



## **HOW TO RUN A CLEAN UP EVENT ON YOUR RIVER**

### **Produced by Thames21 for the Great River Rescue campaign**

Are you someone who loves your local waterway? Do you want to clean up and improve your patch but are not sure how to begin? Thames21, one of the partners in the Great River Rescue campaign, has been helping care for waterways for many years and has put together this guide as a first step in helping you plan a safe litter clean-up of your local river. We also offer accredited training to people living in London. You can find out more here.

This guide doesn't cover all the issues or risks that come up when running this kind of activity, so if you are unsure about what to do, always choose the safest, lowest risk option; even if it means cancelling the event. But if you want to get together a group of willing volunteers and do something about the rubbish in your river this guide is a good place to start.

#### **1. KNOW YOUR WATERWAY**

Do you have a river in mind for your clean up? Find out more about it. Do some research and gather information that will help you plan your event.

Things to consider:

- What is the river called?
- Who are the local council?
- Who owns the site you want to clean?
- How can people get there?
- Who is in the area that could help you?
- Are there local issues that might impact your event?

#### **2. SITE VISIT AND EVENT PLAN**

Take a walk round your site and start thinking about the event you would like to lead. Take a camera with you to record the details. Think about what you want to do and where you want to work.

Things to consider:

- What are the features of the site? Make a note of such things as water depth, types and prevalence of vegetation, ground surfaces, and frequency of other users.
- Who owns the site? Making contact with landowners and other users around the area is a good idea and sometimes required (to get permission to run your event or to arrange for rubbish collection, for example).

- How will volunteers collect the litter?
- What sort of litter is there? Your site may have small items, large items, heavy items, sharp items.
- Who will come and collect the litter?
- What equipment will you need to get the job done?

### **3. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The most important part of your plan is how to make your event as safe as possible for everyone taking part.

#### **Assessing the risk**

As you walk around your site think about what you are going to do and what might cause harm to people taking part.

- Think about how accidents and ill health could happen and concentrate on real risks – those that are most likely and which will cause the most harm.
- Write down the hazards and the measures you will take to control these risks. This is your risk assessment and provides a plan of the reasonable steps you will take to prevent harm taking place.

#### **Weil's Disease (Leptospirosis)**

This infection relates specifically to working around water and should feature in your risk assessment. It is a bacterial infection that can be spread to people by contact with urine from infected animal. Cases of Weil's Disease in the UK are rare. However, the symptoms can be confused with the flu and can be serious if not treated. Prevent it by...

Identifying it... recognising flu-like symptoms (fever, aches and pains, headaches) developing 7 – 21 days after infection

Treating it... telling your doctor right away that you have been working around water and asking for an ELISA blood test. Weil's Disease is easily cured with a round of antibiotics.

### **4. GETTING OTHERS INVOLVED**

Part of running a successful event is getting other people involved.

- Who is nearby your event site such as businesses, schools or organisations that might be interested in volunteering at or publicising your event?
- On your Site Visit, take a note of who is using your site. This might give you a clue as to who might be willing to help.
- How will you let people know your event is happening? Will you use posters, emails or social media? List the date and timings of your event.
- How will volunteers get to the event? Set a specific meeting point. How many people do you need to carry out the work?
- If you want to limit the number of volunteers, how will you arrange for that? (You can put a limit on your publicity materials and ask those interested to email to register ahead of time, for example).
- Find out where the nearest toilets and nearest refreshments are in advance.

Make things easy for your volunteers. The more information they have ahead of time, the better they will feel.

### **5. BE THE LEADER**

During the event be prepared to supervise, direct and answer questions. Your volunteers won't know the site or the planning for the day as well as you. Whilst you may want to get stuck in yourself and thoroughly engage in the activities, a good

leader is usually the one taking a step back from the action to keep a bird's eye view on how the event is going as a whole.

### **The Briefing**

Leading your event on the day is perhaps the most rewarding part of the role and giving a welcome briefing before beginning the work it serves the following purposes:

- It is the opportunity to introduce yourself and set the tone for the day
- It is a chance to explain some of the environmental issues facing our waterways and highlight the benefits of what you are doing
- It gets volunteers motivated for the event and empowered to undertake the activities
- It provides clarity about what is going to happen throughout the event so volunteers know what to expect
- It communicates crucial health and safety information, reviews possible hazards and what people need to do to reduce risks of accidents.

### **Biosecurity**

At the end of the event consider biosecurity. Biosecurity means minimising the risk of spreading contaminants such as invasive non-native species, fungi and viruses from one area to another. For more information about biosecurity, contact your local council and have a look at the [Check Clean Dry guidance on the Non-Native Species Secretariat](#) website.

### **After the Event**

- After the event don't forget to say "Thank you" and acknowledge the hard work accomplished by the group.
- Take a group photo and/or a photo of the rubbish collected and post it on social media.
- Send details of what you have achieved and the numbers who took part to the Great River Rescue organisers, so that the campaign can recognise and help publicise your achievement

If you live in London, Thames21 offer free training and support with a range of courses that pass on the knowledge and experience we have gained through our delivery of hundreds of events each year. We want to make it easy for you to make a difference. Check out our [training opportunities](#), which include our nationally accredited training course Leading a Waterway Clean Up.

### **Important note**

The information in this document is only advice and does not constitute official guidance as would be gained by passing Thames21's more detailed and extensive nationally accredited course, "Leading a Waterway Clean Up". Participants will not be covered under the Thames21 insurance that would be provided for a qualified person who has completed the accredited course. Whilst it is not compulsory to have insurance in place for your group before participating, it is recommended; and if you are connected a faith group, charitable organisation, parish, town or district council, or any other group then their existing public liability insurance may provide cover for your activity.