brentford Creek Tidal Lock 020 8568 2779
Brentford Lock 020 8560 1120
Limehouse Lock 020 7308 9930
West India Dock Entrance 020 7987 7260

Environment Agency

Website www.environment-agency.gov.uk
General Enquiries 08708 506506
Thames Region (Reading) 08708 506506
Emergency Hotline (pollution etc) 0800 80 70 60
Teddington Lock 020 8940 8723
Shepperton 01276 454900
Floodline 0845 988 1188

London Port Health Authority

Head Office 020 7332 1611
Tilbury Office (24hr response) 01375 842663
Gravesend Office 01474 363033
Charlton 020 8858 2751

Met Office (weather)

Website: www.metoffice.com
General enquiries: 0870 900 0100/01392 885680

Metropolitan Police, Marine Support Unit 020 7275 4421 / 4422

NOTES

Other Organisations

Amateur Rowing Association www.ara-rowing.org
0870 060 7100

British Canoe Union www.bcu.org.uk
0115 982 1100

National Association of Boat Owners www.nabo.org.uk
0121 475 6273

Royal Yachting Association www.rya.org.uk
0845 345 0400 or 0845 345 0384

Southend Marine Activities Centre www.southendmarineactivitiescentre.co.uk
01702 612770

Port of London Authority

Website www.portoflondon.co.uk
General Enquiries 020 7743 7900
Port Control Centre 01474 560311
Thames Barrier Navigation Centre 020 8855 0315
Richmond Lock 020 8940 0634
Harbour Master Lower (below Crossness) 01474 562200
Harbour Master Upper (above Crossness) 020 7743 7900

