



Theo Thomas

### *What did we learn in 2013?*

- **That the road system in London is perfectly designed to kill fish. 80 square miles of roads drain to the River Lea and its tributaries.** So every time it rains on Haringey, Waltham Forest, Enfield and Cheshunt the dirt that builds up on roads is washed into rivers. When the conditions are right it will kill thousands of fish in one go, as happened in July.



We need much more action to stop the pollution in stormwater from reaching our rivers. When planned road works take place, that is the time to install systems that filter the debris and toxins from road run-off. These can be gravel trenches, low kerbs that divert the rain into roadside verges or reedbeds. These are called Sustainable Drainage Systems and use nature to clean road run-off.

- **We learned that pollution from industrial estates adds to the burden that rivers have to bear.** I saw orange goo oozing along a ditch that leads to the Pymmes Brook; oil slicks that covered the width of the Lea; and drains that dumped frothy liquids into rivers. When we see this pollution we need to report it sooner so it can be investigated, traced and action taken against the polluter.



When you see river pollution call the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60. Get a reference number and asked to be called back for an update.

- **We know that Deephams Sewage Works still overflows into the Salmons Brook when it fills up with rain.** Deephams, in Edmonton, takes the sewage from more than 800,000 people in London. It also takes a lot of rain. This means there is less space for treating sewage.

An upgrade is planned for the sewage works in 2017. In dry weather our sewage will be treated to a higher standard so the effluent reaching the river will be cleaner. But not when it rains. We need to use Sustainable Drainage Systems to slow down the rain so it doesn't all rush to Deephams at once.

The upgrade is needed so we'll have a modern sewage works. SuDS are needed to prevent Deephams being overwhelmed by rain by creating a more natural watershed that reduces the flood risk and protects rivers.

## ***What can be done?***

Love the Lea highlights the problems but offers solutions too.

- The [Salmons Brook Healthy River Challenge](#) project is creating 6 Sustainable Drainage Systems in Enfield.
- The Fixing Broken Rivers project funded by £490,000 from HSBC's [Water Programme](#) will reach 32,000 young people and create SuDS and reedbeds.

However these won't save the River Lea catchment on their own. They show what can be done, but we need comprehensive action across the river system. We need more organisations, more councils to help save rivers.

Only 7% of London's rivers are rated as Good, all the rest fail the Water Framework Directive. We have a right to healthy rivers and clean water, and that right is being denied. 2013 was a bad year for the River Lea. Much, much more has to be done. We need changes that will take a generation to complete, but that can start now.

In April 2014 new National Standards for Sustainable Drainage are due to come into force. These will require new developments to use SuDS to reduce local flooding risk, cut the pressure on sewers – boosting river water quality. This should have been happening for years of course, but it will be a great relief when they are activated. We need developers and councils to embrace SuDS, and show they truly value rivers.

Thank you to all the Love the Lea supporters for caring about rivers. There is a much higher awareness that river pollution is wrong and unnecessary. Many more people got to know about the death of thousands of fish because of you. Together we can make 2014 a year for change, a year for healthy rivers

## **What you can do**

If you see pollution call 0800 80 70 60 and tell the Environment Agency where, what and when. Ask to be called back.

If you see pollution and can take a photo email it to [theo.thomas@thames21.org.uk](mailto:theo.thomas@thames21.org.uk)

Pledge to Love the Lea – we need more people to show they care about their river