



IMPACT REPORT 2024

INTRODUCTION

Active Thames is a partnership programme supporting physical activity on the tidal Thames and inland waterways in London, Kent and Essex.

It launched in 2021 and is led by the Port of London Authority as a key part of their commitment to the long-term development of the tidal Thames – [Thames Vision](#).

This report outlines the social impact of the Active Thames partnership and funded organisations between 2023 and 2024, including those organisations supported by the [Tideway boost](#), with an emphasis on the grants awarded to community clubs. We built on the progress of [2023](#), and several projects received funding for a second year.

Through Active Thames, the following partners work together to support growth, diversity and inclusion and maximise the use of blue space:



ACTIVE THAMES INSIGHT SURVEY, 2021

In 2021, London Sport conducted a survey targeted at anyone who enjoys or organises sport on the tideway or inland waterways in London, Kent and Essex. People were asked about their background, what they think about the potential for blue spaces, and what they consider to be barriers to getting active. The survey was split into two stages; a quantitative online survey, and a qualitative online community consultation.

Sport England recognises several groups that are less likely to engage in physical activity and sport. The same groups were found to be under-represented within the Active Thames research findings across participants, administrators, and coaches.

With 942 responses, the survey provided a huge amount of insight for the Active Thames partners to focus their attention.



KEY FIGURES INCLUDE:

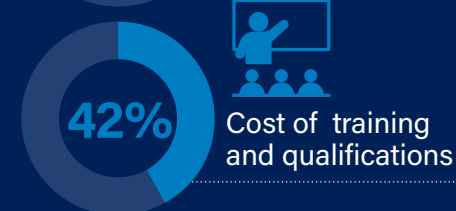
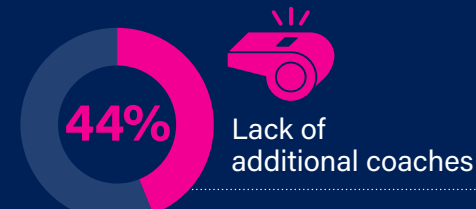


5% OF PARTICIPANTS ARE FROM A MINORITY ETHNIC BACKGROUND

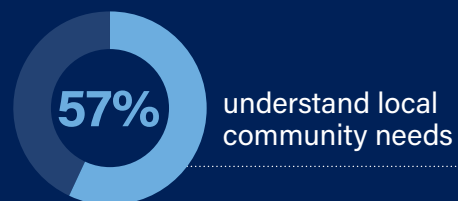
BIGGEST SKILL GAPS



TOP BARRIERS TO BEING AN EFFECTIVE COACH



100% OF COACHES ARE CONFIDENT IN THEIR ABILITY TO DELIVER A GOOD EXPERIENCE FOR PARTICIPANTS, BUT ONLY

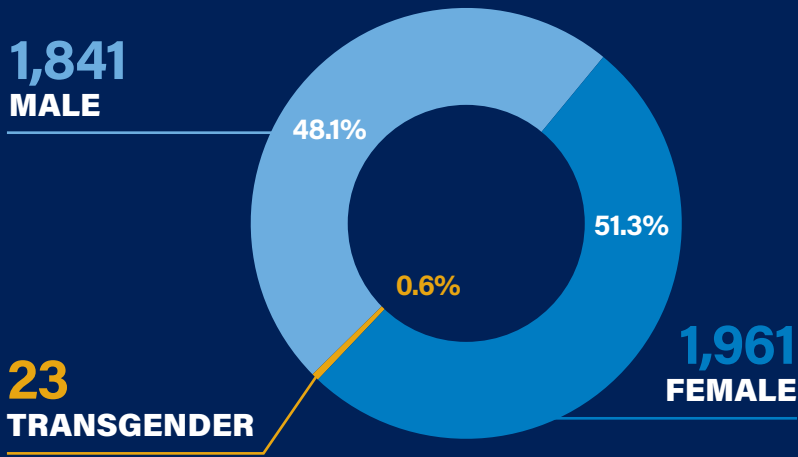


2024 IMPACT

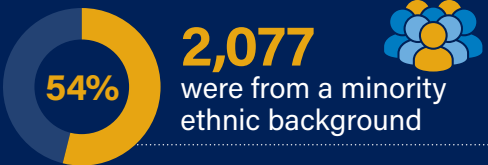
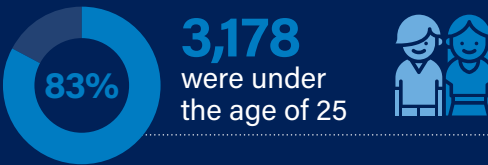


36 PROJECTS WERE AWARDED GRANTS TOTTALLING £193,535

THOSE BENEFITING FROM PROJECTS WERE



OF WHICH APPROXIMATELY



3,826
PEOPLE
REACHED

+1,245
SESSIONS
DELIVERED

158
COACHES
DEVELOPED

When opening/launching the fund, Active Thames particularly welcomed applications that would support these audiences.



