

# Swimmable Rivers

Aerial view of central London

## Key information

Publication type: Current investigation

Publication status: Adopted

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## Introduction

The Environment Committee is investigating the Mayor's commitment for swimmable rivers in London within 10 years. The Committee will seek to understand what work is required to reach this goal.

## Investigation aims and objectives (Terms of Reference)

This investigation will examine the Mayor's manifesto commitment to "Develop a bold plan for swimmable rivers within 10 years." The Committee will consider what a swimmable river is and how the Mayor can work with partners across London to deliver improvements to water quality and make rivers clean and accessible for Londoners to enjoy safely.

## Key issues

- Improving river water quality involves long-term investment in new infrastructure, and co-operation between a range of stakeholders.

- The Mayor does not directly manage waterways and has only limited and indirect powers to influence them.
- The concept of what is meant by a ‘swimmable river’ needs to be defined – both in terms which water bodies are included, and what is meant by ‘swimmable’ (in terms of water quality and access for activities).
- There are likely to be a range of social and cultural factors that affect whether people engage in water-based activities, as well as ability to swim safely, location of sites, ease of access, infrastructure and costs.

## Key questions

- How can you measure whether a river is ‘swimmable’?
- What should the success criteria/framework for an effective 10-year plan be? Which groups will be part of the engagement and delivery for this plan? How will rivers be prioritised?
- How can the Mayor ensure ‘swimmable rivers’ are accessible to all Londoners, especially those from minority communities?
- What funding and other measures should the Mayor commit to this, and what action should the Mayor prioritise?
- How can improvements for swimmable rivers contribute to nature recovery, and also take into account the needs of other river users? Are there any risks associated with this approach?

## Call for Evidence

As part of this investigation, the Committee has issued a Call for Evidence.

The Committee would like to invite organisations or individuals with relevant experience or expertise to provide evidence to inform the work of the Committee and influence its recommendations to the Mayor.

[Call for Evidence - DOCX](#)

[Call for Evidence - PDF](#)

The deadline for submissions is Monday 20 January 2025.

## Survey

As part of this investigation, the Committee has issued a [survey](#) for Londoners to provide their experiences of how they use rivers and waterways in London and their thoughts about how rivers and waterways could be improved.

**This survey closes Friday 7 February.**

## Publications

In December 2024, the Committee wrote to Defra as part of its consultation on [Reform of the Bathing Water Regulations 2013](#).

[Read the Committee's letter on the Defra Bathing Water consultation in full](#)  
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