

# Thames Access Points

## What are they, and how do we get one?

### July 2009

Website: [www.jddc.co.uk/taps](http://www.jddc.co.uk/taps)

## 1 Background to the TAP project

### 1.1 What is a TAP?

A Thames Access Point is a recognisable location, well signed and clearly indicated on maps, where visitors may find easy access to the river and its amenities.

### 1.2 Where did the idea come from?

The TAP concept originated with the goals of the River Thames Alliance, as expressed in the Thames Waterway Plan. The plan calls for various means of making the river more accessible and enjoyable by the public.

The 'visit Thames' website ([www.visitthames.co.uk](http://www.visitthames.co.uk)) has done an excellent job in promoting the river as a destination, but visitors (mostly those unfamiliar with the river) have great difficulty locating a good point to find the riverbank and start exploring.



Figure 1: Road signage gives no clue as to the proximity of the river, and riverbank signage is often unwelcoming

### 1.3 So what will the TAP programme achieve?

- The TAP programme will create a number of specific locations along the river where easy access is possible. Each TAP will have car parking or public transport nearby.
- TAPs will then become reference points for river tourism – shown on maps, trails, marketing documents etc.
- TAPs will also be used by River Thames partners and businesses, to assist them to market their products / services / facilities.

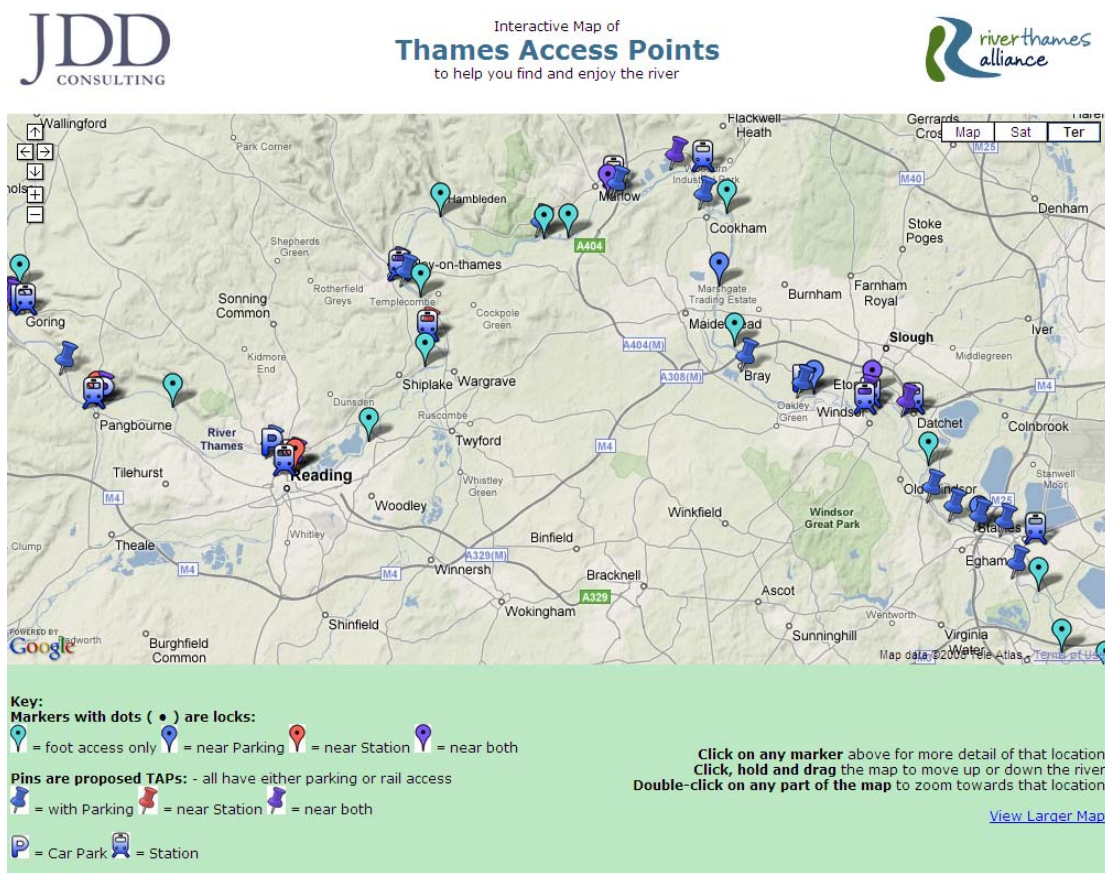
## 2 Where are the TAPs to be located?