PROJECTS FUNDED

KEY

- Active Thames Funded Organisations
- Tideway Funded Organisations
- Multiple projects funded by both

- 1 Brentford Community Boathouse
- 2 Barn Elms Boathouse
- 3 Fulham Reach Boat Club
- 4 Westminster Boating Base
- 5 Islington Boat Club
- 6 And Fitness For All CIC
- 7 Laburnum Boat Club
- 8 Leaside Trust
- 9 Shadwell Basin Outdoor Activity Centre
- 10 Tower Hamlets Canoe Club

- 11 Tideway Sailability
- 12 The AHOY Centre
- 13 Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre
- 14 Poplar HARCA
- 15 Greenwich UK Parkinson's Support Group
- 16 The Line
- 17 Re-Instate
- 18 Dartford and Cambria Sea Scout Group
- 19 Thurrock Yacht Club
- 20 Gravesend Rowing Club

- 21 London Youth Rowing
- 22 Age UK Kent Rivers
- 23 4th/6th Leigh-on-Sea Sea Scouts
- 24 Cake Club CIO
- 25 Seaquins Westcliff
- 26 Sea-Change Sailing Trust

RIVER WIDE:

- Mayor's Fund for London Kitchen Social
- AquaPaddle
- Around and Around



ACTIVE THAMES FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

Brentford Community Boathouse

1

£5,000 funded bursaries for six young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds to stay active on the water all year round at **Brentford Community Boathouse**. The project helped to break down financial obstacles in the sport while furthering the organisation's primary goal, which is to enable open access to activities for a wider and more diverse community on the river overcoming any socio-economic barriers. The club continually aims to reach as many children as possible in the local area, which has some of the highest levels of deprivation in London.

"As a single mother of 3 there was no way we could afford a sport like rowing. But at this point Alex was completely in love with it and I had to try. I was told about a bursary...Fast track to today and Alex is a part of Brentford Boat Club with some wins and a lot of challenges that he has overcome. I saw my boy become the most resilient, dedicated and committed he had ever been."

Alex's Mother



Barn Elms Boathouse

2

A rowing programme delivered at **Barn Elms Boathouse**, managed by Enable Leisure, received £4,000 to support a fitness programme for adults with long term health conditions. Referrals to the rowing programme came through existing social prescribing networks, and participants had the opportunity to learn a new skill, get active outdoors, and connect with others in a positive environment. The programme will continue delivering sessions throughout Spring 2025.



"I was a little nervous to start with as I am not the most comfortable on the water, but the coaches were really reassuring. After the first few sessions I was feeling more relaxed and enjoyed the experience of both learning to row and being out on the Thames. My mood definitely felt lighter at the end of each session."

Participant

Fulham Reach Boat Club

3

Fulham Reach Boat Club was awarded £10,000 to strengthen and extend their work with schools in Hammersmith & Fulham and beyond. The grant supported access to rowing on the Thames for 88 young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, including young people with disabilities, learning conditions and challenging behaviours. Feedback surveys from the programme showed that most participants agreed or strongly agreed that the project had helped to support their mental health, self-confidence, teamwork skills and ability to focus and study.



"I had never rowed before so I was quite nervous about it but the coaches were really nice and helpful and they made sure we knew what to do and were ok the whole time. My arms were really sore afterwards but it was so much fun."

Participant

ACTIVE THAMES FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

Westminster Boating Base

4

Westminster Boating Base have been delivering watersports on the Thames for 48 years. A grant of £5,000 allowed the base to run powerboating, canoeing, kayaking, and sailing sessions for 108 young people with special education needs and disabilities on the Thames, whilst directly involving their carers and teachers. The base was able to engage schools in areas of the greatest deprivation. Students gained confidence handling themselves in a new environment while instructors gained important experience working with young people with a variety of disabilities.

"I wanted to say how thankful we are for giving them this amazing experience and how impressed I was with your colleagues - very friendly, professional and understanding and they really worked very well with our students!"

The Phoenix School



And Fitness For All CIC

6

And Fitness For All CIC was awarded £5,000 to build on their successful paddling and mentoring project with **Downside Fisher Youth Club**. Young paddlers gained plenty of experience on the water, while three of the youth club volunteers and staff members are now progressing onto becoming paddlesport coaches this year, with a view to creating an affiliated club with Paddle UK and continuing the programme long-term. This means that the youth club will be able to provide paddling sessions for young people well into the future. Training took place at Surrey Docks Watersports Centre in Southwark.

