

'Moor or less' response

Mooring on London's waterways

14 March 2014

Submission from the Environment Agency in response to the London Assembly Environment Committee's report on Moorings on London's Waterways 'Moor or Less'

Introduction

London Assembly conducted an investigation into the impacts arising in London from the increasing popularity of living on boats on inland waterways. A report was produced in November 2013 which set out a number of recommendations, including a call for additional moorings that the London Assembly hope can help address the overcrowding and improve relations between the different people who use the waterways.

This paper has been prepared in response to the recommendations made in the report.

Our role and remit as a navigation authority

The Environment Agency is the navigation authority for the non-tidal River Thames and a short section of the tidal river downstream of Teddington.

We have a responsibility to maintain a navigable channel for river users, to maintain our locks, gates and chambers in a safe working condition for boating.

We manage water levels to balance the many uses of the river, including boating, retaining enough for water companies to extract, managing flood risk and ensuring conservation sites, fisheries and water quality are protected.

Navigation boundary

Our navigation role extends from Lechlade in Wiltshire on the non-tidal River Thames to the tidal boundary with the Port of London Authority at Teddington.

Our response to recommendations made in the report:

Recommendation 1:

"To increase mooring supply on London's canals, the Canal and River Trust should ensure as far as possible that towpaths have soft verges, mooring rings or bollards, are free of debris or silting up in the waterway and, where possible, are accessible to boaters with disabilities. On the Thames, the Port of London Authority and Environment Agency should look to increase the supply and accessibility of moorings where possible, including visitor moorings".

Our response to recommendation 1:

We recognise the popularity of our managed moorings along the River Thames to our customers. We have been and will continue to manage our moorings effectively and increase the supply and accessibility of moorings where practicable, subject to funding and resources. Our visitor, short and long term facilities are an important source of revenue towards being able to provide a more sustainable overall navigation service.

Recommendation 6:

“Relevant authorities, particularly the Canal and River Trust, the Mayor and London Waterways Commission, Transport for London and the police, should support work to engage boating and waterside communities, particularly the Better Relationships on the Waterways project and boater wardens. Support could include attending meetings, taking forward conclusions and agreements, and potentially some small financial or organisational resources”.

Our response to recommendation 6:

We are fully engaged and regularly meet with our customers and the trade along the River Thames. We engage on all recreational and trade activity on the River Thames through groups including the Thames Navigation User Forum, British Marine Federation, River Thames Alliance and River User Groups. We also have strong links with other navigation authorities including the Canal and River Trust and Broads Authority through National Navigation Users Forum and Association of Inland Navigation Authorities. These groups play a vital role to allow us to share knowledge and expertise with each other. We will continue to work with other navigation authorities as we recognise the value of partnership working to strive for consistent ways of working.

Recommendation 5:

“The Canal and River Trust should review the provision of facilities and lighting, and lead the production and implementation of a facilities strategy for London waterways. It should aim to ensure that facilities are:

- sufficient to cope with increasing boater numbers and encourage less concentrated mooring*
- readily-available and well-signposted for cruisers and accessible to all boaters including those with disabilities*
- available when needed, with prompt maintenance seven days a week*

The facilities strategy should also seek to support the operation of service boats and the wharves they need”.

Our response to recommendation 5:

We regularly review the facilities we provide at our sites, and their condition. Where our funding and resource allow we aim to maintain the provision of our facilities and improve them if we can for the benefit of our river users. Regular risk assessments at our sites allow us to manage the health and safety of the public and our staff. We will continue to engage with the Canal and River Trust to aim for a consistent provision of facilities and lighting on our waterways in London where our funding allows.

For further information please contact:

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