All the appropriate sites have been identified and they are all referenced through a map on the JDD website ([www.jddc.co.uk/tapmap](http://www.jddc.co.uk/tapmap)). (This surveying and mapping was funded by The Waterways Trust).



All the chosen sites are close to either a car park, a bus stop or a railway station. There are between 50 and 60 identified sites, including about 15 at lock locations.

One or two further sites have been suggested since the publication of the list and map, and these are being evaluated.



**Figure 2: The 'tapmap' showing all TAP locations (see [www.jddc.co.uk/tapmap](http://www.jddc.co.uk/tapmap))**

## 3 What will a TAP look like?

### 3.1 Components already designed

We have created a standard design for an information panel (see Figure 3), which will match those being installed by The Environment Agency at some two dozen locks up and down the river.

The sign carries a number of features, including:

- A small inset showing the full length of the river

- A more detailed map of the nearby river stretch (a few miles in each direction)
- There is also a highly detailed map of the immediate local area, showing locations of key facilities
- The text and illustrations in the sign give local points of interest and suggest places that can be easily reached on foot or bicycle from this location
- Some facts about this particular point on the river (height above sea level, distance from source, etc.)
- Ample space can be allocated next to the panel, or on a strip below it, to carry the sponsor’s name, contact details and appropriate advertising messages

