

# River Thames, Maidenhead to Sunbury

## Pilot Community Catchment Plan



**Thames21**

Walbrook Wharf  
City of London Corporation  
78-83 Upper Thames Street  
LONDON, EC4R 3TD

## The Community Catchment Plan Approach,

### River Thames Maidenhead - Sunbury

#### **Introduction**

In partnership with the Environment Agency and other Wildlife Trusts, Thames21 have been asked to help produce in collaboration with all communities and stakeholders a 'Pilot Community Catchment Plan' for the River Thames from Maidenhead to Sunbury Catchment.

The WFD River Thames Maidenhead – Sunbury Catchment Project started as a one year pilot project looking at a new community approach to river management. In 2012 the project was funded by Defra as part of the 'catchment-based' approach to working with individuals and organisations that can make a difference to the health of England's water environments.

This is part of a new community approach to river management driven by the [European Water Framework Directive](#). This Catchment Plan approach was launched in response to requirements for transparency, aspirations for the environment and public engagement laid out in the Water Framework Directive. 25 key river catchments across England were selected to test out this community approach to river management, before it is expanded across the country in 2013. The Water Framework Directive from the European Union aims to increase the quality of our rivers and other water bodies.

#### **The problems the plan aims to address**

The catchment is affected by:

- Less fresh water flowing into the river.
- Pollution from chemicals and sewage.
- Artificially straightened channels and reinforced banks.
- Vertical wall flood defences.
- Loss of natural river corridor habitat.

#### **How the Plan has been developed in 2012 - 2013**

At the beginning of 2013 Thames21 ran a series of open day days, and, invited people to add their ideas directly into the developing plan. This was carried out by questionnaires, and meta-planning. Some people added new ideas, whilst other people built on or commented on the issues already raised by others. All issues raised in 2013 were listed in this Working Plan in people's own words. At the end of this Working Plan there is an Appendix listing all the organisations and individuals who have contributed their thoughts and ideas, and references.

## **What will happen in 2013?**

Strategy Groups will be developed and each point added will be considered by the Project Team and the Strategy Group – a group of key river users, managers and experts. They key issues, solutions and actions raised in the Working Plan are to be summarised in a Final Pilot Project Report. This complements the Working Plan, and the two documents should always be considered together.

On completion of the Final Project Report Thames21 will submit this Working Plan to Defra along with the Working Plan. The Working Plan includes all of the ideas that everyone had written and will be used as an essential part of the planning and delivery process for an improved, sustainable river environment.

Thames21 intend for the Community Catchment Project to continue and we are currently seeking funding to make this possible. The project will also link into current Thames21 Non-Tidal River Thames Project, and carry on facilitating towards achieving Water Framework Directive aims. We acknowledge that within one year it is unrealistic to try and hear the views of the entire community within the pilot catchment and we plan to continue this work during 2013. If you have not yet given your views please complete this Catchment Plan Template and return it to Thames21. The plan is still a developing document and will continue to be updated in 2013.

## **SECTION 1: HOW DO YOU RELATE TO THE RIVER THAMES BETWEEN MAIDENHEAD AND SUNBURY?**

*Please provide some background about how you use and interact with the River Thames between Maidenhead and Sunbury. Then go to Section 2.*

The ideas written in below are responses to this plan which we have received Jan – Feb 2013.

We own a number of sites (parks and open spaces) which are next to (or encompass) the Thames, The Bourne, and The Wey. We therefore use rivers to add to the amenity value of the sites.  
(Runnymede Borough Council. 2013)

As the regional representatives for anglers between the Staines Stone and Sunbury (and beyond) the Thames Anglers' Conservancy (TAC) are concerned with the health of the river and would like to assist in its future improvement under the direction of the Water Framework Directive. The river in this particular area has historically been a focal point of angler's way beyond those that simply live in and around the area. It is arguably the home to some of the most diverse angling in the country, treasured by many, but constantly challenged and threatened by continual developments connected with the river and its tributaries.

