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S A F E T Y
GUIDE

Anglian Waterways your rivers for life



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Introduction

Rivers can be both fun and dangerous. This booklet is designed to illustrate how river activities can be enjoyed with minimum risk if the simple guidelines on safety are followed.

This safety booklet forms part of a series of leaflets which contain information about the Rivers Nene, Welland, Glen, Ancholme, Great Ouse and Stour. Each River Guide contains specific information on:

- Locks**
- Facilities**
- Marinas**
- Speed limits**
- Moorings**
- Bridge headroom clearances**

A booklet is also produced, which contains all the relevant Navigation Byelaws for the Anglian Region.

General Principals of Responsibility

- When navigating on a river, people must accept they are dealing with flowing water.
- Boaters must be self-reliant and responsible for their own safety.
- The decision to navigate must be taken by the boat skipper.
- It is the responsibility of the boat skipper to be properly equipped for the type of boating undertaken.
- When there are strong currents, higher river levels or cold weather conditions, the risk associated with any river activity increases.
- Be courteous and always navigate with care and avoid speeding.
- Do not take risks and never underestimate the power of the river.

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General safety tips when boating

Before Setting Off

Before you set off, follow a few simple safety tips...

- Check your boat is in good condition and meets safety standards.
- Check you have lifebelts, an emergency light and a first-aid kit as an absolute minimum.
- Make sure you and your crew know how to handle the boat.
- Get local information before going onto unfamiliar waterways.
- Plan your cruise and allow enough time to complete it without rushing.
- Do not cruise at night, in the dark or when visibility is poor.
- Make a visual check on river flows. If in doubt over high flows, telephone the Agency Floodline Number (Nene and Ouse only) on 0845 9881188 (for more information see Page 12).

Once Aboard

- Use suitable footwear with non-slip soles and never run around deck.
- Use the grab rails when you walk around deck, even when moored.
- Lifejackets or buoyancy aids should be worn by children and non-swimmers at all times and by everybody in adverse weather conditions, or when alone on deck.
- On some boats children can be out of sight; they often sit in dangerous positions and a sharp turn, change of speed or wash from another boat can toss them into the water. Make sure that children are always in a safe place.
- Take care on landing stages and around locks when in wet conditions, as surfaces can be slippery.

When Underway

Speeding is dangerous and illegal. For river speed limits, please refer to the byelaw booklet. Accidents occur more frequently at high speeds, particularly from the wash that speed creates. Unlike a car, a boat will not 'stop in seconds' and therefore needs a longer stopping time, especially when travelling downstream, when control over the boat is less.

All moving vessels make wash. Excessive wash can:

- Endanger people
- Damage moored vessels
- Harm wildlife
- Cause accidents in galleys of moored craft
- Swamp small craft
- Damage river banks
- Interfere with angling

Keep a frequent check on your wash. Due to differing shapes, some boats make more wash than others. Even at a slow speed, your wash will be increased when in convoy. Resist the temptation to keep in a convoy at the speed limit if the resultant wash is too great. It is often sensible to stop briefly to allow your wash to settle to an acceptable level.

Think ahead. Slow down and check your wash when:

- There are moorings ahead
- There are small craft, swimmers or anglers
- The channel ahead narrows

Do not let time rule your journey, relax and enjoy the trip. It is an offence to navigate without care and caution, or in a manner likely to endanger the safety of others, or damage the banks of the river.

Keep a sharp lookout for anglers, who normally fish from the bank and try to keep a good distance from them. Avoid their tackle and create as little disturbance as possible.

When sailing boats are near, maintain a slow steady course but be prepared to give way to avoid collision. In times of little or no wind a sailing boat has almost no control and it will be up to you to avoid it.

In the vicinity of events, take advice from officials or marshals. Sailing races are usually held round a series of buoys, and vessels should avoid these turning marks. There may be congestion near sailing clubs when dinghies gather to race. This should clear within minutes. Motorised craft should be prepared to stop and when clear, proceed at a slow and steady pace.

