

Guidance for Deployers, Coaches and Leaders operating on the Thames Tideway

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Overview of the Thames

Tideway Code

This is essential knowledge and practice for all paddlers on the Tideway. Its importance and relevance is heightened further for those who lead or coach on the Tideway who have a responsibility for the welfare of others.

The Tideway is classified as a commercial port. Without experience and knowledge of this waterway qualifications to lead or coach will be inadequate on their own.

<https://pla.co.uk/tideway-code>

Above Putney

The river between Teddington lock and Putney is classified by the Port of London Authority (PLA) as suitable for recreational craft. Leaders and coaches must be suitably qualified, have experience on the Tideway and have a detailed understanding of the Tideway Code.

Below Putney

Below Putney the river is classified by the Port of London Authority (PLA) as suitable for guided trips.

Local Knowledge Endorsement (LKE)

Commercial operators below Putney must hold an LKE.

The PLA describe this as:

“Commercial providers - any club, individual or company which offers paid ‘tour guide’ style trips on the tidal Thames requires permission from the PLA Harbourmaster. Detailed Passage Plans, Risk Assessments and Safety Management Systems are required for operations such as this and these need to be approved by the PLA. Kayaks, canoes and standup paddleboards used for commercial trips must also be licensed by the

PLA. A leader of any such commercial outfit is required to hold a Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (LKE) when operating between Putney and Margaretness. [LKE Syllabus \(pla.co.uk\)](http://pla.co.uk)

Leaders are expected to have this knowledge below Putney

1. PLA Regulations and Guidance
2. Awareness of other agencies – Coastguard, RNLI, Police
3. Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) & Communication Procedures - VTS Stations/ VHF Radio Frequencies / Routine Broadcasts /Reporting Points (Waypoints)
4. Tides - PLA Tide Tables, PLA tide predictions, Local Knowledge, Find high water (HW) & low water (LW) for a given position. Tidal flows at neaps and springs. Currents and tidal Eddies - Tidal sets at bridges, piers and moorings
5. Geography –
 - Names and Locations of reaches
 - lights and points
 - Names and working arches of bridges, piers, causeways, landing places and access points
 - Names and Locations of locks dock, barriers, creeks, cuts and inlets
 - Names and Locations of barge roads, buoyage, signage, daymarks and tide gauges

Teddington to Sea Reach

The tidal Thames is a 95-mile stretch of river that runs from Teddington Weir in west London to Southend, influenced by the ocean's tides. The river's height can change by up to 7 metres in six hours due to the moon's influence on the North Sea tides.

Challenge for Paddlers

The Thames has many challenges for paddlers, including:

- Above Putney the river is considered Sheltered Water and is narrow and shallow.
- Upper river: The channel is narrow and shallow between Putney and Teddington with many small recreational craft.
- Middle river: The channel is narrow and busy between Putney and the Thames Barrier, with tugs, tows, commuter ferries, and day tripping boats.
- After the Thames Barrier: The river widens and larger vessels operate within the channel.

Note: PLA do not permit SUP Activity below Tower Bridge

Paddle UK Guidance - Qualifications

Definitions of a Coach and Leader

Leading

Leaders provide journey activities, giving 'top tips' to aid enjoyment and ensure progress on the trip, they are able to work autonomously, ensuring safety frameworks are in place and making professional judgements and informed decisions on the suitable environment and craft taking into account their own skills, experience and knowledge as well as those they are leading.

Coaching

Coaches provide sessional 'learn to paddle' activity, they are able to work autonomously, ensuring safety frameworks are in place and making professional judgements and informed decisions on the suitable environment and craft taking into account their own skills, experience and knowledge as well as those they are coaching.

Technical Advisors

Paddlesport offers a diverse range of environments, disciplines & associated equipment and it is very unlikely that one person can cover a full multitude of activities. The Thames has levels of complexity that requires extensive knowledge and experience of the river.

Technical Advisors:

You must consider your own competence to be able to provide accurate and current advice and ensure you meet the employer's needs. Technical advisors and deployers should consider if the activity falls under the PLA requirement to hold a Local Knowledge Endorsement.

Employers of Technical Advisors:

Confirm your nominated Technical Advisors competence to provide accurate and current advice in line with your needs.

