



West London River Group

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Spring Newsletter 2024

Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea Coordinator Report

UPDATES:

- We are updating our Terms of Reference for the Thames Strategy: Kew to Chelsea Steering Group, with the aim of involving more parties.
- We are seeking a list of projects requiring funding, and we can assist in their application process. If you have any projects in mind, please also contact us at: filip.glatz@lbhf.gov.uk.
- The Joint Thames Strategy Update requires comprehensive data on land ownership and responsibility. We have begun work on this complex exercise.
- Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea will be an observer at TE2100's Future Thames Forum in May. This forum aims to help partners develop clear visions for riversides that are valuable to local communities, test assumptions about the social value of different riverside designs, leverage investment by providing evidence for the value of improvements, gain a better understanding of the benefits or disadvantages of designs, assist TE2100 and partners in making appropriate choices for designs, and provide new insights into how the future riverside hopes to be made climate-proof.
- During the last Steering Group Meeting, the Royal Borough of Richmond informed us that another significant project is the River Thames Scheme upstream of the borough, which involves the excavation of two new river channels. This will entail construction in Richmond, with the borough assessing potential impacts. This scheme was also discussed during the last public PLA meeting held at the Thames Rowing Club in Putney with the project team present.
- The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea informed us that they have produced a local flood risk plan.
- Thames Path confirmed that National Trails UK is campaigning to be part of the protected landscape family, which could bring in additional funding.
- Hounslow Council confirmed that they received funding approval for improvements to the eastern site of Tooth's Meadows, including the construction compound.
- At the end of 2023, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham adopted a Climate Change Document, which also relates to flooding.
- In March, The Towpath Group organised a meeting when it was agreed that there would be a walk with the Council in May along the Towpath between Small Profits Dock,

Representing: Barnes Tidy Towpath Group | Barnes Community Action Group | Battersea Society | Bishop's Park Co-Ordinating Group | Cheyne Walk Trust | Fulham Society | Hammersmith & Fulham Historic Buildings Group | Hurlingham Yacht Club | The Kew Society | Thames21 | London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies. | Mortlake Community Association | Mortlake with East Sheen Society | Putney Society | Strand-on-the-Green Association | Thamesbank | University of London Boathouse | Wandsworth Society | William Morris Society

Barnes, and Beverley Brook, Putney, to look at the recently planted Native Black Poplars and review progress of tree works in the Tree Management Plan.

- Last but not least, we have created new social media accounts for Thames Strategy: Kew to Chelsea on Facebook and LinkedIn to facilitate easier communication with communities. We would appreciate it if you could follow those accounts to stay updated and connected.
- The Co-ordinator's email address is: filip.glatz@lbhf.gov.uk. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if we can assist you with activities aimed at improving the river environment.

Barnes Commons Group

Community BlueScapes Project (Innovative Flood Resilience in Beverley Brook Catchment in Richmond):

- CBS has awarded 5 grants, total value £12k, to individuals and organisations for small flood resilience projects ; two larger projects are under evaluation. All are aimed at engaging wider community interest in flood resilience.
- CBS has launched a programme for volunteer 'gully guardians' aimed at monitoring the condition of road gullies, reporting blocked ones and identifying where road flooding happens and potentially why. The programme has started with areas prone to flooding but we hope it may in due course spread across the catchment; we also hope the volunteers will build interest in and promote wider resilience measures.
- Training has started for volunteers on a citizen science approach to/for water quality testing in the project catchment, for the brook and also relevant surface water drains.
- Work is essentially complete on the new SuDS for Rocks Lane, work has started on incorporating SuDS ideas into the highways maintenance programme at Kitson Road, and design and feasibility studies continue on 6 further projects, with key stakeholder discussions which will be followed by public consultations.

