

West London River Group

Autumn Newsletter 2022

The Officers trust that you have enjoyed the summer with the many and varied pursuits connected to the river.

The West London River Group has met during the last few months on two occasions to review matters of concern.

The officers have to report that Ruth Hutton, the co-ordinator of the Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea, who has worked closely with the WLRG and its many affiliated organisations for the past twelve years will be leaving towards Christmas. Over that time Ruth has raised many thousands of pounds for various projects. Ruth's position will be advertised once agreed with the LB of Hammersmith and Fulham, who have responsibility for the administration of her post. We are most grateful to Ruth and wish her all the best for whatever comes next.

The TSKC Strategy, along with the other Strategies along the River e.g The Thames Landscape Strategy and the Thames Estuary Partnership submitted a joint funding bid to the Environment Agency for funding to upgrade the individual strategies along with an overarching framework which would take account of the many issues currently confronting riparian communities including Local Councils. Flood protection and prevention was central to the bid along with other environmental issues.

The lead authority for flooding is the London Borough of Richmond.

See the Co-ordinators report for further information and we will be keeping you informed as work progresses.

One matter which continues to be of great interest/concern is the flow of effluent discharging from CSOs along the river. This has not reduced during the summer despite the lack of rain. Attention is required by all involved to report discharges to the relevant authority and if possible to provide photographic evidence with location, time and date.

Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea(TSKC).

Update Report from Co-ordinator Ruth Hutton:

TEP, TLS and TSKC submitted a joint funding bid to the E.A which will help fund the update to the three current strategies along the River Thames. The submission went in for four years of funding. The Thames RFCC Sub Committee was supportive of the application and recommended one year's funding, with further funding hoped to be released after the first year. The first year would involve stakeholder engagement, workshops with Community

Groups and Councils along the River Thames. The London Borough of Richmond are the lead partner and are located within both the TSKC and the TLS areas.

Two years ago, T2100 had a 100 year plan to look at Flood defence along the Tidal Thames. Some of these projects have started but it was recognised that Community Engagement plays a vital part in carrying out any future works. Flood defence and risk is the priority, however, the Environment Blue infrastructure, Biodiversity, Transport and other key areas will form part of the Community Engagement.

Getting “buy in” from the Councils is essential as well as business. It is hoped that the Community Engagement works will start in January and the TLS will instigate this.

Co-Ordinators Role.

As the Co-ordinator is due to leave before the new financial year, the job description is with the LBHF, HR department and it is hoped that the post will be advertised shortly.

Carrara Wharf LBHF

The Co-ordinator has attended a meeting with residents of Carrara Wharf to discuss progress and continuing engagement on the site prior to a planning application being submitted.

There is an urgent need for flood improvement works due to the poor state of the existing flood defence wall and the need for improvements. There are legal issues to be resolved together with the responsibility for costs.

Barnes Footbridge

The Footbridge under Barnes Bridge is expected to open in early November.

Reports from Group members:

Battersea Society.

A Royal Tribute

It was delightful to watch the Thames Festival Trust Reflections Flotilla setting off from Battersea’s Albert Bridge, on the evening of Saturday 24th September. This event was the river community’s tribute to mark the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and the accession of King Charles III; it also helped raise funds towards the construction of a new RNLI lifeboat station at Waterloo Bridge.

The first illuminated flotilla on the Thames for over 300 years, Reflections was both a beautiful spectacle and an impressive feat of organisation. Some 150 river craft of all types took part, decorated with white lights. Royal rowbarge *Gloriana* was the centrepiece, having been moored in preparation at Cadogan Pier; next to Albert Bridge. Other boats had mustered upriver: powered craft between Battersea Road and Rail Bridges, with the rowers beyond them, downstream from Wandsworth Bridge. As dusk fell, the decorations were

switched on and at 18.50 the flotilla set off downriver. It made a wonderful sight, with the illuminated oars used by some of the boats creating an especially striking effect.

Moving quite surprisingly fast, it soon passed out of view to make its way through central London. It passed under all seven of the bridges participating in the long term illuminated bridges, all relit for the occasion with a special display by lighting artist Leo Villareal. It finished at Tower Bridge, bathed for the night in purple light, which was raised in a culminating salute as *Gloriana* arrived at 20.30.