If in convoy, ensure that there is ample space between each boat to allow good vision ahead and room to manoeuvre.

When near rowing craft, remember that the crew of an uncoxed boat has a problem keeping a lookout ahead, and even a cox may have a limited field of vision.

Anchoring and Mooring

When stopping overnight, or leaving the craft for any appreciable length of time, do not moor in the shallow water, or with a tight rope or chain, as water may fluctuate by as much as one metre in a few hours. If the level drops and a craft is beached or moored in shallow water, it may be damaged. If the level rises, and mooring ropes or chains are tight, the launch may take on water, be pulled under or even break free.

Always ensure there is ample water below your keel and sufficient vertical play on any mooring rope or chain.

An Introduction to Using Locks

There are 70 Environment Agency locks in the Anglian Region. Boaters, especially those new to the rivers, should make sure they know how to operate and use locks correctly. Children should not be allowed to operate any lock and should be supervised at all times.

The majority of locks in the Region have steel or wooden pointing doors (also known as mitre or 'vee' doors) and vertical steel gates (known as guillotine gates). On some locks guillotine gates are automated (electrically operated), whilst others will require manual winding. Keys are required to operate locks on the River Nene and River Great Ouse, because the vertical gates have security locks. Keys can be purchased from marinas or by contacting 01733 371811. A windlass is also required to operate the paddles in the mitre doors. Windlasses are available from boat yards and chandlers.

Please note, when navigating the Nene always leave locks with the pointing doors closed and the vertical gate raised, secured and locked.

When doors / gates are open on approach:

- Enter lock slowly and moor up, ensuring an adult has control of the head and stern mooring lines.
- Make sure that the guillotine gate, mitre doors and paddles (if present) are closed.
- According to the direction of travel, open the paddles in the mitre doors or lift the guillotine gate a few centimetres slowly. Take into account the consideration of other boats. Great care should be taken when opening the guillotine gate, and if water flows into or out of the lock pen too quickly close the gate and start again.
- Whoever is controlling the boat mooring lines should maintain a taut line, as water levels change. Make sure that the boat does not snag on the lock during emptying and that the boat does not drift close to the lock doors. Several locks, particularly on the Nene, can have water flowing over the mitre doors, which could be a hazard to a boat that is not properly controlled during mooring.
- When water levels have equalised open the mitre doors / guillotine gate fully in the direction of travel.
- Make sure the paddles in the mitre doors (if present) are closed before leaving slowly and safely.
- Narrow boats in particular, should be fitted with side fenders to avoid the boat settling into safety chains which run alongside the lock.

When doors / gates are closed on approach:

- Moor on the landing stage provided and check that all doors, gates and paddles on the mitre doors (if present) are closed.
- Fill the lock following the procedures outlined above. Take particular care to fill the lock pen at a slow rate.
- When water levels have equalised open the mitre doors / guillotine gates fully to allow entry into the lock and follow the procedures outlined above for lock use.

A Special Note on River Nene Locks

The following warning notice is displayed at manually operated locks with guillotine gates on the Nene. Please take note of the precautionary measures.

CAUTION

DO NOT ALLOW CHILDREN TO OPERATE LOCK MACHINERY.

ALWAYS GRIP LOCK OPERATING HANDLE FIRMLY BEFORE RELEASING THE SLIDING LOCK-BOLT WITH KEY.

ALWAYS MAINTAIN A FIRM GRIP ON THE OPERATING HANDLE WHILST RAISING OR LOWERING THE GUILLOTINE GATE.

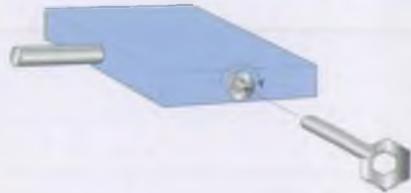
DO NOT OVER-WIND (OR FORCE) THE OPERATING HANDLE WHEN THE GATE IS EITHER FULLY UP OR DOWN, AS WHEN UNLOCKED THE OPERATING HANDLE COULD SPIN AND STRIKE THE USER.

