

# River Thames weir and lock keepers set for strike vote



River Thames weir and lockkeepers are set to ballot for industrial action over safety concerns, GMB has warned the Government.

In a [letter](#) to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the union says workers are ready to act following 'budget-driven decisions' that are 'putting people and property at risk'.

There are only 52 permanent staff on the river, plus 10 temporary posts which expire at the end of this year and have yet to be filled.

According to a 2008 EA assessment, more than 100 staff were needed during peak season.



Climate change has seen an increase in severe weather and flooding, with workers managing multiple weirs while being denied the required 24-hour or 48-hour rest periods between shifts – posing a safety risk to both the public and staff.

GMB members have now told the union they are ready to act.

**Kevin Brandstatter, GMB National Officer said:**

"Environment Agency management has set a budget for staffing of the weirs and locks on the River Thames which is half of what is needed.

"There are only 52 staff doing the work of more than 100 – they simply cannot do the work needed in a safe way.

"GMB members have bent over backwards to keep their communities safe from flooding, which is not only a threat to property but to life.

"Their message to Defra is clear: staffing levels are too low and threaten the health and safety of workers and the public.

"The agency must employ more staff on the river."

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