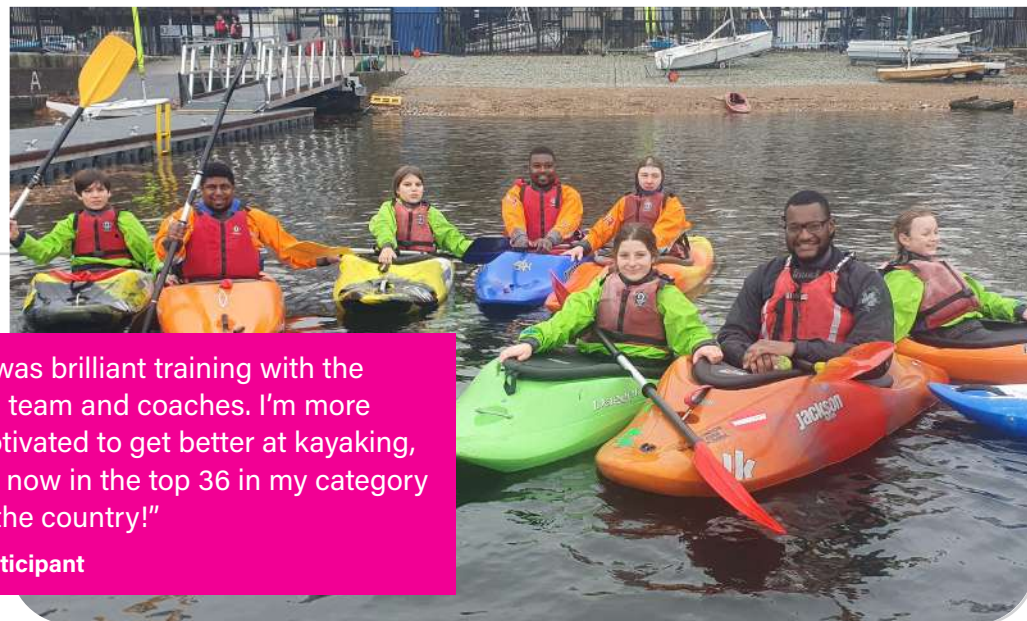
Islington Boat Club

5

Islington Boat Club set up a new paddling club night for young women and girls. The boat club spent the previous year developing their female coaches and have a team that reflect the diversity of their local community. The club received £4,984.64 of funding and supported young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and faith communities who preferred a female-only environment. Participants demonstrated a noticeable growth in self-confidence as the sessions progressed, which was evident through increased leadership and teamwork skills.

"I learnt a lot and made new friends!"

A, Participant



"It was brilliant training with the GB team and coaches. I'm more motivated to get better at kayaking, I'm now in the top 36 in my category in the country!"

Participant

ACTIVE THAMES FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

Laburnum Boat Club

7

Laburnum Boat Club received Active Thames funding for a third year in a row. £6,458 supported their Inclusive Waters project, which provided paddlesport activities and guided walks for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and young people with disabilities. The grant also supported the development of 25 coaches, with the club providing discounted spaces on their courses to other centres and watersports providers in the area.

"You have given our young people an experience of a lifetime...building up their resilience and self-belief as well as increasing their enjoyment of kayaking and being part of such a supportive team."

Parent of a Participant



Shadwell Basin Outdoor Activity Centre

9

Shadwell Basin Outdoor Activity Centre ran a ten-month instructor training programme for six young Londoners aged 16-18, chosen from their existing youth leadership programmes. £4,988 allowed them to run weekly sessions of practical and theoretical workshops including personal skills, group management, leadership, safety, and mentoring. This programme helped address the current lack of instructors in outdoor and adventure sport. It also increased access to the local community to watersports as each coach is able to teach up to 10 young people at a time.

"When I first joined six years ago, I felt a little bit awkward, a little bit socially nervous, but when I came to Shadwell the community was really welcoming and really boosted my confidence. That's what I really love about Shadwell."

Participant who passed his Paddlesport Instructor award in November 2024

The Leaside Trust

8

£4,860 supported **The Leaside Trust**, a charity based on the banks of the River Lea in East London, to boost the development of volunteers at their paddling club. 25 volunteers from diverse backgrounds became paddlesport instructors, including women from the local Charedi community. In turn, this project helped the charity continue to provide free sessions for the local community. The programme had many positive outcomes, including increased confidence of participants, strong community engagement, and expanded access to the waterways and environmental stewardship.

"I never thought I could do this, I feel amazing!"

Participant



Tower Hamlets Canoe Club

10

The visually impaired paddling project at **Tower Hamlets Canoe Club** continues to grow. Now in its third year, having originally launched through Active Thames funding, visually impaired participants were able to try kayaking and canoeing for the first time, with some individuals learning how to paddle single boats. Coaches were also developed in adapting equipment and techniques for visually impaired participants. A grant of £4,163 supported the club to expand its offering and membership throughout 2024.