Beverley Brook:

- BB Partnership has formed two working groups, joint with Hogsmill, covering Water Quality and Habitat Improvement.
- Training by ZSL has happened for the tri-annual River Outfall Safari, designed to help identify misconnections.
- SERT and BCL will again run river-fly surveys this year including some more detailed smart surveying.
- Generally the BB partnership is keen to show it is well prepared to be nominated a Smart Catchment – we understand that, following a successful trial with 4 catchments (incl River Crane), Thames Water intends to expand the programme to cover 14 of the 27 sub-catchments in its area for five years from 2025, and has Ofwat support to do so.
- Smart catchments will be selected based on how prepared they are across improving the health of the river (water quality, geomorphology, enhancing biodiversity), community engagement (promoting public awareness, access and participation and wellbeing), and enhancing flood resilience, as well as how well these all fit with TW's own business (water security, reducing pollution etc)
- BCL is also supporting Imperial College in a multi-disciplinary research funding application to UKRI to improve blue/green spaces for wellbeing, which, if successful, will include Beverley Brook/Hogsmill as one of its research areas.

Barnes Tidy Towpath Group

Since WLRG's last newsletter, **Barnes Tidy Towpath Group** activities include:

- 18 clean ups, bringing totals since the group's 2017 inception to 2,160 volunteer hours, 158 sessions and over 1,200 bags of debris removed.
- BTTG and Habitats & Heritage assistance to the White Hart Pub with its two sister pubs on how to lead their riverine litter picking events;
- Meeting three different people to discuss what is involved in setting up a clean up group in Kew, Mortlake and Teddington but sadly, we've no further news from them;
- Having one BTTG volunteer complete the Thames21 training on leading a River Action Group so watch this space;
- Helping our final two Duke of Edinburgh Award candidates finish their respective volunteering components;
- Per usual, participating in the Great British Spring Clean and conducting our "Pre-Boat Race Blitz" clean up;
- Regarding the Boat Race, we are grateful for the Council's openness to suggestions we made years ago on how to combat Boat Race debris. These procedures continue and are an example of how a large, riverine event can be run in an environmentally sensitive manner. Congratulations are in order!
- Very importantly, BTTG extends massive thanks for longstanding support provided by:
 - Yvonne and her team at Richmond Council's Parks & Open Spaces;
 - Marcin's team at Continental Landscapes, and
 - Bernie, Nigel, Robert & Gary, the PLA team, who focus on our patch of the river, and
- Lastly, on a positive note, despite the ongoing discussions about poor river quality, we share this photo (above) of a chub (or grass carp?) found during a recent clean up and news of a seal emerging from the Thames at Hammersmith Bridge with a large fish in its mouth as a testament to the river's improving health.



Fulham Society



Update on Fulham Football Club

Fulham Football Club has submitted further plans for the public opening of its new Riverside Stand, including the long-awaited extension of the riverwalk. The club has submitted applications to H&F Council for alcohol licences for a range of venues within the new stand. These include a new premises licence application for the ground floor in the Riverside Stand's Main Concourse area, where food and drink will be provided to anyone attending the stadium, including passers-by from Riverside Walk. The application is currently open for comments and can be seen in full on the council website. This area is to be called the Riverside Market and will consist of a range of shops, cafés and bars which can be accessed by all from the Riverside Walk during the day and into the early evening.

An area one floor below, within the Stand's basement, will provide conference and events space. The club is calling this The Orange Box and says it will provide a hospitality space for fans on match days and will also be available to promote cultural and social programmes.

The applications also include a formal restaurant with brasserie and dining areas on the first floor. The Stand's second floor will offer various entertainment and refreshment areas comprising the Chairman's Suite, Director's Suite, and other entertainment spaces, which the club is calling Markers, while floors three to five will become a Members' Club, plus Health Club and Spa, including a heated open air rooftop swimming pool. There is also an application for a boutique hotel which will be operated independently.

The Fulham Society welcomes these proposals with the caveat that licensing hours should be reasonable considering the proximity of residential properties. We are particularly anxious for the Riverside walk, a condition of the project, to be opened as soon as possible. This has been promised once the site is cleared of construction materials.

Joint Thames Strategy Update



Figure 1 The Thames consists of a variety of landscape elements and issues; flood walls, foreshore, river uses, and urban spaces.



Figure 2 Battersea Power Station restoration and development; the importance of iconic buildings and the value of the character of these local spaces

Rebecca Kendrick Strategic Project Manager TLS/TSKC writes

Stretching from Weybridge to the Sea, through Surrey, London, Kent and Essex, the Joint Thames Strategies Refresh is an exciting new partnership project to update the three existing 100-year Thames Strategies (Thames Landscape Strategy, Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea, Thames Strategy East) and fulfil the potential for two new ones (central London and the coastal estuary). Together these documents will form a “Surrey to the Sea” strategic programme for project delivery and planning guidance. These three long-term strategies need updating (having not been updated in over a decade) to consider the impacts of/ for climate change and flood risk mitigation over the next 25 years.

