

# PERSONAL WATERCRAFT IN THE THAMES ESTUARY CODE OF CONDUCT

The Thames Estuary offers excellent opportunities for you to use your Personal Watercraft (PWC). This document describes established good practice to ensure that you do not endanger yourself, others, or cause harm to the environment and wildlife. Please follow this Code of Conduct and share this information and guidance with other riders. Have fun whilst being safe!

## DO!

- Only launch, moor and land from authorised launch sites
- Read and observe the byelaws and rules posted at launch sites
- Maintain a distance from sensitive wildlife and habitats, particularly during wintering periods (September to March) and at high tides
- Maintain a steady direction and a slow 'no wake' speed if wildlife is encountered
- Maintain distance from sensitive habitats on land and in the water (sandbanks, marshland, seagrass, rocky outcrops)
- Ensure you have (and carry proof of) adequate public liability insurance and ID
- Register with Datatag and display your 'Datatag Visible ID' clearly
- Carry correct safety equipment when out on the water
- Show consideration to other water users
- Consider joining a local PWC club
- Give ships a wide berth and give way if need be

## DO NOT!

- Use your PWC upstream of Margaretness Point (near Barking Creek)
- Enter PWC restricted areas
- Exceed 8 knots within 200m of a berth, jetty, public beach, bathing place or residential property
- Harass, chase or try to feed wildlife
- Launch from or approach roosting or nesting sites for birds and haul out sites for seals
- Ride at the low water mark where birds may be feeding, seals may be resting or where you may erode the bed/submerged vegetation
- Decant petrol or use chemical treatments in the water
- Ride the bow waves of ships or cross close ahead of them
- Generate wake when passing through moorings
- Underestimate the speed or inability of manoeuvre of large ships



### **How to Report an Incident**

In an emergency contact the Coastguard on 999 or VHF channel 16. If you see any PWC rider acting irresponsibly, endangering other water users or breaking the law, please contact the **Essex Police Marine Unit on: 01621 782121,**  
**Kent Police on: 101 or**  
**the PLA on: 01474 562215.**



This advice is produced by the Port of London Authority (PLA), with the assistance of the estuary community and river users, through workshops and wide consultation. To obtain further copies please see:

[www.boatingonthethames.co.uk/](http://www.boatingonthethames.co.uk/)

The PLA's Thames Byelaws require Personal Watercraft (PWCs) to remain clear of the navigational channel and to keep a minimum distance of 200 metres from berths, beaches and foreshore. PWCs are also not permitted in the area from Lower Hope Point to the Margaretness Limit when operating on the plane, without having first advised the Harbour Master.

To comply with the Byelaw a PWC transiting inwards should follow the approved recreational vessel track (see the PLA's Recreational Users Guide) and should be to the south of the channel in Sea Reach before passing the tanker berths at the Havens and London Gateway Port, crossing back to the correct side of the river when approaching Alpha Jetty in the Lower Hope. Similarly PWCs proceeding outwards should transit south of the channel passing London Gateway Port & tanker berths before crossing the channel if heading for the Southend area.

There are a number of areas on the River, which are clear of the channel and berths where operating on the plane is permitted; such as St Clements Anchorage, Greenhithe and a small area in Erith Rands clear of the channel.

### ***Safeguarding the Natural Environment***

The Thames Estuary supports some of the most ecologically valuable habitats in the country, many of which have been legally designated for their wildlife value (see map below). These range from statutory sites of national or international significance to smaller non-statutory sites of local importance. Using your PWC could cause lasting damage to these sites, the animals that depend upon them and the wider environment, through:

- physical impact to important habitats (e.g. saltmarsh and mudflats)
- disturbance of wildlife (e.g. birds and marine mammals)
- pollution (e.g. watercraft repairs, waste, noise)



In order to minimise your impact, please follow these simple rules:

- Only launch, moor and land your PWC from authorised launch sites and do not use saltmarsh, mudflats or sandbanks for these purposes. Authorised launch sites are listed below:
  - Watt Tyler Country Park
  - West Shoebury Beach
  - Ramsgate
  - Hoo Peninsula
  - Herne Bay
  - Margate
  - Whitstable
- Maintain a good distance from sensitive habitats (saltmarsh and exposed mudflats) and avoid shallow waters where your PWC may disturb the riverbed or submerged vegetation.
- Do not approach birds during wintering periods (September - March) as birds use this time to conserve energy, feed and roost.
- Do not approach or go onto sandbanks/mudflats when seals are hauled out of the water. This is time for seals to breed, moult, recover from foraging and conserve their energy.
- Do not harass marine mammals such as dolphins, or large flocks of birds. As a general rule, never go closer than 100m (200m if another boat is in the vicinity).
- If wildlife is encountered, maintain a steady direction and a slow 'no wake' speed away from the wildlife. Do not chase it.
- Do not exceed 8 knots (10 mph) when within designated conservation areas and do not enter restricted areas (see map opposite).
- Do not decant petrol or use chemical treatments in the water.