"During July and August, I learned assisted and self-rescues for 8 weeks and then progressed to my Explore award, in groups with different coaches and leaders. I started kayaking in April for the first time and now regularly paddle a single boat on the Thames, the canal and club and private trips away to the sea."

Participant

ACTIVE THAMES FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

The AHOY Centre

12

The AHOY Centre enhanced their ability to generate income for their programmes by becoming commercially endorsed. A grant of £5,000 covered training and certification costs for staff members and their boats. Further income generated by the Centre supported several of the Deptford-based charity's programmes, which all improve the health and life skills of disadvantaged young people and young adults.

"I hated every day at school and often truanted. When I joined AHOY, I finally found somewhere I belong. I learned more at AHOY in four months than I did in the whole five years I was at secondary school."

Young Participant Sailor



Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre

13

Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre

received £5,000 to run an instructor development programme. Five young people from lower socio-economic groups and diverse backgrounds were successfully put through their RYA Dinghy Instructor qualification, and one young person through their UKCC Level One Kayak Instructors qualification. Candidates were then able to become part-time coaches at the centre, and their contribution allowed the centre's summer project to add an additional 48 places across their sailing and kayaking sessions per day. This supports a drive to increase sailing coaches in East London and builds on learning from a project funded by Active Thames last year.

"The project has allowed me to complete courses required for the RYA Dinghy Instructor course for free, without which I wouldn't have been able to afford on my own."

Alex, Participant



ACTIVE THAMES FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

Poplar HARCA

14

In 2023 (and with previous support from Active Thames), **Poplar HARCA** successfully recruited over 50 local minority ethnic women to engage in watersports, many for the first time. The women formed a committee and their club, Oar & Explore, is now affiliated to Paddle UK. A grant in 2024 of £4,880 supported the club to deliver new sessions including family days, sessions for their male relatives and friends to try paddling, and two sessions dedicated to SEND families.

"I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to build up my confidence and skills for using boats and boards on water. The water has long been inaccessible to me, but this course has given me the information needed to get up and active now on the waterways in my area. I've been taught the proper and safe ways to keep me and others safe whilst on the water. It's been upskilling and very good for establishing friendships that bridge culture and religion."

Eileen (59)



Dartford and Cambria Sea Scout Group

18

Dartford and Cambria Sea Scout Group received a grant of £8,300 towards the purchase of two new catamarans, with 83 young people benefitting from their use. Alongside the new boats, instructors trained to deliver catamaran sailing helped to increase the capacity of the organisation, allowing for six extra sessions per week over a four-month period. The scout group managed to raise match funding for this project and the sailing boats are expected to last for at least ten years.

"The catamaran training gave me the opportunity to further develop my skills, building my confidence and my abilities, and leading me on to become a senior instructor."

Erin, Instructor



Thurrock Yacht Club

19

Thurrock Yacht Club is a community-centred sailing club based at Grays, Essex. £5,000 of Active Thames funding, and further funds raised by the club, upgraded their fleet of safety boats. This enabled the club to run more sessions and support safe sheltered sailing for other local organisations such as Grangewaters Outdoor Education Centre and the Tilbury Sea Scouts.



ACTIVE THAMES FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

London Youth Rowing

21

London Youth Rowing received £20,000 to continue to roll out their Active Row programme in Kent. In its second year, the project worked with schools to establish indoor rowing clubs and then get them out onto the Thames from Gravesend Rowing Club, benefitting 1,281 individual participants overall. A key focus of the programme was in developing five essential life skills: Leadership, Teamwork, Staying Positive, Aiming High, and Problem Solving. The programme's data highlighted substantial growth in these areas, with 94% of tracked participants showing improvement across all five skills.

"Today I learned how the skills needed in rowing can help in other parts of life, like job interviews or careers. We got to see how the PLA uses these skills, and then we tried them out in the boat. The boats were scary at first since I've never been in one, but we pushed through our fears and stayed positive."

Participant, Orchards Academy, Active Row Kent



Age UK Kent Rivers

22

Age UK Kent Rivers received £4,160 to set up two walking groups along the Thames Path. One group specifically supported adults with learning disabilities and their support workers, while the other was open to all ages and supported by staff so that older and vulnerable people felt safe and confident to attend. Participants benefitted from improved mobility and confidence, and friendships blossomed among the group, creating a strong support network for those involved.



"As a regular volunteer at the group, I am happy to report that some of those taking part have seen a vast improvement in their mobility and confidence, in fact two participants that started out walking at the back of the group with the tail walker are now regularly at the front of the group helping to decide the exact route that we explore on each walk."

