

## **Enjoying water in the London and South East region**

### **Report on Stakeholder Workshop Findings**

#### **Overview**

Seven stakeholder workshops were held in early 2010. Three were in the Thames region and four in the Southern region at the following locations:

- Ashford,
- Brighton,
- Chichester,
- Guildford,
- Hastings,
- London,
- Oxford.

Originally it was planned to hold a total of six workshops in January 2010 but two workshops were affected by the adverse weather conditions and had to be postponed until March 2010. An additional workshop was held in March 2010 to ensure the postponement did not have an adverse affect on the stakeholders. Two of the workshops were held in the late afternoon/early evening to facilitate attendance.

The workshops involved discussion of key topics in small groups and a mapping exercise. The workshops attracted a total of 220 attendees from a wide range of organisations including national government departments, national agencies, national governing bodies of sport, local clubs and societies, national conservation bodies, regional agencies, national park authorities, local government, local agencies and interested individuals. A total of 152 organisations were present at the workshops out of just over 800 that were invited. This represents a positive response rate for public consultation exercises on strategic issues. Some organisations sent representatives to more than one workshop to ensure that as well as presenting general views detailed local knowledge could be provided at each workshop.

The workshops were designed to obtain views on key general issues affecting water related recreation and also to gather knowledge on the use of water spaces both locally to the workshop and in the region as a whole. At the first three workshops angler involvement was low but this was rectified by the involvement of angling organisations in later workshops.

The vast majority of those organisations and groups involved in water related recreation were represented. There was some concern expressed by participants at two workshops that the participants could have been drawn from a wider social and ethnic background especially in London. The 800 groups invited to the workshops covered a wide range of organisations, interests, abilities, ethnic and social groups.

The steering group for the project and the consultants, the University of Brighton, are very grateful to all the individuals who kindly gave up their time, to attend the workshops.

#### **Workshop Process**

The feedback forms completed by the workshop participants asked them to rate various aspects of the workshop on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the most positive rating. Participants rated highly (4-5) the organisation of the day and the small group discussion sessions. All participants felt their views had been heard except one who recorded a

Enjoying water - workshop report London and South East region  
response of 'maybe'. This participant was contacted after the workshop to ensure their views were clearly understood.

There were some low ratings for the quality of some of the venues used but these had been chosen as low cost venues in central locations accessible by public transport, where venue costs can be high.

### **Workshop Purpose**

The workshops were designed to gather knowledge about the current situation and views about demand and future requirements for water related recreation in the region. The participants in the workshops contributed a wide range of views and many, not just those with direct involvement in water sports, stressed their strong commitment, passion and enthusiasm for water related recreation. This enthusiasm related to a wide range of issues including the pleasure of being in the outdoors, the value of testing yourself alongside others and a passion for nature and the environment. For some the workshops were viewed as an enjoyable event since they were able to communicate their enthusiasm in the context of developing a strategic approach for water related recreation.

The commitment and enthusiasm amongst participants was also found in the posters that 50 organisations prepared for the workshops and nearly all of which have since been posted on the project website where visitors to the site can leave comments. These posters summarise the views of organisations on key issues for water related recreation and provide a resource for other organisations that were unable to attend the workshops.

### **The Analysis Process**

A detailed analysis of the views expressed at workshops was undertaken and the views of participants provide valuable insights especially when placed alongside data gathered from other sources such as policy documents and interviews with National Governing Bodies and other stakeholders. Stronger weighting is given to views that were expressed by a number of different types of stakeholder and those that were aired in more than one workshop.

The findings from this analysis are cross referenced with data obtained using other methods as part of the process for developing the strategic approach to water related recreation. This included an analysis of existing plans and strategies, a computer mapping audit of recreational activity, site visits and in-depth interviews with key knowledge holders and strategic stakeholders. This detailed body of evidence informs the identification of the strategic priorities for the Enjoying Water strategic approach to water related recreation for London and the South east region. The findings and proposals will be subject to a consultation exercise later in 2010. The priorities will include spatial priorities identifying the locations where water related recreation should be encouraged. This approach has been successfully adopted in developing a strategic approach in other regions – see [www.brighton.ac.uk/waterrecreation](http://www.brighton.ac.uk/waterrecreation). Many of the key issues identified at workshops will be directly addressed by the Enjoying water strategic approach.

The rest of this document provides a summary of the key views expressed at the workshops and focuses on those views expressed by a range of participants and in a number of different workshops. The next section outlines the views that summarise the distinctive features of the London and South East region that have to be considered when developing strategic priorities for water related recreation. It is important to emphasise that the views expressed below are those of the workshop attendees and are not those of the consultants, the University of Brighton, preparing the strategic approach or the organisations represented on the project steering group.