### **Riding Responsibly**

PWC users have a responsibility to other water users, and to themselves, to ride in a safe and responsible manner. It is important to know how to stay safe and how to behave with respect to other users when out on the water. By observing the following guidelines, you can stay safe and not endanger others. The Port of London Authority (PLA) regulates the use of PWCs through its local Thames Byelaws. To obtain a copy please visit the PLA's website: [www.pla.co.uk](http://www.pla.co.uk).



### **Awareness**

When out on the water, you should always be on the lookout for other vessels and people in the water. It is important to know where other vessels are and where they are heading before you make a turn or cross a wake.

### **Operating Speed**

As a general rule, you should not exceed the speed of 8 knots (10 mph) when your craft is within 200m of the shoreline or a port facility. In congested areas, lower your speed accordingly.

### **Upstream Limit**

You must not use your PWC upstream of Margaretness Limit (near Barking Creek).

**Note:** *There are currently no authorised launching sites upstream (to the west) of Canvey Island.*

To operate a PWC between Margaretness and Lower Hope Point you must provide your details to the Harbour Master before or on date of intended use.

### **Safety Lanyard**

Never operate your PWC without the safety lanyard attached to you. The lanyard will cut the engine if you fall from the craft.

### **Competency Training**

Attend an approved training course. The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) holds a one-day competence course which teaches you how to use your PWC safely, responsibly and with confidence, ensuring that you get the best out of your craft. RYA contact details are provided overleaf.

### **PWC Clubs**

Where possible, join a local PWC club which can offer benefits like the use of private slipways. The map overleaf shows the locations of PWC clubs in the Thames Estuary.

### **Insurance and Safety Equipment**

Ensure that you have (and carry proof of) adequate public liability insurance and ID before using your PWC. Ensure that you hold a copy of the registration certificate.

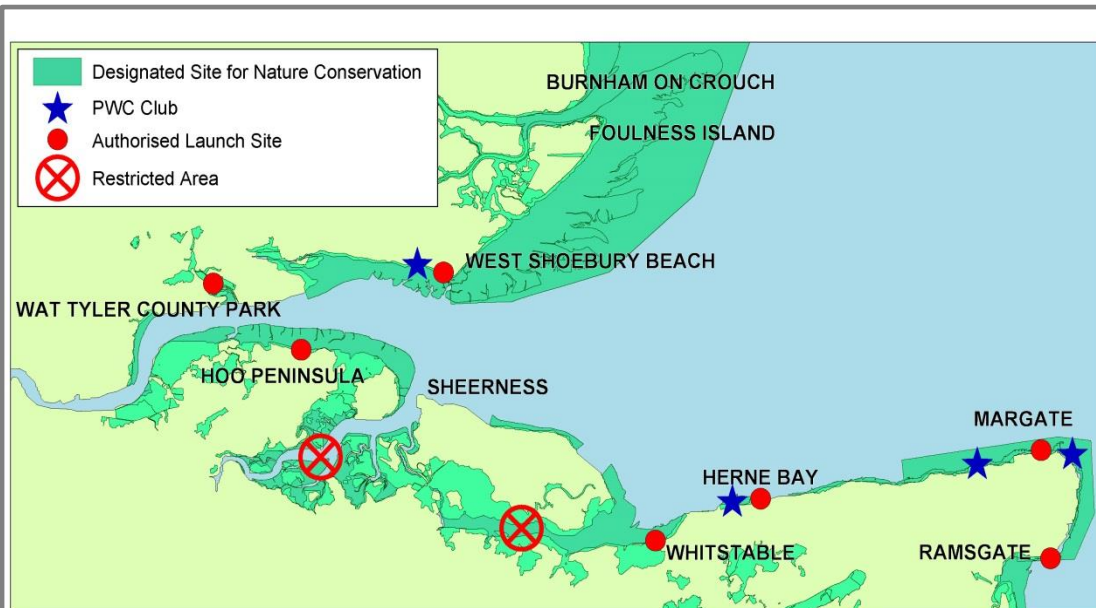
Always carry the correct safety equipment:

#### **Personal Equipment**

Suitable clothing,  
Buoyancy aid,  
Goggles,  
Safety lanyard,  
Sun-block,  
Foot protection,  
Gloves,  
Whistle

#### **PWC Equipment**

First aid kit,  
Full tank of petrol and oil,  
Radio,  
Fire extinguisher,  
Flare pack,  
Rope,  
Anchor,  
Torch,  
Tool kit



### Further Advice and Guidance

#### Ports and marine safety advice:

Port of London Authority: ☎01474 562200 🌐 [www.pla.co.uk](http://www.pla.co.uk)  
 Maritime & Coastguard Agency: ☎02380 329100 (Head Office)  
 🌐 [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency)  
 RNLI: ☎ 0845 122 6999 🌐 [www.rnli.org](http://www.rnli.org)  
 Essex Police Marine Unit: ☎0300 333 4444 🌐 [www.essex.police.uk](http://www.essex.police.uk)  
 Kent Police Rural and Environmental Crime: ☎101 ✉6374@kent.pnn.police.uk  
 🌐 [www.kent.police.uk](http://www.kent.police.uk)  
 Datatag: ☎0845 0700 440 🌐 [www.datatag.co.uk](http://www.datatag.co.uk)

#### Wildlife advice and local information:

Natural England: ☎0300 060 6000 ✉ [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)  
 🌐 [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)  
 Environment Agency: ☎03708 506 506  
 🌐 [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency)  
 Essex Wildlife Trust: ☎01621 862960 ✉ [admin@essexwt.org.uk](mailto:admin@essexwt.org.uk) 🌐 [www.essexwt.org.uk](http://www.essexwt.org.uk)  
 Kent Wildlife Trust: ☎01622 662012 ✉ [info@kentwildlife.org.uk](mailto:info@kentwildlife.org.uk)  
 🌐 [www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk)  
 RSPB: ☎01273 775333 ✉ [southeast.conservation@rspb.org.uk](mailto:southeast.conservation@rspb.org.uk) 🌐 [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)  
 British Divers Marine Life Rescue: ☎01825765546 🌐 [www.bdmlr.org.uk](http://www.bdmlr.org.uk)

#### PWC and water sport bodies:

RYA training: ☎0845 3450326 🌐 [www.rya.org.uk](http://www.rya.org.uk)  
 Personal Watercraft Partnership: ☎01725 513775 ✉ [info@pwpuke.org](mailto:info@pwpuke.org) 🌐 [www.pwpuke.org](http://www.pwpuke.org)

#### PWC Clubs:

Wat Tyler Country Park: ☎01268 5555586 (authorised launch site)  
 West Shoebury Beach: ☎01702 215000 (authorised launch site)  
 PWC Allhallows Yacht Club (Hoo Peninsula): ☎PWC Captain Carla Ebers 07919 021210  
 ✉ <http://www.allhallowsyachtclub.net/>  
 Long Reach Ski Club (Swale): ☎01795 511116 ✉ [longreachskiclub@aol.com](mailto:longreachskiclub@aol.com)  
 Herne Bay & Whitstable Jet Ski Club (JAWS): ☎07932 970699 ✉ [chairman@jaws.org.uk](mailto:chairman@jaws.org.uk)  
 Thanet Water Users Group: ☎01843 577274 ✉ [jean.reynolds@thanet.gov.uk](mailto:jean.reynolds@thanet.gov.uk)  
 Birchington Water Ski and Wakeboarding Club (Thanet): ☎07974 509807  
 Jet Ski World (Thanet): ☎01843 231703 ✉ [info@jetski-world.co.uk](mailto:info@jetski-world.co.uk)  
 The Varne Boat Club (Shepway): ☎01797 364640 ✉ [hbagshaw@aol.com](mailto:hbagshaw@aol.com)  
 Southend Jet Ski Club: ✉ [southendjetskiclub@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:southendjetskiclub@hotmail.co.uk)  
 🌐 [www.southendjetskiclub.com](http://www.southendjetskiclub.com)