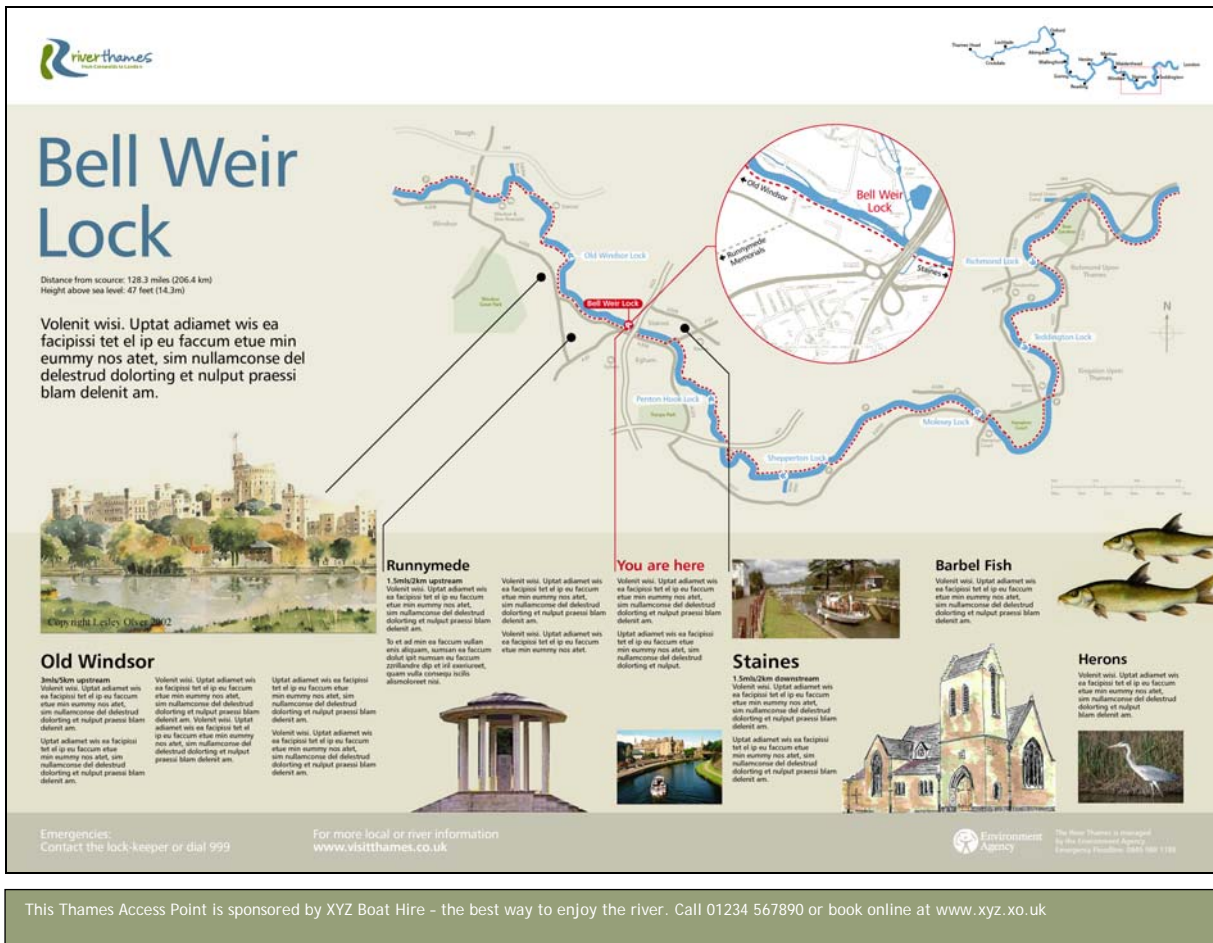


Figure 3: New design for information panel to be provided at each TAP

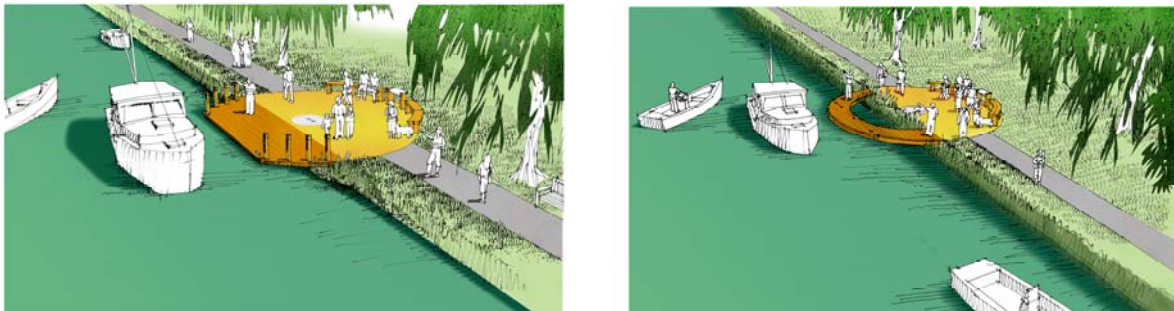
### 3.2 What will the rest of the installation look like?

This has been visualised by Russ Canning & Company, landscape architects. Funding for this design work was provided by The Waterways Trust. The basic requirements – as set out in the brief to the Landscape Architects – were these:

- A TAP is designed primarily to welcome and orientate those who are unfamiliar with the river, although all river users will appreciate its facilities.
- A TAP should give a sense of arrival: visitors may have journeyed to find the river, and at the TAP should help them to feel that they have arrived at a destination that is attractive and welcoming.
- A TAP should be a relay point: as well as giving a sense of arrival, the TAP should also help visitors to feel that there is much more to explore, e.g. local places to see and

things to do by or near the river. In particular, the TAP will sign up routes that link to other TAPs and nearby locks, or circular routes that will bring them back to this starting point.

- A TAP should be distinctly recognisable, though not obtrusive in the landscape. The recognition might come from a common architectural feature such as a beacon, flag or sculpture. It may be appropriate to specify a selection of materials that may be used, to take account of the wide variation in local landscape character up and down the river.
- Some TAPs may be at the river's edge, some set back from the river, and some may even be floating pontoons or landing stages.
- Locks are the most obvious examples of a consistent architectural / engineering style that has been applied up and down the length of the river. The more accessible locks already perform the function of TAPs to some extent. The use of consistent interpretation signage will help to cement a feeling that locks and TAPs are all part of the same network.
- A TAP installation might include places to sit and linger or picnic, or to board a boat. There may also be interpretation boards highlighting the locality, and signposts for important local facilities. Provision should be made for the inclusion of riverside safety equipment such as lifebelts.
- 'Brand values' for the River Thames have been identified, and the design of the TAP should be consistent with these.
- The TAP should be generally vandal-proof.



