



# West London River Group

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## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the West London River Group held by Zoom on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 18.30hrs**

### **1. The meeting was attended by the following:**

Avril Dalglish AD, Joint Chair, WLRG, Diana Roth DR Towpath Group, Roger Weston RW Bishops Park, Rebecca Kendrick RK Thames Strategy, Clare Graham CG Battersea Society, Angela Clarke AC Hammersmith Society, Dido Berkeley DB Thamesbank, Filip Glatz FG Co-Ordinator TSKC, Philip Whyte PW Joint Chair WLRG

Apologies were received from Jason Dolby TLS, Barbara Skorupska Fulham Society.

### **2. Minutes of the Previous AGM**

The Minutes of the AGM of the 22 May 2023 had been circulated (with the Calling Notice).

The Chair asked if there were any matters to be raised and as there were none, the Minutes were adopted.

### **3. Matters Arising**

See No 2 above.

### **4. The report of the Chair**

The Chair AD advised the meeting of the progress of the Planning Inquiry for the Stag Brewery and explained that because of the unavailability of various people who are critical to the presentation of evidence, the Inquiry has been postponed until November with additional days reserved for evidence. The Inspector who was nominated initially will be available for the Inquiry. AD then spoke of the progress which has been made in the co-operation with all parties to the Joint Thames Strategy, reviewing a plethora of subjects directly and indirectly connected with the River.

The Chair then asked RK to update the meeting on the Refresh which is being undertaken simultaneously with the TLS(Thames Landscape Strategy) . RK reported that there had been successful engagement with all local authorities and

**Representing:** [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](#)

County Councils. RK advised that the 10<sup>th</sup> July is a critical date for the “sign off” of all the Strategies from Surrey to the Sea. RK is continuing engagement with other parties, policies for the future are needed from those Local Authorities who have not yet completed the information required.

AD then summed up.

FG advised that Kensington and Chelsea will co-operate and participate with the strategy. FG was thanked by the chair and RK for achieving this outcome.

DB spoke of an email clarifying some legal points which had been circulated earlier in the day and suggested that the Strategies should be aware of this. The summary of the legal points are in Appendix A of these Minutes.

If possible, all rain water should be attenuated on site.

CG suggested that the new plan should have legal strength.

RK explained how various bodies link in through the River Basin Management plans.

RK said that locations are required for detailed study of the possible effects of increased flooding in Richmond, Chelsea, Cheyne Walk was suggested, and Strand on the Green among others.

There followed a general discussion on water (too difficult to minute!)

DB suggested that there should be an integrated water management plan.

#### **5. To receive the Treasurers Report.**

In the Treasurer’s absence PW advised the meeting that the accounts had been circulated with the Calling Notice. PW asked if there were any questions on the presented accounts. As there were no questions PW asked for a proposer for the accounts to be adopted DR proposed, AC seconded the adoption.

#### **6. To confirm the officers for the forthcoming year.**

AD, DR, AM(treasurer) and PW have all indicated their willingness to continue. RW has asked to step back but will keep in touch with the officers. As there had been no other nominations received nor objections from those present or who had received the Calling Notice, the officers were proposed by RW and seconded by both CG and AC and were duly elected.

#### **7. New Members to the officers.**

Dealt with in No 6 above.

#### **8. Any other business.**

DR raised the question of who the Key Society was on the letterhead. PW advised that unfortunately this was a typo and should be the Kew Society. Correction will be made.

AC commented( not recorded-sorry)

RK asked about MailChimp to make contact with groups.

DB suggested that the next public meeting should be held in person and suggested Putney.

RK said that there would be a major co-ordination of the press prior to and on the day of any significant announcement

**9. The meeting ended at 20.00hrs.**

## **Appendix A: Clarification of points about Rivers & Water in decision making**

The [Aarhus Convention](#) was ratified by the UK Government in 2005 to improve environmental decision-making. There are three pillars:

- rights to information from public authorities;
- rights to meaningful public participation in the decision-making process when all options are still open, and
- rights to an appeal to a decision, which is not prohibitively expensive.

In the UK, regional and international law does not have direct effect in the courts. One must rely on the domestic legislation which is supposed to mirror the Convention. Unfortunately, the Convention rights have not been fully forthcoming. One glaring example is that it took a [4 year legal battle](#) against the Information Commissioner to establish that water companies were subject to the Convention and had to provide information to the public when requested to do so. There have also been many complaints from the public to the [Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee](#) concerning successive UK Government failures.

With regard to planning, it is often found that the public is unable to participate in a meaningful way when the options are open. For example, the Thames Tideway Tunnel application started as an 'ordinary' application and then was made a NSIP and then subject to the NPS on Waste Water without real public knowledge. Members of the public were consulted upon the project by Thames Water Ltd and believed it to be an 'ordinary' planning application. They did not realise that any comments regarding need for or alternatives to the Tunnel could not be considered by the decision makers because this fundamental right had been removed by the NPS. This of course completely undermined the purpose of the Convention and made a mockery of the public consultation.

The Water Framework Regulations 2017 are a post Brexit reincarnation of our obligations under the [Water Framework Directive 2000](#) to achieve good ecological status or potential for all our water bodies by 2027. The rules are the most important concerning water law because it establishes the importance of managing all water holistically in each river basin.

The recent [Pickering Fishery case](#) illustrates once again the reluctance of the UK Government to abide by environmental rules to the detriment of all. In the High Court, the Judge found that Defra had erred in law by failing to appreciate that the programme of measures to achieve compliance with the Regs by 2027 needed to have measures for specific water bodies. The Judge also concluded that there was an error in law in the consultation because the river basin management plan did not

contain the legally required information. In other words, the river basin management plans were designed to fail, not improve our waters and to exclude meaningful input and scrutiny by the public.

Without lawful river basin management plans every planning application, strategy and proposal concerning water is at risk to legal challenge because the river basin management plans underpin all those aforementioned plans and strategies.

The new Government is urged to drop its appeal to this decision and to abide properly to the Water Framework Regulation.

Emily Shirley

TBGE Legal Director

Thames Blue Green Economy

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