ENSURE BOAT IS POSITIONED AWAY FROM WATER FLOWING OVER THE POINTING DOORS.

Please report any problems encountered to the Environment Agency on -

0800 80 70 60

Lock Security - Vertical Gate



Insert the abloy key and turn clockwise



Pull out to release the lock barrel, this will release the spring loaded sliding lockbolt and allow the handle to turn



When the gate is either fully raised or lowered, re-lock the winding gear by relocating the slide bolt, while holding the slidebolt with the thumb, push in and relock the abloy lock barrel. Remove the key

On electrically operated gates simply use the abloy key to open the control box and press the appropriate buttons, ensuring that the pointing 'V' doors are properly closed before lifting the gate and that the gate is fully raised and the control box relocked when passage is complete.

Low Bridges and Other Structures

On the Nene navigation, many bridges and other structures that have a low (less than 2.8m) clearance have headroom gaugeboards installed. The gaugeboards are located immediately up and downstream of the structure, with a board installed further upstream. The gaugeboards will help boat users to assess whether there is adequate clearance for their boat. Gauge boards will also be found at some locations on the Great Ouse, many of these low bridges are also narrow. The waterflow is increased as the boat gets closer to the bridge. This has the effect of 'drawing' the boat towards the bridge. When travelling downstream, when levels are high, extreme caution should be exercised.



Learn How to Cope if an Accident Should Occur

You should:

- **Know** how to help a person in difficulty in the water.
- **Learn** an approved resuscitation technique.
- **Learn** how to administer first aid.
- **Learn** how to deal with hypothermia.
- **Get help!** - if in doubt do not put yourself at risk.

In the event of a river accident, ring Emergency Services on 999, and inform the Environment Agency by calling 0800 80 70 60.

Dangers

Weirs are Dangerous Areas

Most weirs are identified by a sign (a boat going over a weir). These warning signs should always be respected. It is both dangerous and illegal to interfere with weir gates and sluices. Many weirs can also be identified by the presence of buoys.

Water Levels

Water levels can never be guaranteed. This means extra care should be taken:

- When approaching any river control structures – weirs, sluices, and locks etc – particularly if there is significant flow in the river. Greater quantities of water will be flowing over river structures and this can make boating hazardous. At higher water levels, significant quantities of water can cascade over the lock upstream mitre doors, **this represents a risk of sinking** and boats should moor away from these mitre doors.
- When stopping overnight, or leaving a boat for a considerable amount of time (for example, over winter in places where boats are permitted to remain in the water) or when a river is in flood, do not moor in shallow water or with a tight rope or chain as water levels may change rapidly. If the levels drop and the craft is 'grounded', it may be turned on its side or be damaged. If the level rises and mooring ropes or chains are tight, the boat may take on water, be pulled under or break free.

Reversed Locks

During periods of high (flood) flows, some locks may be used for flood water discharge purposes. Absolutely no attempt should be made to pass through a lock if the mitre doors are chained back and the vertical gate is partially lifted. In this position the lock is 'reversed' and warning signs will be sited upstream. These signs must be obeyed. 'Reversed' locks are closed due to heavy rain resulting in exceptionally high and fast river flows. Under these conditions navigation is hazardous and **the Agency strongly advises users not to attempt to boat on the river.**

The following locks are reversed on the Nene:

- **Doddington**
- **Titchmarsh**
- **Wadenhoe**
- **Lower Barnwell**
- **Cotterstock**
- **Warmington**
- **Elton**
- **Yarwell**

The following locks are reversed on the Great Ouse:

- Bedford
- Cardington
- Eaton Socon
- Offord
- Brampton
- Godmanchester
- Hemingford
- St Ives
- Brownhill

Strong Stream Advice

The Rivers Nene and Ouse are unique in the Region because the Agency 'reverse the locks': an operation which closes the affected locks to navigation. **'Strong Stream Advice' procedure advises boat users that locks are 'reversed' and that the Agency strongly advises against attempting to navigate.** The procedure involves an automated phone call being made to a predetermined set of telephone numbers when the rivers reach certain flows. The telephone numbers belong to boat clubs, marinas and others on the River Nene and Great Ouse navigations.