Note: No BCAB Qualifications or Awards formally cover providing paddlesport technical advice. [Technical Advice for Paddlesport Guidance Document](#)

Qualification Matrix

Above Putney

Activity	Instructor / Coach / Leader		Technical Advisor	
	Person Specification to include	Minimum Qualification	Person Specification to include	Minimum Qualification
Kayak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, both general & context specific 	<p>BCAB Paddlesport Leader (<u>See notes below</u>)</p> <p>Or</p> <p>BCAB Sea Kayak Leader (tidal)</p> <p>Or</p> <p>BCAB Racing Coach (Moderate Water)</p> <p>And</p> <p>Site Specific Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific ■ Specific River Thames and Tideway Code Knowledge and experience 	BCAB Sheltered Water Kayak Coach
Canoe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, both general & context specific 	<p>BCAB Paddlesport Leader (<u>See notes below</u>)</p> <p>Or</p> <p>BCAB Open Water Canoe Leader</p> <p>Or</p> <p>BCAB Racing Coach (Moderate Water)</p> <p>And</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific 	BCAB Sheltered Water Canoe Coach

		Site Specific Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Specific River Thames and Tideway Code Knowledge and experience 	
SUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, both general & context specific 	<p>BCAB Paddlesport Leader (<u>See notes below</u>)</p> <p>Or</p> <p>BCAB Tidal Stand Up Paddleboard Leader</p> <p>Or</p> <p>BCAB Open Water SUP Coach + Site Specific Training</p> <p>Or</p> <p>BCAB SUP Race Coach</p> <p>And</p> <p>Site Specific Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific ■ Specific River Thames and Tideway Code Knowledge and experience 	BCAB Sheltered Water SUP Coach

Note 1: BCAB Paddlesport Leader has been assessed in sheltered open water and slow-moving water up but not including grade 1/0.5knts, Paddlesport Leaders should undertake further training prior to deployment, examples include;

- BCAB SUP Safer Tidway,
- BCAB Coastal Navigation & Tidal Planning,
- [BCAB Tides, workshop or eLearning](#).

Site Specific Training

Delivered by an individual who meets the descriptor for **Technical Advisor** and that covers:

- Port London Authority (role and responsibility)
- Tidal planning
- Tideway Code
- Competence check

Below Putney

Activity	Instructor / Coach / Leader		Technical Advisor	
	Person Specification to include	Minimum Qualification	Person Specification to include	Minimum Qualification
Kayak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, both general & context specific 	<p>BCAB Paddlesport Leader <u>(See notes below)</u> Or BCAB Sea Kayak Leader (tidal) Or BCAB Racing Coach (Moderate Water) And Site Specific Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific ■ Specific River Thames and Tideway Code Knowledge and experience 	<p>BCAB Paddlesport Touring Leader Provider Or BCAB Sea Kayak Leader (tidal) Provider</p>

Canoe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, both general & context specific 	<p>BCAB Paddlesport Leader <u>(See notes below)</u> Or BCAB Open Water Canoe Leader Or BCAB Racing Coach (Moderate Water) And Site Specific Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific ■ Specific River Thames and Tideway Code Knowledge and experience 	<p>BCAB Paddlesport Touring Leader Provider Or BCAB Canoe Open Water Leader Provider</p>
SUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, both general & context specific 	<p>BCAB Paddlesport Leader <u>(See notes below)</u> Or BCAB Tidal Stand Up Paddleboard Leader Or BCAB Open Water SUP Coach + Site Specific Training Or BCAB SUP Race Coach And Site Specific Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skills & knowledge ■ Personal Attributes ■ Training support/membership ■ Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific ■ Specific River Thames and Tideway Code Knowledge and experience 	<p>BCAB Tidal Stand Up Paddleboard Leader Provider Or Open Water/ Race SUP Coach Assessor</p>

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- BCAB SUP Safer Tidway,
- BCAB Coastal Navigation & Tidal Planning,
- [BCAB Tides, workshop or eLearning](#),

Site Specific Training

Delivered by an individual who meets the descriptor for **Technical Advisor** and that covers:

- Port London Authority (role and responsibility)
- Tidal planning
- Tideway Code
- Competence check