Volunteer

Cake Club CIO

24

Cake Club CIO is a project offering parenting support, activities and playgroups in Essex, fuelled by plenty of tea and cake. £2,000 enabled the club to set up weekly walk and talk sessions in Shoeburyness, Southend, Westcliff and Leigh. Aimed predominantly at women in the perinatal period, the project directly supported 438 people get active in the local area and support them with their mental health and wellbeing.

"I really enjoy the walk and talk sessions. They are my favourite activities as I love being outdoors in the fresh air and this is the only organised event that I am aware of for mums and babies which is situated outside. It's good for both my mental health and physical health, and I get to socialise with other mums and get support if I need it."

K, parent of R



ACTIVE THAMES FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

Seaquins Westcliff

25

Seaquins Westcliff promote physical and mental wellbeing, facilitate community integration, and challenge stereotypes faced by the Orthodox Jewish community. £4,500 enabled Seaquins to establish regular walking and cycling groups for young people in the community along the Thames Estuary Path. They were able to reach 395 individuals throughout the project, creating a sense of belonging and shared experience for all.



"I used to be so anxious and isolated, but now I feel like I have a whole new support system. The walking group has changed my life."

Participant

Sea-Change Sailing Trust

26

Sea-Change Sailing Trust used their grant of £8,370 for three purposes: a sailing residential for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, training for 15 volunteers, and subsidised sail-training weekends for adults interested in learning how to sail traditional barges. Traditional Thames barges, such as the Blue Mermaid, require additional skills and there is a shortage of people able to sail them. This project benefitted the wider Thames sailing barge community, keeping a key piece of Thames heritage alive.

"Thank you to you and the team for a brilliant weekend on Blue Mermaid. The staff were both brilliant and very patient in teaching us the complexities of sailing the Barge."

Participant



Mayor's Fund for London Kitchen Social

River wide

Mayor's Fund for London Kitchen Social

programme works with a diverse range of grass-roots organisations, including sports clubs, to provide tailored packages of support to help deliver food along with activity provision. £5,000 funded collaborative projects between the Kitchen Social programme, Fulham Reach Boat Club and Phoenix Outdoor Centre respectively. Overall, 124 young people were reached, providing them with opportunities to develop key life skills while experiencing fun and joy on the river over the school holidays.

"It was an amazing experience for all the young people and an opportunity they wouldn't have had otherwise.... once on the water [the young people] showed determination, resilience, bravery, conquering fears (some were not able to swim) as well as different physical attributes such as balance, coordination, stamina and strength."

Provider

AquaPaddle

River wide

AquaPaddle organises paddleboarding sessions for individuals and groups who would not be able to do so otherwise due to their financial hardship, disability, or social circumstances. In 2023, £5,000 was awarded to fund stand-up paddleboarding sessions in central and East London, with delivery delayed until 2024. Participants were predominantly young refugees and children from local areas of high deprivation. Participants reported reduced stress levels and increased community connections through the process of making new friends and having fun on the water.

"The sessions were hugely positive. The young people had stacks of enthusiasm and initiative and were daring and up for some fun. The staff and translators worked well too."

Alfie, Instructor at East London Canal Access Network (delivery partner)

Delayed Delivery: Funding awards were also made to Welsh Harp Sailing Club, Thames Barbarians, and Southend Association of Voluntary Services (SAVS). Unforeseen delays mean these projects will be delivered in 2025, and they will be included in our next report.



John Sage,
Head of Corporate Responsibility
at Tideway

Why the 'super sewer' project supported Active Thames in 2024

The Thames Tideway Tunnel, aka London's 'super sewer', will make the capital's iconic river cleaner than it has been for generations. It will intercept the vast majority of the sewage spills that are currently polluting the Thames – more than 30 million tonnes in an average year – and is the largest part of a project that will reduce overflows into the tidal river by 95 per cent. This means the river will be healthier for the fish who swim in the Thames, the wildlife and plants who rely on it – and the people who use it for leisure.

To mark the year when we began the tunnel's testing and commissioning, in other words when we began to protect it from sewage pollution, we decided to boost the Active Thames 2024 Fund. This was a fitting way for us to support local communities last year for another reason, too. When we began in 2015, we set out a wider vision for our project – not just to build a 25km-long tunnel, but to change Londoners' relationship with the river, to 'reconnect London with the Thames.' The Active Thames programme fits this vision well because it doesn't just encourage

more people to use London's waterways, but it also gives people who really need support an opportunity to benefit from activities in, and alongside, the river.

This impact report demonstrates the power that activities on or around the water can have to help every type of person – young and old; from every background; with any ability or disability. The data shows its reach, both in terms of the geography of the Thames estuary and its strong impact on those who took part in the programmes. The quotes from participants speak for themselves – to hear a young person on paid work experience at Laburnum Boat Club in Hackney say "I'm eternally grateful for the confidence boost, can't wait for whatever comes next" is brilliant.