The automated phone call (AVM) message is as follows:

"Strong Stream Advice has been issued for the River Nene/Ouse. Several locks on the River Nene/Ouse are closed to navigation and are being used to discharge floodwaters. The Agency strongly advises against attempting to boat on the River Nene/Ouse. River flows are above normal and headroom at some sites will be restricted. For further information telephone the Agency on 01733 371811."

The Strong Stream Advice cancel message is as follows:

"The Strong Stream Advice issued for the River Nene/Ouse has been cancelled. Locks that were closed to discharge floodwaters have been re-opened. River flows will remain above normal and headroom will be restricted at some sites for a time, anyone intending to navigate should proceed with extreme caution. For further information contact the Agency on 01733 371811."

The Agency, British Waterways and The Middle Level Commissioners also display signs to inform users of Strong Stream Advice. Signs on the River Nene are located at the top and bottom locks of the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal, at Stanground Lock, Peterborough and at Dog-in-a-Doublet. At a number of sites on the River Nene, boat clubs (in association with the Agency) raise red flags when Strong Stream Advice is in operation. These flags not only inform club members that Strong Stream Advice is on, but are of value to other river users as well. River users are also able to telephone the Agency's Floodline Information Service to hear a recorded message which will inform users whether Strong Stream Advice is on or off.



The Floodline number is - 0845 9881188 - followed by the quick dial for:

River Nene **032112**

River Great Ouse **03321**

The messages on the Floodline Information Service for the Rivers Nene and Great Ouse are the same as the AVM.

Safety at Locks

In narrow lock cuts, please remember that some pleasure craft draw up to 1.2 metres (4 feet) or more and might not be able to manoeuvre quickly.

When waiting for a lock, form an orderly queue at the landing platform. Queue jumping is bad manners, arouses ill feeling and can cause confusion and delay entering the lock. Always moor on the platform as near as possible to the lock so that later arrivals can moor astern of you. When a lock is full of craft, any remaining boats should move forward along the platform to enable those waiting in the channel (perhaps in difficult conditions) to moor at the back of the queue. Stop your engine once the boat is moored in the lock. Please turn off any radio, or other form of noise.

If you have a dog on board, please keep it on your boat or on a lead while passing through locks.

Please take care, and whilst in the lock:

Do not fend off with hands, feet or boat hook (experience shows that this can result in crushed or broken limbs).

Do not open fuel tanks or strike matches.

Canoeing

Buoyancy aids or lifejackets should be worn at all times with helmets when in wild water. Canoeists should preferably have had formal instruction, be able to swim and adhere to the British Canoe Union Code of Practice.

Specific advice for non-powered craft

Do not canoe just above weirs or try to shoot weirs.

Keep clear of sailing boats, motor cruisers and rowing craft (sculls, pairs, fours and eights) particularly when racing or coaching is taking place. Remember it is difficult for rowing craft to see canoes.

Do not follow close behind larger vessels.

Do not get in the way of other craft by suddenly altering course, particularly in narrow waters. Remember that larger boats are less manoeuvrable and canoes can use much shallower water than any other craft.

Rowing and Sculling

In strong stream conditions it is advised that rowing craft stay off the river. If you choose to row in strong conditions, stay away from weirs, obstructions and bridges, especially whilst turning round. At such times, a rescue boat should be in attendance.

If on water at dusk, after sunset or in restricted visibility, rowers and scullers should wear light coloured tops, and an all-round **white** light or two **white** lights covering 360° should be displayed.

Look out for others on and in the water, and change speed and direction as necessary to avoid incident.

Remember the cox is always in charge and is the master of the craft.