Illustration: The flotilla sets off under Albert Bridge. Beside Cadogan Pier *Gloriana's* oarsmen, in scarlet livery of past Doggett's Coat and Badge race winners, hold their illuminated oars upright in salute.

Links:

<https://thamesfestivaltrust.org/reflections-2022/>

<https://illuminatedriver.london/>

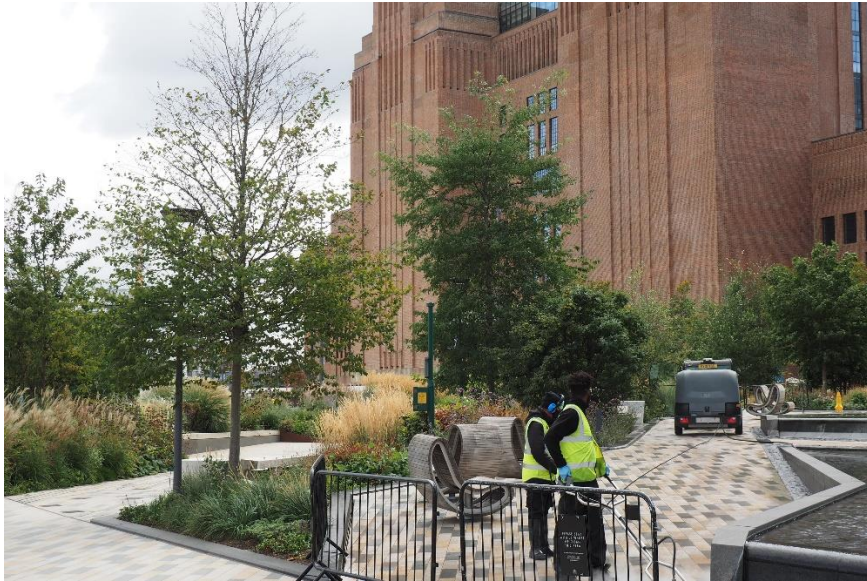
Opening of Battersea Power Station.

A new section of the south bank Thames Path opened up this year, as all four sides of the Battersea Power Station became publicly accessible. This means the path is now continuous from Vauxhall Cross to Battersea Park, apart from diversions around the Thames Tideway/Super Sewer works taking place at Heathwall Pumping Station and at Kirtling Street, east of the Power Station. Outside the Power Station itself, the river frontage incorporates a new grassed park area providing a most attractive open space. This has some rather gimmicky, hopefully shortlived features, including giant armchairs covered in plastic grass, but with the permanent planting and lighting have been done attractively.

The long-awaited opening of the Power Station itself was scheduled for the 14th October. That will be almost forty years since this huge Grade II* listed building, which at its peak supplied a fifth of London's electricity, was decommissioned back in 1983. Since then it has undergone many vicissitudes; and quite a few indignities; several owners later, it has become a mix of apartments, shops, offices, restaurants and leisure facilities. The last will include a cinema and (from early 2023) LIFT 109, a "glass elevator experience" designed to whisk visitors 109 metres up to the top of the building's north west chimney, for panoramic views of the Thames and London's skyline.

The fitout was still in progress when the Battersea Society Trustees and committee members took an advance tour of the interiors in May; we were however impressed by the standard of finish already achieved, and by the restoration of the former Control Rooms in particular.

Illustration: getting the new riverside park ready for the opening of the Battersea Power Station on the 14th October 2022.



Links:

<https://www.tideway.london/>

<https://batterseapowerstation.co.uk>

Hammersmith Society

Hammersmith Bridge

Things have moved forward very recently in relation to repairing Hammersmith Bridge, at long last.

The planning process will now be progressed to seek permission to build a double-decker temporary crossing running above the existing deck of the bridge which would allow

pedestrians and motorists to cross the Thames while permanent repairs are carried out to the ageing structure. This is a proposal put forward by Foster+Partners architects, some 18 months ago.

We understand that it would also aid the permanent repair programme, shave time and cost off the overall project (around £40m less than the current £141m restoration plan), create a safer environment for contractors working on the repairs as well as being more environmentally friendly than previous proposals.

If given the go ahead, together with the planning process being completed quickly, the double-decker crossing could open to pedestrians early next summer, before opening to motorists around two months later.