It makes me excited for what 2025 can hold for all the amazing coaches, volunteers and participants in Active Thames. With the Tideway project completing this year, it's also brilliant that they will have a cleaner, healthier river to enjoy.

-John Sage



TIDEWAY FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

Fulham Reach Boat Club

3

A new sport arrived on the Thames in West London via **Fulham Reach Boat Club**: beach sprint rowing. A form of coastal rowing, beach sprints require skills in sprinting on land and turning the boat quickly around buoys on the water. It is a relatively new sport that will feature in the 2028 Olympics. With their funding of £4,074, Fulham Reach Boat Club launched taster sessions for this sport, as well as sliding-seat rowing, reaching adults with little or no rowing experience.

"Rowing was so much fun, it was so much harder than I thought it was going to be, but it was cool to try a new sport."

Young Participant



Shadwell Basin Outdoor Activity Centre

9

Each summer, **Shadwell Basin Outdoor Activity Centre** runs an exciting programme of watersports and outward-bound activities for young people in Tower Hamlets. £4,992 went towards the cost of employing coaches to deliver the courses and the purchase of new buoyancy aids. The programme worked with over 100 young people over the summer, many from disadvantaged backgrounds. Participants reported that the programme was good for making friends, thus reducing isolation and improving both mental and physical health and wellbeing.

"I had so much fun during the summer project. I especially enjoyed climbing... I had a great time with my friends and made lots of new ones. The instructors were so supportive and friendly! It was an amazing experience, and it was so great to get these opportunities that are so rare to find in London. I truly had the best time."

Young Participant



Laburnum Boat Club

7

£4,795 of funding supported **Laburnum Boat Club** to provide six, paid, week-long work experience placements in paddlesports for disadvantaged young people, six narrowboat trips for adults with mental health challenges, and three Canal Clean Up days on the Regent's Canal which helped to promote environmental awareness. Over 200 people benefitted from the funding over the summer months.

"I think Laburnum Boat Club is a brilliant local resource. In addition to the youth club activities and the training and personal development activities the adult club offers an affordable opportunity to safely access the water. The staff are all well trained, competent and very friendly and the opportunities offered are really beneficial to health."

Adult participant with mental and physical health issues



TIDEWAY FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

Tideway Sailability

11

At **Tideway Sailability**, £5,000 went towards purchasing a new Hansa 303 Access Sailing boat, which is specially designed to cater for people with a broad range of physical disabilities. This expanded their existing fleet to eight, increasing their capacity for each session to 20 people. This purchase contributed to part of their strategy to expand and renew their existing fleet to meet the ever-increasing needs of disabled and disadvantaged members of the community.

"Tideway has given me the opportunity to sail independently in excellently maintained boats, more than sailing it's a community. Hardworking volunteers that would do anything for me to make the sailing experience as valuable as possible. I have received tuition and coaching and improved immensely, growing to love the sport. I think Tideway Sailability is a truly unique place in the heart of London where able and non-able can come together in a non-judgmental and supporting environment."

Sailor with mobility and limb disabilities (45)



Poplar HARCA

14

The community paddling club at **Poplar HARCA**, known as 'Oar & Explore', used their funding of £4,500 to provide family, disability, and women-only paddling sessions on the Limehouse cut. Benefitting 100 participants, the club was also able to leverage the funding to reach new audiences over the summer months, including children with SEND. Participants were able to tackle their fear of water by learning key safety skills, growing their confidence and connecting with the waterways.

"I absolutely loved the water confidence sessions although I was extremely apprehensive to start. I've avoided certain activities due to sheer fear and childhood bad experiences, but these sessions enabled me to tackle those fears head on and ... I was able to overcome my fears and build a great amount of confidence! I'm now raring to go and feel liberated!"

Tanjina, Participant



Greenwich UK Parkinson's Support Group

15

£1,554.52 of funding supported **Greenwich UK Parkinson's Support Group** in delivering bi-monthly Pole Walking sessions, using specially designed strapless poles, for people living with Parkinson's and their care partners. A local Parkinson's exercise specialist delivered the sessions. Exercise tools called 'Smoveys' were also purchased to ensure programme accessibility and provide an alternative to walking poles, and two volunteers were trained to support future walks.

"I've got Parkinson's and I've been introduced to the Nordic Walking which is a more active way of walking and is good for Parkinson's. It keeps you healthy, keeps you supple. The river Thames means a lot to me. It's the soul of London"

Participant



TIDEWAY FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

The Line

16

£5,000 went towards **The Line's** Youth Guides' programme, which supports local young people to develop transferrable skills and improve employability by providing training and work opportunities in the arts and heritage sector. The grant went towards training and paying the London Living wage for 26 Youth Guides aged 18-21 who worked as guides on the route around Greenwich Peninsula for eight weeks, as well as to deliver a team building workshop.