The river plays an absolutely essential role for anglers and it is therefore incumbent upon us to be part of any improvements to ensure that this much used natural resource is helped to a more desirable level of sustainability in the future. In this regard, and in addition to working with all concerned conservation groups, the need to maintain angling on the river is paramount to the local and extended communities. (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013)

“Boating, and living on the river.” (RTS Member. 2013)

“Fishing.” (Public Open Day. 2013)

“Eating and leisure.” (Public Open Day. 2013)

“Cyclic and walking.” (Public Open Day. 2013)

“Rowing, and sailing, and cycling the Thames path.” (Public Open Day. 2013)

“Willow coppicing and harvest, soon to be the special branch education (Sally, the Granges).” (Public Open Day. 2013)

“Leisure boating.” (Public Open Day. 2013)

“Shepperton Fair (June).” (Public Open Day. 2013)

“Black Cherry, Community Fayre, Runnymede (July).” (Public Open Day. 2013)

“Wraysbury Fair.” (Public Open Day. 2013)

“Boating clubs.” (Public Open Day. 2013)

## **SECTION 2: WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT THE RIVER THAMES BETWEEN MAIDENHEAD AND SUNBURY?**

*Please provide some background about what you like or value with the River Thames between Maidenhead and Sunbury. Then go to Section 3.*

The ideas written in below are responses to this plan which we have received Jan – Feb 2013.

They add to the amenity value, nature conservation value of our site and attract more visitors (Runnymede Borough Council. 2013).

The river allows anglers time and space to enjoy some of the most breath-taking scenery in the country, we have a natural appreciation of our natural environment; its wildlife and habitats, and anglers observe the river's fortunes 24/7, 365 days a year (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

“Good for recreation and wildlife.” (RTS Member. 2013).

“Peace and quiet and brings people together.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“Looks tranquil.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“Birdlife and feeding.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“On the river pubs.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“It’s open.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“Quiet lots of birds, leisure boating.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“Walking, boating, picnics.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“Love walking along river and feeding ducks and swans.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“We love the wildlife especially the ducks.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“Nice walk up to Eton Bridge with all the birds.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“Love walking and cycling the Thames.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“Good walking routes.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“Love living so near the Thames. My little girls love feeding the ducks and swans.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“Making the Thames cleaner.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

“Great wildlife on the Jubilee.” (Public Open Day. 2013).

### **SECTION 3: IN YOUR VIEW, WHAT PROBLEMS ARE AFFECTING THE RIVER THAMES MAIDENHEAD – SUNBURY CATCHMENT?**

*You can be as technical, site specific or general as you like. Please add your views here. Then go to Section 4.*

*The Environment Agency has identified specific problems affecting the River Thames Maidenhead – Sunbury Catchment. Details of these issues are available on our websites. However, we would like to know about any concerns you or your organisation has. These might tie in with the problems identified by the Environment Agency or might be different.*

**The ideas written below are responses to this plan which we have received during Jan 2013.**

- (1) Too much woody debris removed from the river to make it safer for boats. This destroys important habitat for all sorts of wildlife (Runnymede Borough Council. 2013).
- (2) **Water Abstraction from the River Thames.** The use of the river as a source of water supply for public consumption is in many ways compromised by the lack of reservoir storage space available to Thames Water, among many other issues. Many anecdotal observers over the last 50 years have seen the water volume of the River Thames diminished significantly. This also impacts flow regimes and inevitably assists sediment build up which covers spawning gravels, as well as giving non-natives plant species a greater foothold on reaches, which distorts the entire ecosystems (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).
- (3) **The Pollution of the River Thames.** Combined with less depth of water, less flow and agricultural pollutants, the river's ecosystem is seriously threatened and is causing eutrophication in many areas of the River Thames. Agricultural pollutants, for example: nutrients from fertilisers and farm effluents, toxic chemicals such as sheep dips and fine sediment runoff from poor farming practises, all contribute to extreme plant growths in sediment areas, which cause oxygen depletion killing fish and invertebrate populations (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

'Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) - substances which interfere with the body's endocrine system and hormonal activities, enter watercourses in the form of natural and synthetic hormones (such as compounds found in contraceptive pills), industrial chemicals, pesticides, fungicides and herbicides, which can result in intersex fish and thus reduce the population survival. Diffuse (urban) pollution: nutrients from domestic sewage, industrial wastes and storm drainage and toxic pollutants from industrial, domestic and highway runoff (The Salmon and Trout Association. 2013).