The bridge has, of course, been open to pedestrians and cyclists, while FM Conway (contractors) have been carrying out stabilisation works to the structure. These works on the bridge are due to be finished by the end of February 2023, following a delay acquiring steel from Ukraine due to the war. However the Council has confirmed that this delay has had no impact on the full restoration, as works can continue to run in tandem. Elements of the bridge which need repair, including the decking, would be lifted away using the temporary bridge as a works platform and transported by barge to an off-site facility for safer and easier repair and restoration.

One further complication is that there are two gas mains currently running alongside the bridge which will have to be removed/diverted to a different route.

In a separate procurement strategy report, agreed by Hammersmith and Fulham Council's Cabinet, the Council sets out its objective to appoint a private sector contractor to design, renovate, finance and maintain the bridge. It has also confirmed that construction costs and the ongoing operation and maintenance of the bridge will be funded by a toll or road user charge. The restored bridge is expected to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality which had been caused in some measure by the additional diversion mileage that the former (huge numbers of) users are incurring. It is proposed that the charging scheme will offer concessionary rates for electric and low emission vehicles- no word yet for residents of the two Boroughs either side of the river.

Illustration: double decked Hammersmith Bridge.



Mortlake with East Sheen Society(MESS)

Brewery Update

Following the Mayor's refusal of the planning applications last year, the developer has submitted a revised scheme showing *inter alia* a reduction in the number of housing units from 1250 to 1085, an associated reduction in heights, an increase in affordable housing from 17% to 22%, some modification in the riverside massing including a variety of brickwork and colour tones, and more sustainable energy technology. However, a number of concerns still remain *inter alia*:

- The cumulative density of the housing, flexible floor space and secondary school
- The building heights still exceeding those in the Planning Brief and still overshadowing the towpath and causing detriment to the arcadian character
- The affordable housing content still significantly below the Mayor's expectations
- The impact of the anticipated population on existing services, notably health services
- The loss of the grass playing fields and inadequate re-provision of open space
- The impact on the existing poor traffic conditions, air quality and the inadequate enhancement of public transport
- The pedestrian/vehicle conflict on the adjacent road network and the Sheen Lane level crossing

- The flood risk associated with construction of a basement car park with 478 spaces alongside the river.

Further revisions and another round of consultations are expected before this latest scheme goes to the LB Richmond Planning Applications Committee. Meanwhile the developer is also applying for the continued use of the Brewery site as film studios for another five years, a use which is welcomed by the local community.

Illustration:

Views of existing and proposed Mortlake Brewery site.



Existing view from opposite riverbank



The scheme approved by LB Richmond, Jan. 2020



The scheme refused by Mayor after call-in, July 2021



The latest scheme, March 2022

Old Chiswick Protection Society

We reported (with video backup) the pleasure boat Connaught to the PLA for using the narrow channel between the mainland and the Eyot to go upstream at high tide, which could cause damage to the erosion defences which have been built. This led to a meeting between the OCPS and PLA staff, including the Harbour Master on the PLA launch Chelsea, to see the work that has been done on and around the Eyot.

The Harbour Master will write to Connaught's owners to inform them that for a boat of that length, the narrow channel is not to be used for navigation. They hope that this will stop such use. The PLA have asked the OCPS to report any further sightings with date, time and pictures in case they need to take stronger action, which they are quite prepared to do.

Putney Society

Thames Tideway Tunnel: Work continues. The original draw dock in front of Watermans Green has been reinstated and the temporary slipway outside Chas Newens will soon be removed. The secondary lining of the west section of the tunnel is almost complete. Tideway continue to support community groups including a youth Music Academy in Nine Elms.

Watermans Green: As Thames Tideway's works on the Green are coming to an end, the Council have set aside money for the improvement of this small park. These works include: better access from the Embankment, better lighting, planting for bio-diversity and encouraging footfall from the High Street. A consultation is currently taking place.

Putney Tidy Towpath: PTT have been busy again. They have carried out five collections since their Spring report yielding 53 bags of litter. There have been 500 "man hours" of volunteering and DofE students completed their challenges. The area of operation has been extended towards Barnes as BTTG are currently looking for new leaders. They have also decided to make a quarterly collection in Battersea where there are high levels of litter on the foreshore by St Mary's Church. It is hoped that this will encourage a new regular group in the area.

There have been no further reports of fatbergs recently and the towpath appears to have less litter. However new concerns include the large number of dead crabs found between the new slipway and the Dukes Head and also the rise in Nitrous Oxide canisters found on the Embankment section of the site.

