



Thames21 response to the Thames Tunnel Consultation

Thames21 is London's waterways environment charity working with over 15,000 Londoners across the capital who volunteer with the charity on practical activities to care for, clean and green the rivers in their community. Thames21 fully supports the Thames Tunnel project. It is vital for the health of the River Thames.

The Thames Tunnel project is crucially important. The Tidal Thames is London's greatest open space and a highway for wildlife. It runs across and through the very heart of the capital. The River Thames gives London its personality, its sense of place, and is the city's most important connection with the natural world. It would be difficult to find a more high profile or harmful location in which to discharge raw sewage. The situation cannot be allowed to continue, and must be dealt with by the most effective method possible – the Thames Tunnel project.

The current weekly sewage overflows cause massive harm to wildlife. Every time there is a major sewage overflow, tens of thousands of fish are killed, while the weekly discharges endanger the whole ecology of the Thames by removing essential oxygen from the water. Many species of young fish hatching in the Thames are at risk, as are fish using the Thames for passage such as endangered eel populations, aquatic birds which depend on the fish, a range of invertebrates and in fact, the whole river ecology. The Thames Tunnel is the only effective and practical method of stopping this devastation.

The effect of the sewage overflows on community use of the river is huge. The Thames provides thousands of Londoners with their main link with the outdoors, exercise and recreation, as well as with their involvement in community life. Their overall health and wellbeing is threatened by the growing levels of sewage which is driving many members of the community away from the river. It is deeply unpleasant and could pose a direct threat to the health of Thames rowers, kayakers, anglers, amblers and other river users.

The suggestion that because of the current economic situation the UK should have lower standards of cleanliness is frankly unacceptable. The Thames Tunnel is the most effective and sensible solution to environmental pollution of the River Thames, and it will last for at least 150 years. The cost of the Thames Tunnel is dwarfed by the potential cost (as well as the disruption) of other options which have been examined such as new separate storm water and sewage systems or widespread SUDS implementation. In addition data from DEFRA indicates that the economic benefits alone of a cleaner Thames will exceed the costs involved.

The Thames Tunnel project must go ahead, it cannot be delayed.

Debbie Leach, Chief Executive, Thames21
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