



LONDON RIVER SERVICES SERVICE PLANNING GUIDELINES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This note sets out the service planning objectives adopted by London River Services Limited (LRS) in discharging Transport for London's (TfL) statutory duties for the provision of river services (Section 156 (3) of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 and also its fiduciary duties).
- 1.2 LRS's Vision and Objectives are set out in the London Passenger Piers Strategy (LPPS) (2019). The LPPS comprises four strategic aims which provide the framework for all proposed activities on LRS's piers:
- **Safety:** Putting safety first on London's piers;
 - **Customer Experience:** Maximising the iconic experience;
 - **Environmental Sustainability:** Cleaning London's air and waterways; and
 - **Commercial Viability:** London's growth and economic prosperity.
- 1.3 Within this framework, the LPPS sets out a range of principles and policies that detail LRS's key priorities in its approach to assessing opportunity. Such priorities include:
- maximising the role of piers in facilitating a safer Thames through adopting a Vision Zero approach;
 - encouraging the use of piers and river services for commuting, leisure, culture and tourism;
 - seeking to enable the full potential of piers and river services to carry passengers;
 - considering ways to improve pier facilities to enhance the customer experience, and where possible adopt the Healthy Streets Approach at passenger piers;
 - considering the feasibility to pilot the use of piers as delivery hubs; and
 - ensuring environmentally sustainable piers which generate their own energy and facilitate low-emission vessels.
- 1.4 To achieve these priorities, LRS is committed to a process of continuous review and improvement of the river boat network and the services it offers. This process aims to ensure that LRS:
- meet TfL's statutory duties and objectives;
 - allocate its resources on a consistent basis across the network of river services; and

- consider requests for new or amended services on an equitable and consistent basis.
- 1.5 In the following sections, transport objectives, against which service options will be developed and assessed, are described in detail. Service options will then be evaluated to maximise passenger benefits, in line with TfL's vision and objectives.

2. TRANSPORT OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The London river boat network should be market-led in reflecting passengers' needs and priorities and should be responsive to changes in local demand or operating conditions, for example to major infrastructure, property developments, changes in commuting, leisure and tourist facilities or enhancements to environmental sustainability and safety.
- 2.2 Hence, enhancements to the network will be considered both to take account of changes in local patterns or levels of demand and when opportunities for innovation arise. Evaluation will be undertaken to ensure value for money for passengers and LRS.
- 2.3 From a passenger's point of view, it is important that the river boat network be aligned to the vision and objectives in the LPPS. In practice, it is often necessary to trade these objectives against each other, however, each of the objectives and underlying principles of the LPPS should be addressed in service design.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- 2.4 River patronage can be maximised when services are safe, fast (for commuters), frequent, reliable, affordable, accessible, comfortable and as convenient as possible.

Transport objective

- 2.5 In considering proposals for river services from its piers, TfL will encourage services that adopt the following core principles:
- **Comprehensive:** providing services to available piers and recognising the needs of local people and visitors (including the elderly and people with disabilities);
 - **Frequent:** with adequate capacity for seasonal and daily peaks;
 - **Simple:** easy for passengers to understand and flexible enough to adapt to specific demand patterns; and
 - **Reliable:** aiming to provide even service intervals when frequencies are high and operating to time when they are low.
- 2.6 In addition, TfL will encourage the following:
- Fully accessible services, delivering step free access and the use of boarding ramps, with vessels that cater for all disabilities onboard;

- Services delivering exemplary customer service at all stages of the customer journey both onboard and while on LRS's piers; and
 - Services delivering passenger information across multiple platforms for all potential users, such as online and mobile apps, including real-time information where possible.
- 2.7 As part of its desire to improve the nature of travel by river, LRS wishes to encourage improved amenities on boats and at piers. Proposals to upgrade existing amenities and to introduce new amenities particularly in conjunction with accessibility proposals will be of particular interest. LRS would therefore require the highest degree of accessibility as is practicable.
- 2.8 The nature of staffing, customer care and other services oriented towards the passenger will be a matter of utmost importance. LRS will seek to ensure that exemplary passenger standards be agreed as part of the licence arrangements and that there be a programme of continual improvement in customer care.

SAFETY

- 2.9 TfL is committed to putting safety at its core and improving standards on the river at all piers and within all river operations. TfL's Vision Zero approach will seek to eliminate all deaths and serious injuries on and around London's piers, including all passengers, staff and boat crews.