The EA's Thames Estuary 2100 programme has been developing a series of recommendations that will be needed to ensure the sustainability of the Thames environment through London to the Sea considering rising sea levels, increased flood risk downstream and the timeline of changes to the operation of the Thames Barrier. Actions such as raising or setting back flood defences, changing management of land from wet to dry spaces, and implanting a much more cohesive plan for riverside development and planning. As such the partnership of Thames Landscape Strategy, Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea, Thames Estuary Partnership and the Lead Local Flood Authority London Borough of Richmond, has received funding from the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to produce a project plan and evidence the need/value of the refresh of the strategies.

Once the project plan is presented to the RFCC in July 2024 – it is hoped that the remaining funding (over £1million) will be released to carry out the refresh.

In order to ensure robust and cohesive outcomes the JTS refresh will include extensive consultation with landowners, stakeholders, and community groups across the Surrey to the Sea area of the Thames. Over the last six months, the project team has been carrying out extensive engagement with the local boroughs and statutory authorities across the JTS area, including Kew to Chelsea. Holding a series of workshops and meetings with flood and planning officers and conversations with the TE2100 team to establish a baseline of support and to begin to unpick the layers of involvement needed at a policy level to understand the complexity of the task and to map out the potential challenges and benefits the project can provide.

The existing Thames Strategies have always captured a wide variety of riverside issues, heritage, conservation, geography, recreation and riverside economy to name a few. The intention of this refresh is to utilise the existing knowledge and engagement of the community and stakeholders to ensure that flood management is not limited to that single issue. By thinking strategically, beyond borough borders, there is the opportunity for a more sustainable and well-rounded series of projects and guidance to be achieved.

Planning policy has been interrogated to establish where all the relevant authorities are with local plans, what the overlaying structures are, and where everything fits with national planning policy framework. The level of interaction the team has had with borough officers and the EA has been extremely promising, the data gathered and the conversations truly enlightening. These conversations have established the very real need for a single location for information. The complexity and multifaceted nature of the riverside management makes finding information outside your immediate knowledge base quite difficult. One of the priorities for the JTS will therefore be to create a library of this information, a handbook, that will allow officers and members of the public alike to locate resources much more easily.

One of the key requirements of TE2100 is to produce this consistent approach to riverside management, flood mitigation and policy-requiring overarching principles which extend beyond the local to regional level. However the JTS recognises, through the combined experience of the project team, that the local level is how the implementation will get done. As the team is also discussing the concerns of the community and have been attending local meetings and discussion groups, this adds to the understanding. It is vital to the future of the River that a understanding of the dynamic, fluctuating and varied temperament of the

River is conveyed to everyone. Whilst a particular community group has a specific interest in their local park or section of towpath; what happens in that place will impact and be impacted by what happens in spaces around it. Big picture thinking is required as well as an honest review of the potential.

It is vital to recognise that change is happening to the river right now. This last winter has seen continued high water levels and on going flood events, this is only likely to become more common over the next decade. Some of our cherished places are going to have to change but by working together to understand what is needed, the JTS intends to establish how we can meet that need with added benefit.

The review is not just about flood but also drought. New habitats or “wet” projects need to be able to survive during periods of drought as well. It is also when the River is vulnerable, from heat, salinity levels and other elements. Sustainability and management will need to be carefully considered.

The next steps of this project will be to establish lines of communication through the community and stakeholders. Carry out drop-in sessions, arrange meetings and communications to gather input, support and dialogue to inform the details we can use to deliver these big, high-level proposals.

Details of the project can be found at [JTSREFRESH.COM](https://www.jtsrefresh.com)

Stag Brewery Mortlake Redevelopment



Image from application

The latest applications for housing, community hub and secondary school went before the Council’s Planning Committee on 19 July 2023. The West London River Group, Mortlake Brewery Community Group, Mortlake Community Association, Mortlake with East Sheen

Society, Barnes Community Association and Kew Society all raised concern about inter alia the density and height, the impact on heritage, the low percentage of affordable housing and the inadequacy of public transport. Nevertheless, the Committee felt that the social benefits outweighed these harms and they approved both applications subject to direction from the Mayor of London.