**Figure 4: Architect's impression of possible TAP configurations**

## 4 Rollout programme

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### 4.1 Prototypes

We are now looking to identify the first few sites for Thames Access Points. A number of riverside businesses have already expressed interest. It is expected there would initially be 5-6 prototype installations.

### 4.2 Rollout

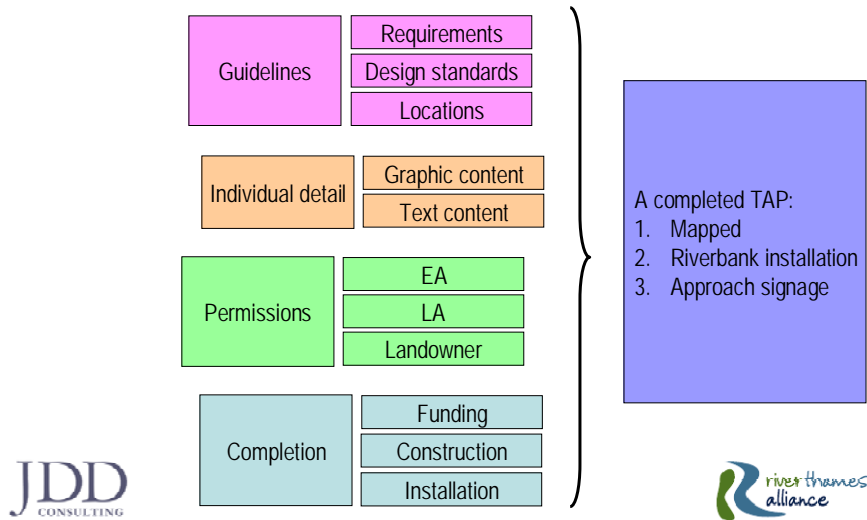
Ultimately, some 50-60 TAPs may be commissioned. For each one, the following will be required:

1. agreement of the EA, the landowner and the local council;
2. approach signing for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians (according to a specified scheme which we have documented);

3. identification of a sponsor to fund the content, fabrication and installation of the sign;
4. individualisation of the TAP design for the specific locality;
5. finalisation of sign content (text and illustrations);
6. fabrication and installation.

## 5 We want a TAP - what do we need to do?

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**Figure 5: Chart showing all the pieces that need to be put in place to achieve a completed TAP**

Figure 5 is a visual representation of all the actions that need to be completed to install a TAP. On the next page, a ten-point checklist is given to help you prepare the project and follow it through to completion.

For more information, contact the TAP Scheme consultant, John Sherlock on 07785 243070 or at [js@jddc.co.uk](mailto:js@jddc.co.uk).

## 6 TAP Installation checklist

<i>No</i>	<i>Step</i>	<i>Agency / person responsible</i>	<i>Completed (date)</i>
1	Appoint a Project Manager (PM)	You, your consultant, or the TAP Scheme Consultant <sup>1</sup>	
2	Agree precise TAP location – obtain necessary permissions	PM and 1. Landowner 2. Environment Agency 3. Local Authority	
3	Prepare layout plan for TAP installation, using design guidelines created by the TAP Scheme Architect <sup>2</sup>	PM with your architect, or the TAP Scheme Architect	
4	Agree TAP budget and funding source(s) or sponsor(s)	PM with your consultant or the TAP Scheme Consultant	
5	Agree design and content of the information panel, as per standard template (see Figure 3)	PM with the TAP Scheme Consultant	
6	Prepare approach signage plan (pedestrian, cycle and motor vehicles) for TAP, using design guidelines created by the TAP Scheme Consultant	PM with your consultant or the TAP Scheme Consultant, consulting with Local Authority	
7	Procure TAP furniture as per architect's layout plan (benches, display boards etc)	PM with the recommended TAP Scheme Suppliers <sup>3</sup>	
8	Agree supervision / maintenance responsibilities and programme	PM, your consultant, or the TAP Scheme Consultant	
9	Appoint installation contractors	PM, your consultant, or the TAP Scheme Consultant	
10	Deliver the completed TAP (landscape works, furniture and signage)	PM and installation contractors	

<sup>1</sup> TAP Scheme Consultant: JDD Consulting Limited – 01483 272574

<sup>2</sup> TAP Scheme Architect: Russ Canning & Company – 01993 883662

<sup>3</sup> The TAP Scheme Architect will recommend a range of furniture, with supplier details