## Summary of Findings

### Water Related Recreation in a World City region

**The regional context.** Many workshop participants noted that water related recreation in the London and South East region is shaped by the economic and social distinctiveness of the region. The status of London as a world city financial centre and the concentration in the region of the headquarters of large corporations alongside national and international government bodies affects the demand and supply processes for water related recreation. In such a regional context participants told us how the high value of land impacts on water related recreation as waterside sites can command a premium price for residential and commercial development which affects space for recreational facilities and access to inland and coastal waters.

**Protect and improve waterside access.** Strong views were expressed on the need to protect and improve waterside access for recreation in areas where property development pressures were strong despite the recession, such as on the River Thames, in city centres (e.g. Guildford and Oxford) and in certain coastal locations (e.g. urban south Hampshire). In some parts of the region high land values negatively affected anglers as it was felt private landowners or farmers over the last decade had been looking to increase rents or encourage more commercial fishing which had put pressure on some club waters.

**Economic characteristics.** The economic characteristics of the region also affect the demand for water related recreation. The relative concentration of wealthy people in the region leads to a demand for very high quality spaces and facilities for some water sports. Participants stressed that this is also a factor in supporting the concentration of the leisure marine industry on the south coast which meets international (especially when the pound is weak) as well UK demand.

**Social deprivation.** The London and South East region also contains major concentrations of deprivation especially in Inner London and certain coastal towns. Participants described a number of examples of good practice in areas of deprivation and elsewhere where water related recreation initiatives played a role in tackling social exclusion, disability and a range of social problems such as crime and truancy.

Participants stressed that there had been a noticeable change in many clubs and organisations involved in water related recreation in terms of their willingness to address social inclusion and health agendas partly as a requirement of accessing government funding and grants. Good practice examples cited by participants, included the wheelyboat trust for disabled angling, low cost day entry to Lymington sailing club, Get Hooked on Fishing and the Thanet coast project. A number of participants felt that there demand for water recreation opportunities was growing amongst people with disabilities and this would require further suitably designed facilities at sites throughout the region.

**2012 Olympic and legacy.** The distinctive features of London and the South east also contributed to London being awarded the role of host city for the 2012 Olympic and paralympic games. Many participants in workshops felt that the Olympics was an exciting event for water related recreation given the good performances in water sports in previous Olympics but they also expressed strong views concerning the sporting legacy of the Olympics for the region. It was recognised that the facilities legacy in the region would include major water sport venues, such as the Broxbourne White Water Canoe centre and improvements to Dorney Lake in Windsor.

Views on the participation legacy were mixed but many participants did not see the Olympics having a major impact on participation and a number of sporting bodies were not planning for a linked increase in participation. It was felt, however, that the redesigned water spaces in the Lee valley to accommodate the Olympic park would

Enjoying water - workshop report London and South East region  
 create opportunities for using the water during and after the Olympics but these were not being addressed in legacy planning.

Indeed, participants at workshops in and outside London stressed that the changes in the Lee valley linked to the Olympics offered an opportunity to create a strategic corridor for water related recreation on and beside the water that would be of value to people from very different social and ethnic backgrounds. Currently participants were not confident this opportunity was being addressed.

**Transport and door step opportunities.** The London and South East region also contains a very dense public and road transport system. This allows those involved in water related recreation to access a wide range of opportunities but often by car. Participants told us how for certain activities where water spaces were lacking (e.g. surfing) or access to water was limited (e.g. canoeing on fast moving water) then people regularly travelled outside the region to pursue their activities.

Workshop participants stressed that the overall travel patterns of participants in water related recreation, especially movement to the south coast from London would be difficult to change significantly since London simply could not offer the quality of water spaces for some sports found on the coast and in more rural areas of the South East region.

Nevertheless, participants also emphasised that all types of recreational participant can benefit from good quality 'doorstep' opportunities either for novices to engage with an activity or for experts to practice their skills. It was felt improvements in 'doorstep' opportunities would help expand participation and also limit further growth in long distance car travel for water related recreation.

Participants noted that residents of outer London have relatively limited access to doorstep opportunities and thus especially residents in south London travel long distances to the coast. Thus expanding opportunities on the edge of London was seen as potentially very beneficial.

**Sub-regional complexity.** Overall, workshop participants felt that the scale, complexity and diversity of the London and South East region in economic, social, geographical and environmental terms was a major challenge for identifying gaps in provision and developing strategic priorities for water related recreation. Some stressed that it was important to address the sub-regional geography of the region by taking account of the sub-regions identified for new growth in spatial plans and areas where water related recreation was of major significance (e.g. the Solent).