Planning Applications: There has been an interesting clash of applications regarding the present pier(2022/1280) and a new pier for Thames Clippers(2022/2916). The Putney Society has objected to the first application on the grounds, among others that the view of the river from the new promontory would be blocked. The second application is from Thames Clippers for a new pier extending into the river from the promontory towards the Bridge. The Society supports this application from the point of view of improving the Clipper service but suggests that any new proposal should be sited downstream(east) of the Bridge

on St George's Wharf. There have been a large number of objections to both applications from the Rowing Clubs amongst others.

A welcome application is for upgrading the Hotel part of the Star and Garter building(2022/3278). If implemented this would result in a high quality restaurant, with each room in the hotel having river views.

St Mary's Church Repair Café: The repair Café continues once a month and is well attended. Volunteer repairers are now offering a weekly extended service based in one of the vaults under the bridge. The Church now hosts monthly Vintage Fashion and Furniture Fairs held alternately.

Strand on the Green Association(SoGA):

An email received from the outgoing Chairman Richard Griffith:

"After nearly nine years as Chairman of SoGA, I felt it appropriate to pass the mantle to someone who would have new project ideas and how SoGA should develop.

My period as Chair was both rewarding and frustrating. Rewarding in achieving positive results and frustrating in that it was not always possible to achieve a satisfactory end result. Two examples: through SoGA's intervention we were able to get the Strand on the Green historic street lights listed along the footpath following a move by LBH to replace them with modern LED lights and posts. Secondly, despite repeated requests and visits by LBH officers, SoGA has been unable to have the SotG footpath properly maintained, repaired or resurfaced but I hope that SoGA will continue to pursue this issue, perhaps with the assistance of Ruth Hutton at TSK-C.

One of the more hard fought battles by SoGA was defending the foreshore at Steam Packet Steps from the threat of a multi-park houseboat marina. Fortunately with the united support of members we were able to convince the inspector at Appeal to confirm refusal of the planning application on this historic and picturesque stretch of the River. The refusal safeguards the foreshore this side of Kew Bridge from future development although the mooring of individual and residents' dinghies is to be encouraged.

I leave the Chairmanship having successfully achieved the near nine year long campaign to have an Arch opened under Kew Bridge subsequently accepted as part of the Thames Path for wheelchairs and pedestrians. I am amazed that such a little thing can take so long to come to fruition but be of benefit to so many!

I am confident that my successor Ann Collins(ann.soga@yahoo.com) will continue to promote SoGA and the best interests of those neighbouring organisations with whom I have had the pleasure of association.

Richard Griffith

Strand on the Green Association

The Towpath Group

The Towpath Group met on the 10th October when a large turnout assembled at the Ship pub in Mortlake under the chair of Diana Roth to receive reports and discuss those matters which have been brought to the attention of groups.

It is most pleasing to report that the long delayed tree survey report on behalf of the London Borough of Richmond(LBRuT) and the PLA has been completed. It is expected that the LBRuT will adopt the report in November.

Work to the revetements is continuing with good progress being made by Bernie Watson and Nigel Donovan of the PLA. Thank you Bernie and Nigel.

All eyes have been on the barricades to the closed towpath between Barnes Bridge and Mortlake's Jubilee Gardens, where the EA contractors, Balfour Beatty, have been carrying out essential repair and upgrading works to the two Beverley Brook outfalls and culverts for most of the summer. We are advised that the work is now complete, and that the worksite established on Jubilee Gardens will be cleared and the gardens reinstated by the end of November. As this will entail either re-seeding or re-turfing, it seems somewhat optimistic. The Towpath will also be re-opened which will be most welcome.

An unexpected and inexplicable occurrence was the appearance in the towpath, downstream of the White Hart pub, and opposite the western entry to Elm Bank Gardens of a sinkhole. This was described as being some two metres deep and two metres wide and "bone dry"! It has been infilled.

Wandsworth Society

The Society continues to monitor planning applications in our area and somewhat surprisingly no application has yet been submitted for the Gas Works site in central Wandsworth which adjoins the River Wandle.

We await continued communication with the Council in respect of their policies towards the environment, flood risk in relation to new construction and we hope continued commitment to tree planting.

Philip Whyte

Newsletter complier

Co Chair West London River Group 01/11/2022