Remember when travelling faster than another craft that overtaking vehicles must keep clear. Do not turn across the bows of an oncoming craft; wait until it is safe.

Remember it is difficult for other users to see fast moving rowing craft that lie low in the water.

When rowing for pleasure, ensure you do not interfere with other organised activities.

Coaching/rescue vessels must watch their speed and wash.

Sailing

Sailing craft should look out for other river traffic, and keep clear of weirs and busy channels.

Do not suddenly alter course immediately in front of other craft. Power driven craft are not always as manoeuvrable as sailing craft, especially at low speeds when sailing craft have reasonable winds.

Tacking is often essential, but can present a hazard to navigation. Keep a proper lookout; failure to do so is the cause of many accidents.

Buoyancy aids or lifejackets should be worn at all times.

Dinghy Racing

Lay starting lines where they cannot cause trouble to passing traffic. If in doubt, consult the local Navigation Enforcement Section. Sailing marks should not be placed near locks, lock cuts, marinas, fuel wharves, passenger boat landing stages or narrow and shallow places.

The length of the starting line must allow a clear passage to craft proceeding up and down the river. A navigable channel should be available for non-racing vessels.

Starting signal intervals: keep the time between Warning and Starting signals to a minimum.

When there are several starts in succession, allow an interval between races. During this interval, craft intending to race should avoid congregating in the starting area. This allows other vessels to proceed and avoids annoying delays.

Regulations

There are various regulations governing the use of the Anglian navigable rivers and their banks for boaters of all sorts, anglers, riparian owners, towpath walkers etc. Whether you want to erect a landing stage, or hold an event such as a regatta or raft race, check with the Area Customer contact department, details are as follows:

Rivers Nene, Welland, Glen and Ancholme	Environment Agency Lincoln Office Telephone 01522 513100
River Great Ouse	Environment Agency Brampton Office Telephone 01480 414581
River Stour	Environment Agency Ipswich Office Telephone 01473 727712

Registration and Licensing

All vessels (motor launches, canoes, sailing dinghies, sailboards, rowing craft) must have a current registration and licence with the Environment Agency. Registration certificates usually expire on 31st March, although short period certificates may be obtained for visiting craft entering the Anglian Region's navigable waterways from other waterways.

Other classes of licences are available which allow access to the Agency and British Waterways navigations - The 'Gold Licence' and the 'Eastern Rivers Licence'.

The Agency must also be notified by the registered boat owner of any change of ownership taking place during the registration period. Failure to do so is an offence. Licences are not transferable and the licence plate must be clearly displayed.

All vessels used on the Environment Agency Anglian Region's navigable waterways are required to comply with construction and equipment specifications. From 1997 onwards, depending on the age of the vessel, owners have been required to produce a valid Boat Safety Certificate when applying for a licence to use the vessel on the Agency's Anglian Region's navigable waterways.

Boat Safety Scheme

Safety is vitally important for boat owners and users. The Boat Safety Scheme, developed in co-operation with boat user representatives and the boat trade, is designed to reduce the risk of fire and/or explosion on craft. The scheme currently applies to both Environment Agency and British Waterways navigations.

How does it work?

Boats subject to the scheme have to be examined independently at least once every four years by authorised examiners.

Who does it apply to?

The scheme applies to all powered vessels, including hire craft. Manually propelled craft and sailing vessels, which do not carry fuel and are not fitted with cooking, heating, refrigerating or lighting appliances do not have to comply.

For further details on the Boat Safety Scheme please refer to the 'Boat Safety Scheme' booklet available from the Boat Safety Scheme, at Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford, WD1 3QA. Telephone 01923 201 278.

Email: BoatSafetyScheme@dial.pipex.com.

Navigation Byelaws

Obey the rules of navigation and the navigation byelaws. Copies are available from Area Offices, the Regional Office and the Navigation Income Section in Peterborough.

Other publications available in this series :

River Nene

River Welland

River Glen

River Ancholme

River Great Ouse

River Stour

Safety Guide

Byelaws