Compared to the rest of the UK the region was seen as having advantageous facilities for sailing, rowing, diving, yacht cruising, personal watercraft and coastal swimming.

The participants in mapping exercises and discussion identified a range of range of existing significant waters for water related recreation listed in Table 1 below which included those heavily used and those where there was believed to be potential for more use.

**Table 1 Significant waters for water related recreation**

Water type	Waters
<b>Rivers</b>	The blue ribbon network rivers in London, the Thames, Medway, Test, Itchen, Avon (hants), Hamble Lee Valley rivers and canals, Ouse, Adur, Arun, Western and Eastern Rother, Colne (Herts), Windrush, Jubilee, Cherwell, Meon Cuckmere, Mole, Wey and Godalming Navigation
<b>Enclosed waters</b>	Southwater (Horsham), Blackwater Valley Lakes Caversham Lakes, Reservoirs on the edge of west of London (used and underused) Bewl Water, Warwick Reservoir, Farmoor Reservoir and Arlington Reservoir

## Enjoying water - workshop report London and South East region

	Royal docks, Brent reservoir, Frensham Greatponds, Serpentine, Hampstead Ponds, Lee valley reservoirs
<b>Coast</b>	Solent, Hamble estuary, Isle of Wight, Watersports coast (Brighton/Eastbourne to Rye), Bognor and Littlehampton, Hayling Island , North East Kent, Camber sands
<b>Nature sites</b>	Dungeness, Pagham Harbour, Pulborough Brooks and Brading Marshes, Thames estuary,
<b>Canals</b>	Grand Union, Regents Oxford, Kennet and Avon Canal
<b>Waterside</b>	Thames Path National trail, Thames foreshore, Colne Valley Way, Grand Union Canal Way and the Berkshire Circular Ring Isle of Wight coastal path, river valley walks, including the Blackwater, Itchen, Lee, Meon, Solent, Stour, Sussex Ouse and Wandle Valleys. Thames and Kennet & Avon Cycle Routes and Grand Union towpath

### **What participants told us about participation and the demand for water related recreation.**

#### **Changes in demand– the headlines.**

Workshop participants felt it was hard to identify any forms of water related recreation that were likely to experience a marked decline in participation and demand in the near future unless there were specific problematic events (e.g. foot and mouth or large scale influx of invasive species).

The following factors were seen as playing a significant role in increasing demand and participation for water related recreation in the London and South East region:

- population growth and new housing development;
- public and policy concerns over health and obesity;
- new technology providing cheaper and new forms of recreational equipment;
- an ageing population demanding specific types of recreational opportunities;
- changing demand from tourism either due to increases in domestic holidays in recessionary periods or demand from repeat overseas visitors to the region

Growth in population was seen as a key factor resulting in demand either growing or staying level for most sports. Even if the proportion of the population participating in certain sports stayed level growth in population would lead to an increase in demand.

Participants felt demand was likely to increase most amongst casual participants more than regular recreationalists especially for activities that involved touring along waters or weekend breaks.

**Changes in Participation.** Participants felt that the predicted growth in population in London and the South East would increase and perhaps change the nature of demand of water related recreation. New migrant groups could create changes to demand (e.g. recent demand for angling from new migrants from Central and Eastern Europe).

Recently, participation growth involved increasing use of 'pay and go' facilities for a range of recreational activities with people less willing to join clubs and this trend was predicted to continue. A good example was coarse anglers who used well stocked lakes rather than join clubs. Also it was claimed people had less time to devote to sport and leisure and this impacted on club membership and volunteering. Participants stressed that clubs were finding it hard to retain volunteers for a range of activities but particularly coaching. This situation was often exacerbated by the need to adhere with child protection and health and safety legislation In some boating activities timeshare

Enjoying water - workshop report London and South East region and charter activity were increasingly being used as a way to avoid the difficulties and expense of full ownership. The 'pay and go' facilities for some powered activities were

seen as quite limited partly because they were not on sheltered waters that were preferable for inexperienced users who often seek out 'pay and go' opportunities.

**Planning process.** New housing development and related place making agendas aim to create high quality environments involving new green infrastructure. In this situation new 'blue spaces' maybe developed but many participants felt the planning process often marginalised water related recreation and opportunities were missed particularly in new water side housing developments where developers would highlight recreational activities in advertising material but not deliver them on the ground. It was argued that education and continuing professional development for planners should place greater emphasis on the value of water spaces and related recreation.

Some participants stressed that section 106 agreements could not be relied upon to deliver new facilities for water related recreation as there was intense pressure to use these agreements for other social benefits.

