



River Deben Association

A Guide for Swimmers in the River Deben



River Deben Association



The river Deben is a strongly tidal estuary and although it may look wide at high tide, the deep area called the channel is fairly narrow for much of its course. That means that most vessels need to keep to the marked channel (between the red and green buoys) and often cannot see swimmers there. It is therefore strongly recommended that swimmers keep out of the channel as much as possible.



Before you start swimming make sure that:

- you know what the tide is doing (it can be difficult to swim against it, so it is sensible to start your swim against the tide so that you can be carried back with it when you are tired). Be particularly aware of very strong currents at the mouth of the river between Bawdsey Quay and Felixstowe Ferry.
- you know where the channel is so that you can avoid swimming there;
- you take into account the water temperature and if necessary, wear a wetsuit;
- you have assessed the risks of waterborne illnesses;
- you are preferably swimming with at least one other, but otherwise someone knows where you are in case you get into trouble; and
- you comply with any requests made by the harbour masters at Waldringfield, Ramsholt or Felixstowe Ferry



Ideally, please use a brightly coloured swimming hat and a tow float so that you are more likely to be seen by vessels on the river. But remember that you may be mistaken for a mooring buoy, and as many vessels steer from an aft position with imperfect visibility they may not have registered a swimmer in their path, even though you have seen them.



Put a copy of your ICE details with your belongings on the shore and in your tow float. There is other useful advice on open water swimming on the RNLI's website at www.rnli.org/safety/choose-your-activity/open-water-swimming; on the swimming.org website at and on the outdoor swimming society website at www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com



If you see anyone in difficulty on the river, ring 999 and ask for the Coastguard.



The river Deben has national protection for both breeding and wintering birds, making it an important area for wildlife all year round. Please keep away from key breeding, roosting and feeding areas all year round. If you see signs of disturbance such as individual birds or groups of birds moving to take flight or hauled-out seals rapidly moving to slip into the water, you are too close and are causing them stress. This can affect their survival capability.

This notice has been prepared by the River Deben Association in consultation with Felixstowe Coast Patrol, The Felixstowe Ferry Harbour Master, The Waldringfield Harbour Master, The Felixstowe Ferry Fairways Committee, The Waldringfield Fairway Committee and the Felixstowe Coastal Ward Town Councillor.

April 2022

www.riverdeben.org