"We had a lovely experience. We loved talking to the Youth Guides; they were really friendly and knowledgeable, and we thought that if they are representative of the next generation then the UK will definitely be ok!"

Member of the Public



Re-Instate

17

Re-Instate received £5,000 to fund weekly guided walks for adults with learning disabilities and autism, exploring the Thames Path. Walks encouraged physical activity and learning, connecting people with the Thames. The funding paid for a coordinator to manage the regular walks and support the learning sessions back at Re-Instate's Hub in Bexley.



Gravesend Rowing Club

20

£1,500 enabled six volunteers from **Gravesend Rowing Club** to gain powerboating qualifications, meaning they can now provide safety support for junior and beginner rowing sessions. The club also ran a 'Learn to Row' course, recruiting from a broad network of community organisations in Gravesham, and purchased two new sets of sculling oars, enabling more people to get out on the water per session.



"Since completing the powerboat course I feel a lot more confident in my own abilities, and my ability to help the rowing club grow. I'm looking forward to being able to help get new people rowing in the spring."

RYA Powerboat Course Participant

TIDEWAY FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

4th/6th Leigh-on-Sea Sea Scouts

23

£3,687.50 enabled the **4th/6th Leigh-on-Sea Sea Scouts** to replace their ageing buoyancy aids and single-seater kayaks, supporting over 80 young people to get active on the Thames Estuary over the summer months. Some funds also went towards the purchase of new sit on kayaks, helping to increase the number of participants who could get out on the water at any given time.



Around and Around

River wide

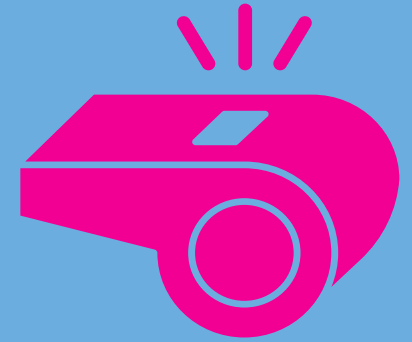
The charity **Around and Around** received £3,970.98 to update the Lively Lady, the boat that the late Sir Alec Rose used to make his famous single-handed voyage around the world in 1968. The funding was used to provide updated electrical, navigation, and safety equipment that is essential to supporting the volunteer team achieve their ambitions and maintain the historic yacht. The project provided life-changing opportunities for 185 people, including those from underrepresented communities and lower socio-economic backgrounds, to experience sailing on the Thames estuary and other waterways. Five volunteers also gained their RYA Yacht Master theory certification, allowing the team to progress to the next RYA qualification levels.

"Sailing, swimming, and playing with the dog was brilliant"

Provider



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Almost 50% of projects received funding to support the development of the workforce.

Some projects onboarded new coaches and volunteers, some funded the delivery of certified training courses, while others upskilled new instructors in key areas, including working with people with a range of mental and physical disabilities. Overall, training qualifications were awarded to 158 coaches and volunteers.

Investing in workforce development brings immediate benefits to coaches and volunteers, but its impact extends far beyond that — strengthening club capacity and growing the watersports community. Coaching shortages are a persistent challenge for watersport programmes across the UK, with the Active Thames survey highlighting a lack of instructors as a key barrier to participation. By training and upskilling more coaches, we can get more people out on the water, fostering a deeper connection to our shared blue space. This not only promotes physical activity along the tidal Thames but also builds long-term resilience and sustainability within the wider watersports community.

Some examples of the positive impact of investing in coach development include:

Laburnum Boat Club

FOCUSED ON INCREASING, UPSKILLING, AND DIVERSIFYING THE WORKFORCE

in their Club and across London by delivering four Governing Body Courses, ranging from a one-day first aid course, to a Paddlesport Safety & Rescue Course, Paddlesport Instructor and a Core Coach Training course. Overall, 25 coaches successfully obtained their qualifications. 11 were from Laburnum who received free qualifications and mentoring, while 14 came from other Centres and received discounted qualifications.

The Line

THE LINE'S YOUTH GUIDES' PROGRAMME TRAINED 26 YOUNG PEOPLE

to become tour guides along London's public art trail. Based on a participant survey, the Youth Guides experienced an increase in development in every measurable skill by the end of the project. The biggest increases were seen in knowledge of public art, knowledge of the local area, and overall confidence. Community feedback demonstrated that the public were impressed by the Youth Guides and felt more connected to The Line through this transfer of knowledge.

Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre's

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING PROGRAMME DEMONSTRATED

that it could deliver an efficient model of training young people to become competent and qualified instructors with a national governing body qualification. The project provided the young people with their first step into employment with an opportunity to share their passion for watersports with other people. The six young participants came from lower socio-economic groups and diverse backgrounds and were hand-selected for their drive and commitment to watersports, ensuring that both current participation and the next generation of coaching staff is reflective of the local communities they work with.