Similarly, participants felt that major flood defence and water management/quality engineering projects often did not maximise associated water related recreation opportunities. It was acknowledged that some recent developments associated with the Thames were looking to leave a legacy (e.g. jetties and public spaces) for both formal and informal water related recreation.

**New Technology and Equipment.** Participants told us how new technology especially in water craft, equipment and wet suits had made it easier for new participants from mid-lower income groups to take up particular activities using small craft (inflatables, ribs, and sit on tops) and to get involved in immersion activities such as surfing/body boarding and triathlon. This had also led to a growing divide in boat size with craft getting bigger overall but there was a growing number of smaller craft being used.

The new technology and equipment had also led recreationalists to take part in a wider range of activities and blurred traditional boundaries between sports. For example, sit on top kayaks had led to a rise in kayak fishing such that the British Canoe Union are about to issue guidance for this activity.

New craft it was felt also raised management issues with some workshop participants arguing more controls were needed as some users were now less abiding of regulations and codes of conduct. It was also noted that the application of by-laws was varied with some harbour authorities using them efficiently whilst others did not do so often because they could not afford the costs involved in prosecution

**Demographics.** The ageing population may also lead to a growth in certain activities as participants suggested older people looking to maintain healthy lifestyles were increasingly taking part in activities such as walking, cycling, cruising, veterans rowing, bird watching and volunteering for nature conservation.

**The Health Agenda.** The health agenda encouraging healthy lifestyles and diets was seen as stimulating demand from all age groups but could also provide new sources of incomes for clubs and organised groups that could offer appropriate opportunities and training. Clubs and activities that had already developed social inclusion initiatives were felt to be well placed to adapt these measures to include a health dimension for socially excluded individuals and groups of people.

Some workshop participants noted, however, that despite the development of the 'blue gym' brand, evidence of the health effects of water related recreation was quite limited (mainly to the evaluation of health walking schemes) and developing such evidence would prove valuable for developing bids and attracting funding. Despite the limited

Enjoying water - workshop report London and South East region  
evidence the health impacts of outdoor water based recreation were believed to be accepted by many stakeholders and improving physical and mental health was viewed as

an important component in creating an inclusive society. Some participants felt, therefore, that there should also be a blue gym initiative or pilot scheme either in London or on the south coast. In addition, participation in water related recreation was seen as being very valuable to the well being of young people. Participation through youth schemes or on school trips was seen as being important for promoting self confidence, team building and physical health. Some schemes targeted at marginalised young people were also identified as having played valuable roles in reducing truancy and offending rates.

**Tourism.** Alongside demand from local residents of London and South East there was a major demand from tourists coming to Britain's most visited region. Some participants stressed that tourism linked to water related recreation was a major source of job creation in particular parts of the south east region. Participants had different views on whether the increase in demand for certain activities due to people holidaying in the UK during the recession would continue in the future due to uncertainty over the timing of the economic recovery and potential future changes to air travel and fares.

Some participants felt that informal water recreation was an important part of the region's tourism product on the coast and inland, especially along the Thames as people like to be beside water especially to watch activity and to picnic. It was noted that seafront regeneration policies and systems of awards for beach cleanliness and water quality improvements had contributed to marked improvements in some of the beaches in the region over the last decade. The water resources in the New Forest and South Downs National Parks were discussed at a number of workshops. Some participants indicated access was limited to rivers in the South Downs Park and that there were opportunities for increased activity at some currently used water bodies in the New Forest Park.

The River Thames was still a major attraction for visitors wanting to walk on the riverside and take boat trips although boat hire had declined and some commercial passenger services were under financial pressure. At some workshops it was noted that integration between passenger boat trip quays and local bus stops, coach setting down points and rail stations can encourage more tourists to take boat trips but that this integration did not always occur in some urban locations.

According to workshop participants the growth in demand for water based touring activities and long distance walking/cycling trails meant that some canals and river navigations have become multipurpose trails. Camping along these trails was also a growing area of demand. Recent years have seen a growth in canoe and rowing boat touring on rivers like the Medway and Thames. Where these activities are accompanied by traditional touring in cruising or canal boats as well as walking and cycling on the river sides multipurpose trails emerge that can also be used for static activities such as angling. Supporting facilities on multipurpose trails, such as pubs and picnic spots can allow informal users to enjoy viewing activities on the water as well as being used by those taking part in water based activity. Participants felt that on some of these trails (and on certain canals e.g. Kennet and Avon) such facilities are limited especially car parking, portage, drop off points for bikes or canoes, cafes, pubs and particularly camp sites. Furthermore, it was claimed many of the walking and cycling trails, including the Thames Path National Trail, have sections where routes have to leave the watersides or sites where the route is poorly managed.