Note that even though this questionnaire concerns the Lower Thames, the river catchments in their entirety are affected through what happens above, all the way from the head of the river downstream, as well as within any single catchment area (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

- (4) **Habitat maintenance and restoration on the River Thames.** The TAC has been involved with the Environment Agency's fisheries officers in the restoration of vital fish spawning areas, restoring habitat etc. to assist the river in fish recruitment for example. However, there is an

almost never ending list of projects that could be undertaken but the amalgamation of 3<sup>rd</sup> party work forces with EA official works has many restrictions due to the nature of the work and the risk involved. In this instance the ‘Big Society’ is choked with red-tape and restricts the hands on approach that would be of immense benefit to many reaches of the river. Many of these projects are relatively small scale operations, requiring very little by the way of funding and the need for simple, practical and seamless solutions is as necessary for the continuity of the development of riverine ecologies, as are larger projects that involve more complex and costly solutions (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

Rubbish clearing, invasive plant removal events and so on, are all fantastic days whereby, not only do those that participate get a great sense of wellbeing through being involved, but additionally influence other local people and help generate a heightened awareness concerning the river and its needs (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

- (5) **Poaching, illegal fishing, predation and invasive species, as well as migration of fish on the River Thames.** The increase of invasive species as well as a greater number of predators i.e. signal crayfish, mitten crabs and cormorants, as well as Himalayan balsam – to name but a few – all create additional pressure on fish recruitment, and while in many ways they are beyond control, it doesn’t mean that there isn’t a requirement to have management strategies in place (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

Additionally, the illegal removal of adult coarse fish from our rivers, whether that is on a casual basis with rod and line or in a more orchestrated manner such as seine netting is becoming an ever more regular occurrence (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

- (6) Reducing population and numbers of small fish species (OWAC Member. 2013).
- (7) Impact on fish populations of large fish-eating birds (esp. cormorants) (OWAC Member. 2013).
- (8) Potential impact on fish populations of significant predatory species (E.g. otters: where present mink: assumed fish-eaters, etc. (OWAC Member. 2013).
- (9) Impact on fish populations of non-native species (e.g. zebra mussels, mitten crabs, American crayfish, etc. and also vegetation species) (OWAC Member. 2013).
- (10) Acknowledged impact of mink on former water rat populations (OWAC Member. 2013).
- (11) All the above concerns apply whether the effect if direct (i.e. predation) Or indirect (e.g. competition for food sources or habitat in common with fish, esp. habitat for fish spawning) (OWAC Member. 2013).
- (12) All the above also apply to other aspects of the environment (e.g. birdlife, fly life, etc.), numbers of which appear to have declined (OWAC Member. 2013).
- (13) General conduct in the environment (esp. avoidance of littering) (OWAC Member. 2013).
- (14) impact of boats on bank erosion (much reduced with current speed limits compared to previous conditions 20-40 years ago) (OWAC Member. 2013).

- (15) A specific local difficulty for all users is the low level of the Thames footpath under the railway bridge in Home Park, Windsor which regularly is impassable during high water or flood conditions (OWAC Member. 2013).
- (16) Frequent poaching of fish, e.g. pike (Volunteer. 2013).
- (17) Rubbish/ mess in river and on banks (Volunteer. 2013).
- (18) Eroding banks, swims put in highly fished areas (Volunteer. 2013).
- (19) A tow path along the whole of the Thames (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (20) Dirty stream alongside navigation (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (21) Cycle and foot traffic collisions (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (22) Rudeness from towpath users, i.e. cyclists and walkers (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (23) No child friendly paths/ river access/ safety/ awareness (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (24) Lower Sunbury needs a foot/ cycle path across Thames to Surrey towpath and amenities (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (25) Still back waters at River Mead Island, clogged, can be enhanced (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (26) Litter (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (27) No reason to use (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (28) Hydropower at Weirs (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (29) New builds need better environmental consideration (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (30) Disconnection for running/ cycling with kids (Weybridge) (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (31) Anglers using too many rods (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (32) Bank erosion (Chertsey) (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (33) Removal of BBQs (Chertsey) (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (34) Spelthorne Council parking fees going up to £10 to visit. (Thames, Chertsey, Tow path) (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (35) Lack of dog poo bins between Chertsey and Penton Hook Lock (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (36) Invasive species, Himalayan balsam and penny wort (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (37) Poaching (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (38) Out of season fishing (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (39) Need to link planning droughts and floods (Public Open Day. 2013).

