

Detailed guide: Apply for an accommodation licence on the River Thames

Updated: Updated tariffs for 2018 to 2019

You must have a licence if you have an existing structure or want to build a new structure on the River Thames that's:

- in, on or over the river
- cut into the bank
- on a towpath owned by the Environment Agency

Structures are known as 'accommodations' and include:

- jetties
- pontoons
- docks
- boathouses
- slipways
- landing stages
- footbridges
- offshore mooring piles and buoys
- rubbing posts
- miscellaneous piles

You must get a licence whether your structure is for private, shared or commercial use.

You'll only be given permission for public or private amenity work schemes of a non-navigational nature (eg building development) in exceptional circumstances.

Getting a licence

You must apply to the Environment Agency for your licence and pay an annual fee.

Fees are payable from 29 September each year and are charged on a pro-rata basis depending on when you apply. For example, if you apply for your licence on 29 August you'll just pay the fee for the period between then and 28 September of that year. You'll then have to pay the next year's fee in full.

You can't transfer a licence to someone else. You must get a licence yourself if you buy or move into a property with a structure.

You'll be sent a licence plate when your licence is granted. You must display

this on the structure.

Existing structures without a licence

You must tell the Environment Agency if you already have a structure that hasn't been licensed before and you want to keep it.

Your structure may be removed and you could be charged for its removal if you don't get a licence.

Download and fill in the [retain accommodation form](#) and send it to the address on the form.

New owners of existing structures

You must tell the Environment Agency if you're the new owner of an existing structure that needs a licence.

Download and fill in the [change of circumstances form](#) and send it to the address on the form.

Building new structures and changing existing structures

To build a new structure or change an existing structure you must do both of the following:

- [apply for an environmental permit](#)
- apply for an accommodation licence – download and fill in the [application for a new accommodation](#) and send it to the address on the form.

You'll be sent an information pack telling you what to do next when you apply for consent.

Please be aware you may need planning permission. You should contact your local planning authority to check.

Licensing requirements

To get a licence your structure should only:

- be used for landing and mooring purposes and to give access to the river
- encroach into the river as much as is reasonably necessary for it to fulfil its purpose

The Environment Agency may make an exception about how much your structure can encroach into the river if they decide that it has enough fishery and environmental benefits and that it doesn't unacceptably impact the normal river flow and the floodplain.

Each application is assessed on an individual basis, with the local

environment and individual requirements taken into account.

Your application may be refused, or you may have to make compensatory measures or provide mitigation if the Environment Agency decides that your proposed structure will have a negative impact on the local ecology or flood defences.

You'll be sent a full list of the requirements with your application pack.

Landing stages

Landing stages should be decked structures that allow the water to pass underneath. They usually shouldn't be made of concrete or otherwise form a solid construction on the riverbed.

You won't be given a new licence for an existing solid stage if you're the new owner.

Private domestic frontages and non-residential leisure plots

Your structure should:

- be free of any garden ornament, furniture, shelter, trellis, fencing, screening or planting in or over any part of the river channel
- be positioned away from neighbouring boundaries to allow any neighbour clear navigable access and clear line of sight from their frontage in either direction
- not obstruct your neighbours' sight lines by more than 45 degrees from the bankline ahead (except where the bankline is already subdivided into small plots and it's considered reasonable to permit the whole frontage to be used for a boat)

Working boatyards

If you want to apply for a licence to extend an existing commercial mooring area in or over the main channel of the River Thames, you'll need to show:

- this will benefit other users of the river, eg provide public landing or mooring rights or environmental enhancements
- it doesn't negatively affect navigation or normal river and flood flow

Waterside amenities at riverside hotels, bars and restaurants

If you own a riverside hotel, bar or restaurant you can apply for a licence to provide fixed landing stages or pontoons for short-stay temporary mooring. The structure should only encroach into the river as much as is reasonably necessary to fulfil its purpose.

You can ask the Environment Agency for permission to have a seating area on the structure. They will appoint a private consultant to assess the commercial benefit of a seating area and then add this as an additional fee for you to pay. If you're given permission, you must only place outdoor tables and chairs for customers on areas of spare decking approved by the

Environment Agency. Areas that you can use will be shown on the licence plan and on the deck itself. The landing area must not be furnished with tables, chairs or other garden furniture. Associated walkways should be kept clear.

Licence fees: private

You must get a private licence if the structure is for your own private use.

You need to pay an administration fee of £50 to get your licence, plus an annual fee.

Annual licence fees for structures are calculated by the square metre (maximum length of the structure multiplied by its width). This is known as its overall projection into the river.

Type of structure	Environment Agency/Crown river bed rent (2018 to 2019)	Non Environment Agency/Crown river bed rent (2018 to 2019)
Staging, steps, gangway, ladder, catwalk, framework, pontoon, slipway, boathouse, or other licensed enclosure that's no more than 5 square metres	£96.10	£64.80
– cost of each extra square metre	£19.22	£12.96
Footbridge (each)	£96.10	£64.80
Boom/rubbing pile against bank (single or pair)	£96.10	£64.80
Offshore mooring piles or buoys (single or pair) up to 6 metres apart	£96.10	£64.80
Offshore mooring piles or buoys (single or pair) up to 10 metres apart	£116.83	£78.46
Offshore mooring piles or buoys (single or pair) up to 15 metres apart	£135.69	£91.38
Offshore mooring piles or buoys (single or pair) up to 20 metres apart	£156.13	£103.46
Offshore mooring piles or buoys (single or pair) up to 25 metres apart	£175.62	£116.67
Offshore mooring piles or buoys (single or pair) up to 30 metres apart	£194.60	£129.92

Licence fees: corporate

You must to get a corporate licence if the structure is for anything other than your own private use, for example, you're a:

- commercial company
- hotel
- school
- yacht club
- youth group
- residents association

You need to pay an annual fee for each structure. There's also a £50 administration fee to get your licence.

For any structure with a mooring edge, you must pay for both the area of the structure and the total length of mooring edge it has.

Type of structure	Fee (2018 to 2019)
Stage, gangway, catwalk, pontoon, boathouse or other enclosure of river space (plus the fee for any mooring edge)	£9.00 per square metre
– mooring edge of each structure	£8.04 per linear metre
Offshore mooring piles and buoys	£8.04 per linear metre of moorings run accommodated
Rubbing posts or miscellaneous piles	£31.16 each
Slipways and footbridges	£71.92 each

Minimum fee per structure

There's a minimum fee of £95.90 for each:

- stage, gangway, catwalk, pontoon, boathouse or other enclosure of river space (including the cost of any linear mooring edge)
- offshore mooring pile or buoy

Extra charges and discounts

You'll be charged an extra:

- 50% if the riverbed is owned by Environment Agency or the Crown Estate at Hampton
- 100% if both the riverbed and the bank is owned by the Environment Agency or the Crown Estate at Hampton

You get a 25% discount if your structure is for education or sport, eg for a school, youth group, or rowing club.

If you own a riverside hotel, bar or restaurant and apply for permission for a public service seating area on a structure, you'll also have to pay for an assessment of the commercial benefit of having such a seating area. The Environment Agency will use this assessment to determine the additional fee.

Minimum total fee per licence

There's also a minimum total fee of £153.43 per licence (after taking into account any discounts or extra charges).

Structures used for education or sport (eg by schools, youth groups, or rowing clubs) have a reduced minimum total fee of £95.90.