**Key Regional Trends.** At the workshops participants identified key regional participation and demand trends in their activities and these are summarised in table 2. The degree to which these views match or differ from the trends suggested by participation surveys is discussed in the strategic opportunities document.

**Table 2 Workshop participants' views of regional demand and participation**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Angling Coarse, game and sea	Growth is primarily in coarse angling, with a shift in demand from rivers to lakes, reservoirs and commercial fisheries but relatively little angling occurs in London, despite the presence of many moving and still waters. An increase in sea angling in some locations with good access to piers, jetties or beaches. Demand for game angling remains high, particularly on the Test, Itchen and Meon Rivers. In some locations expensive day tickets or club/syndicate membership constrain the participation of some anglers. Environment Agency coaching programmes for young and disadvantaged anglers contribute to growing participation in some urban areas, and the availability of new waters generates some new (as well as some displaced) participation. But development structures and facilities could still improved to encourage new participants especially in London and other urban areas. The recent growth in rod license sales may be linked to the decline in overseas holidays and improved marketing of angling.
Canoeing Paddle-sports	Significant increases in participation in all disciplines. Growth in sea kayaking is linked to new craft. Many paddlers travel outside the region for fast moving water. Latent demand for canoe polo and other disciplines such as canoe touring and safari, particularly where good facilities or routes are made available. There are some good opportunities in the region for touring (including parts of the coast) and play sites although those living in the south of the region feel that more inland touring waters are required to meet demand. Access is viewed as highly restricted on many rivers in the south of the region, in south and west London and on certain Thames tributaries. Demand for play sites often utilising water flows from weirs and locks is high and on rivers such as the Thames and Medway sites are crowded at weekends with paddlers having to queue up to access water. Some paddlers do not share knowledge about their local weir play sites for fear of overcrowding.
Outdoor Swimming and triathlon	Outdoor swimming is a popular activity and use of inland waters and lidos has been high when the summer weather is good but parts of the region lack sites to meet demand. Demand is high for inland water spaces for triathlons and applications to participate in some well managed events (e.g. Windsor) are over-subscribed but access to more waters with shower facilities and nearby cycle routes would help spread the demand.
Sub-aqua diving	Growing regionally but growth constrained by a lack of sites close to population centres with certain sites under threat and visibility at many sites is poor. Opportunities for deep water advanced training are very limited with many divers travelling outside the region to Stoney Cove near Coventry. Wreck sites are popular and new sites are needed to draw demand away from hot spots. More facilities and showers at key sites would help maintain participation and use.
Personal watercraft	After a period of growth participation is static and expected to decline. Few inland waters are available. Much use is made of the coast and main estuaries, and more use could be sustained if better access were made available to slipways.
Kite surfing	Steady growth linked to general growth in adrenaline sports particularly at popular south coast beaches such as Camber Sands, where crowding and conflict can be an issue during the summer season.
Rowing and dragon boats	Limited growth in competitive rowing but more marked growth in recreational rowing and long distance rowing touring but long distance routes are confined to a few rivers. Dragon boating participation has grown but remains small.
Dinghy sailing	Small increases in participation recently but better facilities required if this growth is to continue. Many people travel out of region, particularly to the National Sailing Centre at Weymouth and other sailing centres in the South West. Poor slipway maintenance and management limits opportunities in many parts of the region with only a few opportunities to sail on calmer inland waters in the north and central south of the region.
Surfing	Growth in demand is mainly met by beaches outside the region but paddle surfing has grown recently and surfing tends to be confined to a few specific beaches in the South East with many surfers travelling out of the region.
Wind surfing	Participation static over the last five years. A lack of suitable venues close to London and a lot of the coast is 'unforgiving' to inexperienced windsurfers hence demand for better coastal provision to be made at Hayling Island.
Motor cruising & Narrow boating	A mixed picture depending on what information is used e.g. participation surveys or registrations. Hire market has declined and the growth in numbers of larger private craft with new mooring requirements has ceased due to the economic conditions but due to rising costs some cruising boats are being used less or stored during the recession and will be used more as the economy recovers.
Water skiing and wakeboarding	Little recent change in participation. Demand is often focussed on good inland facilities and pressure may increase as some sites in the region may be lost due to leases ending and health and safety concerns. Cable tow sites are seen as encouraging new participants to try the sport.
Model Boats	The picture on participation was not clear but clubs were spread across the region. Participants were concerned that some council owned waters and lagoons were increasingly being used for other activities or not suitably maintained for model boating.
Yacht cruising and racing	Participation has fluctuated over the last few years as has demand from visiting boaters from Europe. There is still demand pressure on marinas on the south coast and a need for better management of moorings and availability of safe havens in the Thames Estuary.
Walking	Growth in activity but hard to tell if this is based on new participants or more activity by existing walkers. Health walks are growing in popularity
Horse riding	Bridleways around water bodies are popular but can be conflicts with other users. Riding on

