

# PERSONAL WATERCRAFT IN THE THAMES ESTUARY CODE OF CONDUCT

Code of Conduct for the use of Personal Watercraft on the Thames Estuary

Personal Watercraft are permitted in the Thames Estuary but must users must ensure that they act safely and responsibly. Please follow this simple Code.....

## 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
- Ensure you have (and carry proof of) adequate public liability insurance
- 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

## DON'T!

- Use your PWC upstream of Margaretness Point (near Barking Creek)
- Enter PWC restricted areas
- Exceed 8 knots in a designated conservation area, or within 200m of a wharf, jetty, public beach, bathing place or residential property
- Harass or chase wildlife
- Launch from or approach roosting or nesting sites for birds
- Ride at the low water mark where birds may be feeding 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



### 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, contact the Essex Police Marine Unit on 01621 782121, the Kent Police on 01622 798565, or the PLA Harbour Master on 01474 562212.



This leaflet was produced by the Port of London Authority, with the assistance of the estuary community and river users, through workshops and wide consultation. To obtain further copies please telephone 01474 562269.

# PERSONAL WATERCRAFT IN THE THAMES ESTUARY

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

## *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 under its river 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 Point (near Barking Creek).

## *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 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

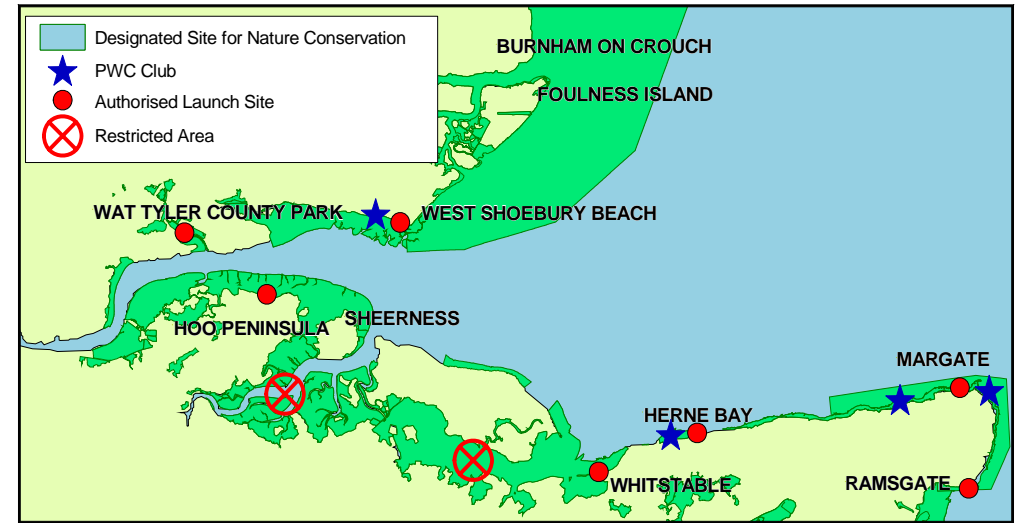
## Safeguarding the Natural Environment

The Thames Estuary supports some of the most valuable habitats in the country. In recognition of this, many areas have been legally designated for their wildlife value (see map opposite). 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 and the wider environment, through: physical impact to important habitats (e.g. saltmarsh and mudflats); disturbance to wildlife (e.g. birds and marine mammals); and pollution (e.g. watercraft repairs, waste).



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 or mudflats for these purposes.
- Maintain distance from sensitive wildlife and habitats such as saltmarsh and exposed mudflats, particularly during wintering periods (September - March) when birds may be feeding or roosting.
- Avoid shallow waters where your PWC may erode or disturb the seabed and submerged vegetation.
- 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 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.



## 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: ☎ 0870 6006505 🌐 [www.mcga.gov.uk](http://www.mcga.gov.uk)  
RNLI: ☎ 01843 296604 ✉ [gaddington@rnli.org.uk](mailto:gaddington@rnli.org.uk) 🌐 [www.rnli.org.uk](http://www.rnli.org.uk)  
Essex Police Marine Unit: ☎ 01621 782121 🌐 [www.essex.police.uk](http://www.essex.police.uk)  
Kent Police Rural and Environmental Crime: ☎ 01622 798565 ✉ [6374@kent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:6374@kent.pnn.police.uk)  
🌐 [www.kent.police.uk](http://www.kent.police.uk)  
Datatag: ☎ 01932 358100 🌐 [www.datatag.co.uk](http://www.datatag.co.uk)

### Wildlife advice and local information:

Natural England: ☎ 01206 796666 (Essex) 01233 811228 (Kent) ✉ [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)  
🌐 [www.naturalengland.gov.uk](http://www.naturalengland.gov.uk)  
Environment Agency: ☎ 08708 506 506 🌐 [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)  
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@pwruk.org](mailto:info@pwruk.org) 🌐 [www.pwruk.org](http://www.pwruk.org)

### PWC Clubs:

Wat Tyler Country Park: ☎ 01268 550 088 (authorised launch site)  
West Shoebury Beach: ☎ 01702 215000 (authorised launch site)  
PWC Allhallows Yacht Club (Hoo Peninsula): ☎ 01634 270273 ✉ [zyggymalot@aol.com](mailto:zyggymalot@aol.com)  
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 Watercraft Club: ✉ [info@southendwatercraftclub.com](mailto:info@southendwatercraftclub.com) 🌐 [www.southendwatercraftclub.com](http://www.southendwatercraftclub.com)

*While the advice given in this Code of Conduct has been developed using the best information currently available, it is intended purely as guidance to be used at the user's own risk. No responsibility is accepted by the Port of London Authority or by any person, firm, corporation or organisation who has been in any way concerned with the supplying of information, the compilation or publication of this Code for the accuracy of any information or advice included in it or for any omission from it or for any consequences whatsoever resulting directly or indirectly from compliance with or adoption of this guidance. Holehaven Creek aerial photo, wildlife photos © Port of London Authority. PWC photos © Jetman UK.*