

AINA CASE STUDY

TOURISM AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

River Thames Alliance: a partnership for success



Working together to plan and promote our most famous waterway

The River Thames Alliance is a partnership of public and private sector organisations established in June 2003 to help manage the future development of the non-tidal Thames. It was created as a result of a study by the River Thames Society, in collaboration with the Oxford Brookes University, which looked at the institutional arrangements for managing the Thames.

There are currently more than 80 member organisations, and the Environment Agency acts as secretariat with the support of a management group which includes representatives from river user groups, local authorities, the River Thames Society, Natural England, Sport England, Thames Boating Trades Association and Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. The Alliance also has the support of DEFRA.

Its main aim is to develop and implement the Thames Waterway Plan, and one of its most significant achievements has been the successful work of the River Thames Alliance Marketing Partnership. This brings together trade associations, businesses, hotels, transport companies, local government and public sector bodies who all share a desire to promote the river. Major supporters include Tourism South East, First Great Western and the Thames Path National Trail.

The Environment Agency, as navigation authority, has seen increased activity on the river, a growth in the number of events, a broader range of commercial opportunities and greater enthusiasm from local partners and funding agencies to improve the quality of facilities alongside the Thames. Andrew Duggan from Runnymede Hotel and Spa is a member of the Marketing Partnership and says: "We see the River Thames as a unique selling point for our hotel. We fully support the partnership and we would recommend it to others."

The Alliance operates a website (www.visitthames.co.uk) which provides details of news and events, travel information, and a range of information for boaters and visitors. Campaigns to "Discover your River Thames" ran in 2009 and 2010 and work to publicise river itineraries aims to encourage those planning to visit the Olympic rowing venue to extend their stay on or near the river.