## Enjoying water - workshop report London and South East region

	beaches is a much desired activity but only occurs on a limited number of beaches (e.g. Camber Sands) due to access restraints and limited opportunities to park horse boxes.
Cycling	Increasing participation and urban watersides are increasingly used for commuting.
Bird watching	Growth in participation has slowed recently. Some sites in Thames estuary and wetland locations are very popular especially where cars can get close by. Coastal access improvements should enhance bird watching opportunities.
Conservation volunteering	The last twenty years had seen a growth in people using their leisure time to volunteer for conservation projects. This has led to the increasing use of the Thames foreshore in and outside London which is also used by educational groups, archaeologies and informal recreationalists

### **The constraints participants felt limited participation and recreational activity**

Workshop participants highlighted a range of issues that they felt constrained existing participants in water related recreation and discouraged new people from taking up certain activities. Many sites in the region were seen as being at capacity with overcrowding and high costs occurring at many coastal and estuarine locations in the summer.

**Access.** The issue of access to water was discussed in detail at all the workshops. Participants stressed that accessible, good quality and safe 'doorstep' sites for water related recreation were essential to maintaining participation in the future and tackling social issues such as exclusion and poor health. It was noted that in some coastal communities access had recently been improved by new management arrangements.

It was felt by many, however, that there was limited access to water bodies in and just outside London although there are a variety of water bodies for angling in London many of which could accommodate more use.

**Parking Facilities.** Perhaps reflecting the high population densities and crowding at some locations, car parking was highlighted as a constraint in many parts of London and South East especially the lack of parking near slipways and launching sites in the Thames Estuary. Concerns over the quality and management of slipways were raised by participants at all of the workshops with concerns over management responsibilities and maintenance emphasised.

**Legislation.** Differing perspectives on the current legislation regarding access to inland water in the United Kingdom were aired at a number of workshops. Some participants argued that access improvements required legislative change, others supported an incremental non-legislative approach to gaining improved access on specific rivers and some felt the current legal situation was adequate but access could be better managed.

A number of participants highlighted what they saw as the improved situation in Scotland after the implementation of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code of 2005. Other participants emphasised some of the problems they felt had occurred since the Act on certain Scottish rivers. There were also differing views on the issue of payment for access with some participants stressing how anglers paid for a rod license and for access thought rents and club membership. Other participants argued that the current situation regarding payments and rents could be used to exclude other users from waters where they could be accommodated with appropriate management.

**Conflict.** Paddle sports felt that currently access was a significant constraint on their sport encouraging travel out of the region. Outdoor swimmers also felt they generally lacked access across the region except at the coast.

This situation was deemed to play a role in some of the conflicts between users mentioned by participants with some stressing that addressing conflict requires communication, perhaps mediation, and a good understanding of what is possible (e.g. zoning, time limits etc.) A number of forums for addressing conflicts were mentioned

Enjoying water - workshop report London and South East region including Local Access Forums and Coastal and Estuary Partnerships e.g. the Integrated Coastal Zone Partnership for the Manhood Peninsula and the pilot project at Havant, the Coastal Protection Partnership, using Defra 'Coastal Change' resources.

**Information.** Many participants felt that improvements were needed to the information regarding the use of inland and coastal waters where water related recreation currently occurred. The improvements in information on internet sites, signs and leaflets regarding the facilities and management of certain beaches was often noted. But many of the

workshop participants were regular water recreation participants and indicated that they were still uncertain about the access arrangements and facilities available at many inland and coastal locations suitable for their activity. It was suggested that clubs, governing bodies, formal groups (e.g. scouts) often have information about access arrangements which allows them to use certain water bodies but this information is not available to others and the public.

The current general websites providing information on opportunities for water related recreation were viewed by many as being inadequate (angling sites were an exception) in that they were far from comprehensive and provided quite limited information that was not always in a format that the regular public would readily understand. It was recognised that there are significant costs in establishing and particularly in maintaining such websites but many participants felt that compared to some tourism websites many water recreation sites were low quality.

