

Press release: £2.1m programme of improvements to River Thames locks

The Environment Agency has launched its annual winter programme of investment into the infrastructure that enables and enhances boating activity on the non-tidal River Thames.

It will carry out major projects at five of the 45 lock sites it owns and operates along the 135 miles of river, for which it is the navigation authority – from Cricklade in Wiltshire to Teddington in Middlesex – but all sites will benefit from some level of investment.

Work began on 29 October, and will continue through to March next year, avoiding the peak boating months to minimise disruption to river-users.

Barry Russell, River Thames Waterways Manager, at the Environment Agency, said:

This year's £2.1m programme of work is one of the most extensive for some time.

The work our specialist navigation engineers, craftsmen and contractors will carry out is absolutely vital. It will directly support both recreational and commercial boating on the Thames, and indirectly support the many thousands of businesses along the river sustained by the spending power of our boating customers. That's not just marinas, boat yards and chandleries, but shops, hotels, restaurants, pubs, visitor attractions and so on.

In order of value the major projects are:

- Teddington Lock, Teddington, Middlesex – refurbishing the concrete-lined lock chamber of the launch lock, one of three different locks at this unique site, at a cost of £450,000
- Day's Lock, Little Wittenham, near Abingdon, Oxfordshire – fabricating four brand new gates at our workshop in Osney at a cost of £100,000 for installation in 2019/20
- Caversham Lock, Reading, Berkshire – refurbishing the concrete-lined lock chamber at a cost of £400,000
- Rushey Lock, Buckland Marsh, near Faringdon, Oxfordshire – replacing the facing timber and balance beams on all four lock gates at a cost of £100,000

- Molesey Lock, East Molesey, Surrey – replacing the facing timber on all four lock gates at a cost of £70,000.

Additional works include refurbishing the concrete sill underneath the tail gates at Cookham Lock near Maidenhead in Berkshire, structural surveys of the lock chambers at King's Lock near Wolvercote in Oxfordshire and Whitchurch Lock near Reading in Berkshire. The agency is also refurbishing mooring facilities at Blake's Lock in Reading.

Other work being carried out as part of this year's programme includes upgrading lock control systems so they are easier for members of the public to operate on their own; repairs to numerous towpath bridges; bank protection works at a number of locations; improved site-security systems and a survey of all lock offices to check on their condition and identify where improvements could be made to improve staff welfare and facilitate greater commercial activity.

Barry Russell continued:

We're proud to be the custodians of the navigation infrastructure on the non-tidal Thames, and we take the responsibility that comes with it very seriously.

This includes major structures like locks, weirs, lock houses, access roads and bridges. Many have significant heritage value, and collectively they have a replacement cost in the region of £1bn.

Keeping everything in safe working order is absolutely vital to ensure boating on the Thames is not only possible in the first place, but also as safe and enjoyable as we can reasonably make it.

The income we get from boaters' registration fees isn't enough to cover the cost of all the work we need to do each year, however. Fortunately, we receive a significant top-up from government that we invest very carefully to ensure maximum value-for-money for the wider tax-paying public.

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NOTES TO EDITORS: Barry Russell, Environment Agency Waterways Manager, is available for interview at any of the sites listed. Filming opportunities can be arranged around the most visually striking elements of the work for example, when lock when lock gates are craned in or out of position. Please call to discuss and arrange.

For the latest updates on the programme go to the [River Thames page](#)

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