CHALLENGES

There were several challenges faced by clubs including:

Marketing, scheduling, and engagement



Bad weather or river conditions



Cancellation of sessions due to rioting and civil unrest in local areas



Availability and retention of staff



Damage to equipment



ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES

This information is integral for Active Thames partners to better understand what gaps need to be addressed. For example, the feedback helped to directly inform the criteria for [projects receiving Active Thames funding in 2025](#), including funding sustainable workforce development courses that will qualify and place young coaches, as well as the procurement of new equipment.

In addition, the PLA's [Environment Fund](#) is set up to secure greater use of the Thames while cleaning up the waterways. In 2025, seven projects were funded, including two rowing clubs, Fulham Reach Boat Club and Greenwich Yacht Club. This initiative is part of the wider [Thames Vision](#) to make the river a clean, safe space for everyone to enjoy.

The Active Thames programme also continues to encourage the uptake of public marketing platforms to promote sessions across local communities, including through our [Activity Finder](#).

MARKETING

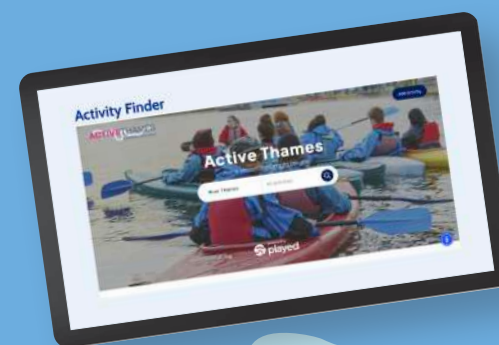
Recognising that marketing and engagement is the biggest administrative skills gap for clubs, the Active Thames partnership collaborates with [Played](#), an all-in-one booking platform built for community sports. With their expertise, they make it easier for clubs to promote sessions, streamline bookings, and even handle payments. By using Open Data, Played helps clubs reach more people and offers 1:1 support to overcome booking system challenges. They're also part of the national Open Active movement, driving greater access to local sports opportunities.

As part of their grant agreements, clubs are encouraged to share data on community sessions, making it easier for people to discover and join activities on the water.

In 2024, there was a continued increase in uptake with Played overall.

OVER 1,080 ACTIVITIES WERE PUBLISHED TO THE PLATFORM, WHICH IS A 27% INCREASE IN ENGAGEMENT FROM 2023

35 organisations published opportunities on the finder, a significant step towards being more digitally inclusive and raising awareness of watersports amongst a wider and more diverse audience.



COMMENT FROM ROBIN MORTIMER



"In its third year of delivery, the Active Thames programme has continued to help more people get active on the river while enjoying the tidal Thames and inland waterways, and of course, doing that safely. It is particularly inspiring to see the large increase in young people aged 25 and under who are now accessing blue space. This work is a credit both to our partners throughout London, Essex, and Kent, as well as colleagues at the PLA."

Robin Mortimer, Chief Executive, Port of London Authority



COMMENTS FROM ACTIVE THAMES PARTNERS



"Working with Active Thames, we've seen how the right funding and support can make a real difference to local initiatives.

Breaking down barriers and creating welcoming spaces that help more people from all backgrounds get out on the water, be active, and connect with their communities through paddlesports.

We truly value this collaboration, as it allows us to reach more people, support grassroots projects, and create lasting opportunities for communities along the Thames and its connected waterways."

Gregory van Heerden, Community Development Manager at Paddle UK



"As the charity that cares for 2,000 miles of waterways, Canal & River Trust is thrilled to be a part of the Active Thames Partnership.

Supporting organisations that encourage people to engage with London's canals and rivers, we're delighted to see the Active Thames fund directly benefiting initiatives that get more people on the water, promoting physical and mental wellbeing."

Sian Palmer-Ferry, Community Development Manager at Canal and River Trust



"Active Thames' continued funding support for the Urban Winds project in East London is making a real and lasting impact by helping to grow the workforce from underrepresented groups. We're already seeing the results, with more sailing instructors from the local community now teaching on the Thames and at inland venues such as the docks."

Steve Mitchell, London and South East Regional Development Officer at Royal Yachting Association



"It has been a real pleasure supporting local organisations in Kent & Medway to offer accessible and inclusive initiatives, as a result of the Active Thames funding. This has enabled them to create new opportunities for their community to be active and to connect them to the River Thames."

Carly Miles, Community Development Manager at Active Kent & Medway



"London Sport is proud to support this initiative. The expertise involved ensured funding reached projects that promote diversity, inclusion, and greater access to blue spaces for underrepresented communities."

Emily Lau, Project Officer at London Sport