Some participants also noted that often information on water recreation websites was very focussed on the water bodies or water side facilities (e.g. trails) and often failed to highlight the opportunities in the surrounding local area for tourists and informal recreation. They highlighted the emerging internet technology (e.g. community mapping) that easily allows communities and clubs/societies to post information about events and points of interest in their locality and that this could be used make water related recreation sites more dynamic and make them of more value both to visitors, tourists and local residents.

Further information developments that participants identified as useful would be making available more of the technical information and data the Environment Agency and water companies hold on water levels and pollution as this could play a role in managing the use of inland water bodies and ensure they were not used at inappropriate times.

**Schools.** Future participation was also seen as being dependent on schools providing water related recreation experiences and many people have their first experience of formal water related recreation on school trips. There were differing views on the current situation facing schools. Some felt that schools were increasingly constrained by health, safety and risk assessment and were stopping taking trips that involved water related recreation. Others argued that some schools had become used to health, safety and legal arrangements and were expanding with such trips.

**Liability.** In general, participants felt that legal issues and liability were creating problems for a range of water related recreation including even informal water side activities. It was argued that landowners could not readily access guidance on good practice relating to the legal and liability issues involved in managing natural and artificial resources for water related recreation. Thus in some cases owners found it easier simply to ban such activities from their waters.

It was noted that British Waterways and the Forestry Commission had taken some valuable actions to provide information and guidance on liability for owners, operators and recreationalists. It was also felt that the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents guidance on water safety and leisure safety was an increasingly valuable resource.

**Storage Facilities.** Pressures on storage facilities were seen as an issue by some workshop participants for owners of both powered and unpowered craft. Despite new marina technology for dry stacking participants felt that storage facilities were still lacking in coastal parts of the region. In inner and central London clubs and individuals often found it difficult to identify sites to store even small craft. Participants felt that better storage facilities in or near London might encourage people to access waters by foot or public transport

**The Environment.** The impact of environmental issues on water related recreation was discussed from a variety of perspectives. Some participants felt that a range of environmental designations, the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and requirements for environmental impact assessment/strategic environmental assessments could all constrain future recreational activity. For others recent developments in environmental policy that would result in new habitats, increased biodiversity and cleaner water were major opportunities especially for activities such as walking, bird watching and conservation.

Examples of good practice in encouraging participants and organisation involved in water related recreation to address environmental issues were highlighted, including the Green Blue Code of the British Marine Federation and the Royal Yachting Association and the Gold Anchor Award scheme of the Yacht Harbours Association. Conflicts and disagreements did occur between recreational users and those responsible for environmental management particularly at some coastal locations where adrenaline sports occurred. The activities of the Solent Forum in managing potential and current conflicts were identified as an example of good practice.

More opportunities for doing something useful for the environment connected to water-related recreation was a theme raised in some areas. Real demand for educational access such as the Thames foreshore was evident but less so in other locations as there was either less demand or simply less information about where people could go. Nevertheless, educational access with the need for environmental education with a water related recreation focus was identified as an opportunity where more could be done.

**Clubs and Societies.** The challenges facing clubs and societies were also highlighted. In particular, child protection legislation was believed to be discouraging members from becoming involved in coaching. Accreditation schemes, such as Clubmark, were viewed as positive developments but often onerous to obtain. County Sports Partnership officers noted they spent significant amounts of time assisting the managers of multi activity centres in obtaining various forms of certification. Many participants felt there was potential for harmonisation of the various certification schemes.

**Specific Activities.** A number of constraints specific to certain activities were highlighted in workshops. Coarse anglers felt that the development structure for their sport in London could be improved to encourage more participation. For sea anglers facilities were seen as adequate but the major issue facing participants was the decline in fish stocks perceived to be linked to commercial fishing and changes in water quality. The high costs of game angling in the region were also noted.

Boaters and other users of navigations stressed the need for the harmonisation of licensing arrangements, codes of conduct and payment vehicles especially for casual users. It was felt, that this would enable regular users to utilise a wider range of navigations as well as encouraging less regular users. Participants representing boaters also noted that transit/overnight moorings are lacking during busy summer periods which can limit boat movements, coastal marinas are often at full capacity and despite new buoys further safe havens were still desirable in the Thames estuary.

**The Solent.** In the Solent area it was noted that access and navigation was often well managed and involved a range of partners. However, anglers felt there were still locations where new angling sites and facilities could be developed and some boaters felt

Enjoying water - workshop report London and South East region that better access and facilities on the west side of the Test estuary would be useful especially to smaller craft.