Transport objective

- 2.10 In considering proposals for river services from its piers, TfL will encourage:
- services that adopt the principles of TfL's Vision Zero approach for a safer Thames and safer piers by demonstrating appropriate safety standards and training requirements that aim to reduce incidents, accidents and near misses on the river;
 - proposals that reduce vessel congestion on the Thames and improve safety for passengers; and
 - vessels that exceed minimum safety standards.
- 2.11 LRS's commitment to safety overarches its transport objectives. Thus, LRS will encourage the introduction of vessels, which exceed minimum safety standards. In accordance with the provisions of the respective LRS licences, operators must comply with all requirements of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Health and Safety Executive, Port Health Authority and the Port of London Authority. Commensurate with its duties under the GLA Act 1999, LRS will monitor all safety and security standards.

COMMERCIAL VIABILITY

- 2.12 To improve the commercial viability of river services and to enable operators to invest in further expansion and improvements to their services, patronage

needs to be increased in a safe and sustainable way. A key element to achieving this will be to promote existing pier facilities to as wide an audience as possible.

Transport objective

- 2.13 In considering proposals for river services from its piers, TfL will encourage:
- opportunities that maximise pier capacity and viability for other uses, including making flexible use of space in off-peak times and periods;
 - opportunities that maximise revenue potential or unlock further investment in LRS piers contributing to their commercial viability;
 - opportunities that drive passenger growth including commuters, tourism and leisure passengers;
 - opportunities that contribute to the growth of the river bus network, in particular those that serve new parts of the river; and
 - innovation, in particular the use of piers for light freight logistics operations, provided that such operations be structured so as to avoid clashes with passenger service operations.
- 2.14 TfL will work with service operators and key stakeholders to seek potential opportunities to increase the promotion of the Thames as a tourist attraction/destination, contributing to the commercial success of both services and piers. To achieve this, TfL will need to optimise pier utilisation and maximise river capacity. There is scope to develop and promote services that attract customers to the river at off-peak periods, such as evenings, and to reduce the current seasonality of ridership. Developing a better understanding of the levels of demand by time of day and time of year will be central to developing initiatives that help operators to maximise their levels of efficiency and commercial viability.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 2.15 As set out in the London Environment Strategy, piers and river services can play a role in facilitating and encouraging a cleaner Thames and improved air quality in London. They can also help meet the Mayor's target of a zero carbon city by 2050.

Transport objective

- 2.16 In considering proposals for river services from its piers, TfL will encourage zero emission vessels or vessels with significantly reduced emissions through the adoption of hybrid and electric engine technologies, or other appropriate environmentally sustainable technologies.
- 2.17 TfL is open to working with operators to identify opportunities for piers to generate and store energy to facilitate the introduction of zero-emission-capable vessels.

3. LICENCING

- 3.1 New licences would normally be awarded for a period of up to five years depending on the service proposed. LRS is keen to encourage experiments or trials in terms of both services and facilities within the licensing regime and would be mindful of the possibility that such services might be of a temporary nature.
- 3.2 Equally, services that serve new developments may be introduced with particular time horizons based on the availability of funding from developers.
- 3.3 Economic circumstances may determine whether a period of longer than five years is appropriate for a particular licence application however this will be considered by exception only.
- 3.4 LRS is keen that there be healthy and sustainable competition for services on the river. LRS believes that competition will develop the market, but in developing its competition policy, LRS will have due regard to both the need to provide a return on capital investment and the effects on the sustainability and safety of the network and individual operators.
- 3.5 When it considers applications for licences, LRS is mindful of the investments in vessels, amenities, customer care quality and safety and would have due regard to these factors when considering whether to extend licences beyond the current date for expiration of the licence.

General factors

- 3.6 The transport criteria set out above will determine whether a particular service or variation of a service is likely to be considered by LRS. However, in undertaking such consideration, LRS will have regard to the implications for available infrastructure, navigational requirements and the requirements of other agencies, who have statutory duties with regard to the river. It is incumbent on any applicant for a new licence or variation of an existing licence to have ensured that there be no objections from the statutory bodies concerned.
- 3.7 When considering applications for scheduled services, LRS will also take account of the appropriateness of the pier slots requested for charter services so that it may make best use of available resources.
- 3.8 Past performance in complying with terms of existing licences will also be a factor that will be taken into account when changes will be considered. Hence, in accordance with the terms of individual licences, LRS reserves the right not to issue licences.

3.9 EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.10 Operators with an interest in running new services from an LRS pier should write to the Head of London River Services at: river@tfl.gov.uk

- 3.11 LRS will consider opportunities in accordance with the transport objectives described above and where spare pier capacity is available. In the interest of open competition, where spare pier capacity is available, LRS reserves the right to extend the opportunity to submit service proposals to other service providers.
- 3.12 LRS will award all licences at its sole discretion and in accordance with TfL's governance procedures.