



**Kent
Police**

SPORT & RECREATION ON THE THAMES

COVID-19 – 13 May 2020

This notice replaces No.6 of 2020 which is hereby cancelled

The Government released updated plans for the response to the COVID-19 pandemic on Monday, 11 May 2020. The overriding guidance in these plans is that people should stay at home as much as possible but can undertake exercise as many times each day as they wish and may drive to outdoor open spaces.

As a result, the Metropolitan Police, Kent Police & Essex Police and the Port of London Authority (PLA) have agreed that, from **Wednesday, 13 May 2020**, the Thames is suitable for undertaking recreational activity, in line with these key elements of Government guidance.

Anyone considering recreational activity on the Thames must consider carefully the risks before going afloat. The Thames remains a challenging environment for recreational activity. Those taking to the water should be experienced, understand the Tideway Code and any other regulations, and take all reasonable precautions to ensure their safety, including using the appropriate safety equipment.

In particular the Police and PLA highlight that, while the Emergency Services are still available to assist in the case of an incident, there is a significant reduction in other river traffic. As a result, should someone come into difficulty it is unlikely they will be seen and/or rescued by a passing vessel. This makes such activity more hazardous than during normal times.

It should also be noted that the PLA's river patrol operations in the upper tidal Thames (Putney to Teddington Lock) are currently scaled down as resources are focused on the resilience of essential port operations.

People considering recreational river use are reminded that drowning accounts for more accidental fatalities in the UK annually than fire deaths in the home or cycling deaths on the road. In particular please be aware of the risk of:

- Cold water shock – low water temperature can numb limbs and render the strongest swimmer helpless in minutes. 2/3 of accidental drowning involve strong swimmers.
- Sub surface hazards. There may be debris and rubbish beneath the surface.
- Currents or water conditions – water does not need to be moving very fast to sweep you off your feet and there may be strong currents even at 'slack' water.

- Alcohol consumption – alcohol severely affects your hazard perception, co-ordination and resistance to the cold.

Recreational Users are reminded that Government guidance may change at short notice which may return to a restriction in recreational activity. As a result, users are recommended to keep up to date with the latest guidance on COVID 19 Restrictions.

Recreational river users with any specific queries over what they are permitted to do they should contact the respective National Governing Body for their particular sport for further advice.

13 May 2020

Port of London Authority
London River House, Royal Pier Road,
Gravesend, Kent DA12 2BG

**Mark Towens - Harbour
Master (Upper)**



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