Following this, the applicant had to revise the plans to include additional staircases for buildings over 18m high to meet new fire regulations post-Grenfell and these new plans were resubmitted for yet another round of consultation and for further consideration by the Planning Committee on 31 January 2024. Despite further objections from the local community groups the Committee felt once again that the social benefits outweighed the harms and they gave their approval again subject to Mayoral Direction.

The Mayor had already refused the previous applications in 2021 on the grounds that the social benefits did not outweigh the harms and there were signs that he could do so again in his Stage 1 report on the new applications in 2022. The applicant has accordingly appealed to the Secretary of State against non-determination, the appeal has been accepted, a public inquiry has been arranged and an Inspector has been appointed to chair it starting on 4th June.

Meanwhile the developer has been using the vacant site as a film studio and has now applied for planning permission for its continued use as such until the site is ready for redevelopment. Local groups wrote in favour of this application and planning permission has been granted.

P.S. The Planning Inquiry has been delayed until the Autumn because of insufficient time availability of those representing various parties

Putney Society

BOAT RACE/ TOXIC THAMES: The Boat race was run again from Putney to Mortlake on Easter Saturday, with Cambridge winning both the women's and the men's races. A warning was issued beforehand regarding the toxicity of the river due to a high level of sewage and crews were told to avoid entering or swallowing the water. The Oxford crew reported that several of their rowers were affected by Ecoli. The quality of the river water locally should show some improvement once the Tideway Tunnel comes into being later this year, however it is a pity that it was not extended westwards to cover the Mogden Sewage Works from which sewage is still regularly discharged.

PUTNEY TIDY TOWPATH: The group has run 17 sessions over the last 12 months. They collected 171 bags of litter with the help of 184 volunteers – a total of 337 'man hours' of volunteering. They have extended their area to Harrod's Village in agreement with Thames 21 to help with their surveys. During this period there have been no fatbergs seen during their hours, but they continue to have a lot of old plastics and micro plastics dropped by high tides. After events such as the Head of the River Race or sponsored runs they have seen an increase in coffee cups, sweet wrappers, energy bars etc. They have 6 Duke of Edinburgh

silver volunteering students with collections for their award – these numbers are not recorded in the stats above,

Sandi continues to help former volunteer Sam Johnson with the Battersea Beach Clean Group. Volunteer numbers and litter collected from these weekend collections are immense. Storage of equipment is an increasing issue and Sandi is trying to find a location where a box (supplied by WBC) can be stored, but with easy access – such as a sailing or rowing club. Any ideas/offers gratefully received – putneytt@outlook.com.

WHITE LION PUB: This very fine listed building at the north end of Putney High Street has been standing empty for several years. At last the site has been bought and it will be reopened as a Boutique Hotel. There will be a bar but no restaurant, and there will be some extensions added at the back. Work is expected to begin in the next 18 months subject to planning permission.

TRAFFIC CHANGES ON PUTNEY BRIDGE: Wandsworth Council is about to start work on a new road layout on the Bridge with the aim of improving traffic flow, safety for cyclists and the reliability of bus timings. Further works at the junction of Putney Bridge and the Lower Richmond Road will follow later in the year, as will changes to traffic signals in the High Street.

Old Chiswick Protection Society

Pollarding of Chiswick Eyot: Because of all the rain we've had and therefore the amount of water coming downstream, it has been impossible to cross over to the Eyot. We were therefore unable to pollard the eyot this year. The one advantage of not pollarding is that we will have bigger withies next year to use in the erosion defences.

Volunteering: Thanks to a generous donation (£7500) from Asahi (who now own Fuller's brewery), Thames21 planned volunteering dates on the eyot throughout the year. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the first three, in January, February and March. More dates are planned for the rest of the year, so that we can continue the work of building up the defences against erosion.

Corporate events: T21 also have some corporate days planned through the year to carry out this work.

Note from the compiler

The officers of the West London River Group thank all members and friends for their continued support and the newsletter compiler would like to thank all those who have submitted reports and updates.

Philip Whyte