### **Opportunities and delivering change**

**Planning and growth areas.** The distinctive features of the London and South East region clearly shaped the views of workshop participants on the opportunities and mechanisms for improving the spaces and facilities for water related recreation. The planning process to accommodate new growth, housing development and green infrastructure was seen as offering significant opportunities providing developers and planners took proper account of the needs and opportunities for water related recreation. Many participants noted that planning authorities were gradually becoming more aware of the important contribution blue spaces can make to local environments and resident's quality of life but felt that there was still a need for clearer planning guidance relating to blue space and that this should include the need to protect existing access to watersides when threatened by new property development.

The new housing and commercial developments in The Thames Gateway, the Milton Keynes area and other growth areas were particularly seen as opportunities to develop linked recreational facilities. The Green and Blue Grid Strategy for the Ashford growth area was highlighted as an example of good practice and of the need to integrate water space into green infrastructure planning. Workshop participants stressed though that whilst policy initiatives could facilitate the development of spaces for water related recreation and new facilities should also be linked to the drivers of supply and demand.

**Water stress and flooding.** The London and South East region also contain large areas at risk of water stress and flooding. New engineering schemes, both large and small, to manage flooding, water drainage, water storage and water quality were also seen as significant areas of private and public sector expenditure which should be designed where possible to leave a legacy of facilities that would be valuable for recreation.

**Environmental policy.** As noted above some participants saw environmental policy as a potential future constraint on water related recreation whereas others felt policy, especially for conservation and biodiversity protection, would lead to the development of valuable new sites. A number of workshop participants noted that the Department of Communities and Local Government had issued a draft Planning Policy Statement for consultation on 'Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment' and that this represented a potentially important opportunity since outdoor recreation and access might in future be addressed alongside biodiversity and land quality issues. It was felt that this would provide an opportunity to highlight the positive role water recreation plays in environment, biodiversity and landscape protection. Some participants stressed that the national plans for improved coastal access needed to take account not just of access along the coast but also current and potential new routes across coastal areas to access water. The requirement for county councils as Mineral Planning Authorities to produce Minerals and Waste Development Frameworks was also seen as both a challenge and opportunity for water related recreation since the process of developing and revising the frameworks might be a vehicle for identifying new water recreation sites but currently recreational interests were not adequately involved in this process. As noted earlier the Olympics and health agenda were other national policy initiatives that it was felt provided opportunities for water related recreation.

**Partnerships for implementation.** Participants recognised, however, that in this dynamic region with a complex geography of planning and delivery structures, the implementation of improvements for water related recreation would often have to involve complex partnerships and a flexible approach to leadership. In growth areas in particular, it was argued partnerships to implement water recreation initiatives might often have to involve regional, sub-regional and local partners.

## Enjoying water - workshop report London and South East region

Some participants noted that in this situation a strategic approach for water related recreation was an important device for ensuring that facilities and spaces developed locally were appropriate given current patterns of demand and supply.

Also organisational leadership would have to be flexible. Some participants felt that in many situations the Environment Agency given its statutory responsibilities for water recreation and navigation may play a key leadership role in partnerships for delivering water related recreation initiatives. It was recognised, however, that depending on the nature of projects and initiatives regional agencies, national governing bodies and local agencies (e.g. harbourmasters and local authorities) could have important roles to play.

In these discussions, the role of private water companies was also considered. The representatives from water companies emphasised that recreation on surface waters owned and managed by water companies have to be considered within the context of operational roles as well as health and safety requirements.

Nevertheless, many participants felt water companies could be more proactive in promoting recreation on and around inland water bodies especially to the west of London where improved facilities could meet demand from London and discourage long distance travel to the coasts. It was also noted that the role of the Conservation, Access and Recreation Reports that water companies produce was limited

**The Thames.** Planning and management for the Thames and its estuary was seen as key strategic driver for water related recreation. The significance of the Thames to many of the region's residents and its role in tourism meant that there was already a framework of for the planning and management of the Thames and its estuary (e.g. Thames waterway plan, the 3 Thames strategies linked to the London Plan - Kew-Chelsea, Chelsea to Kew and Thames East, The Thames landscape strategy) would need to be addressed to ensure the opportunities arising from planning and development were integrated with the demand and supply patterns for water related recreation as well as the need to accommodate freight traffic.

There are also frameworks for stakeholder engagement and conflict management relating to the Thames and its estuary. Participants identified examples of good practice including some of the River User Groups on the Thames, the Port of London Authority's Harbourmaster's Recreational Navigational Group and the code of conduct on the use of personal watercraft. Some participants felt this code of conduct could be used in other parts of the region. Many workshop participants felt there was potential to extend these codes of conduct and stakeholder engagement processes to other parts of the region.

Also in the Thames estuary workshop participants felt that whilst the Royal Docks contained some good recreational facilities there was further potential for additional facilities and that new beaches/lidos besides the Thames would be popular.