- (40) Fishing syndicates, their lakes and new channels (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (41) No fishing platforms (Runnymede, pleasure grounds) (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (42) Proposed moorings and landings, loose of habitat (Datchet) (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (43) No walking group for Jubilee (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (44) Better use of river and surroundings (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (45) Access and amenities. No access, i.e. Jubilee River (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (46) Salt Hill River, blockages, litter. (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (47) Limited benches on Jubilee (Public Open Day. 2013) (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (48) Hard banking along Thames, excessive hard banking (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (49) Working and up to date fish passes (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (50) Better use of river/ environment/ corridor (Cippenham Ditches) (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (51) Invasive species (Cippenham Ditches) (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (52) Previous pollution incident (Cippenham Ditches) (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (53) No enforcements of river side persecutions (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (54) Erosions of banks, speed boats (Windsor/ Dorney) (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (55) Walking bridge at Sutherland Grange (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (56) Olympic Legacy Bridge (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (57) No short circular walking routes in Dorney need of foot bridge (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (58) Bank erosion Boulters – Cookham (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (59) Bad towpath Boulters – Cookham (Public Open Day. 2013).
- (60) No hydro at weirs (Public Open Day. 2013).

## **SECTION 4: WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ADDRESS THESE PROBLEMS?**

*If you have an idea of a solution to address a problem faced by the River Thames Maidenhead – Sunbury Catchment then please add it here. Then go to Section 5.*

The ideas written in below are responses to this plan which we have received Jan – Feb 2013.

- (1) Leave woody debris in place (Runnymede Borough Council. 2013).
- (2) The need for Thames Water to divulge its impact survey concerning abstraction on the lower and tideway Thames, which is due in 2013, and this under the auspices of the Lower Thames Operating Agreement (LTOA) (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

The need for the planning authorities to allow more reservoir storage space to be developed to ease the burden of the River Thames at the earliest opportunity. For water metering to be implemented universally before 2025 (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).
- (3) For the catchment plan to fully adopt and endorse the Blueprint for Water (Wildlife and Countryside Link. 2010), to lobby all relevant agencies on the basis of fully implementing the Water Framework Directive (WFD), to ensure sustainable management of our River(s) for future generations (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).
- (4) With the creation of the Thames River Basin Liaison Panel there is an immense opportunity to make sure that there is a greater emphasis in an integrated approach to managing the numerous catchments. There needs to be a great deal of joined up communication through all stakeholder groups and the TAC recently wrote - in greater detail - concerning the need for a web based forum to be established to assist in this regard. This can be viewed within the 'Working Together' Consultation (Thames River Basin Management Plan) (Environment Agency. 2009; Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).
- (5) Regarding bank side habitats: Much of the necessary management of invasive plant species can be can be strategically planned and coordinated on an ad-hoc basis through the tools required in the 'solution to problem 3' for example (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

Regarding invasive aquatic species – and their distortion of spawning habitats for example - and avian and mammal predation of fish, the expansion and accumulation of improved aquatic habitats throughout the entire Thames basin will only help to assist with future fish recruitment. This will help to minimise the impact on native aquatic species and provide a greater diversity for fish, invertebrates and indigenous plant species (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

Regarding fish migration: Proposed hydropower installations within inappropriate reaches and tributaries, overgrown and flow depleted channels and back waters etc. all block and obstruct natural migration of fish species. With a concerted effort there is an abundance of small to medium sized projects that need addressing and should be well

within the compass of the stakeholder community, in conjunction with the EA (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

Regarding poaching and other forms of illegal fish removal there needs to be a greater number of enforcement officers to prevent such incidents from taking place with an ever increasing regularity (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

Potential for improvement in habitat with careful management (e.g. for birdlife, fly life, flora)

(16) Enforce laws e.g. no littering, not having licences (Public Open Day. 2013).

(17) More frequent clean ups and enforcing no littering (Public Open Day. 2013).

(18) Bank reconstruction (Public Open Day. 2013).

Natural planting on the banks (Desborough/ and Thames Towpath) (Public Open Day. 2013).

Refurbish foot paths Sunbury – Walton Bridge (Public Open Day. 2013).

Hand banking/ restoration (Public Open Day. 2013).

(35) One at Ferry Lock and 1 at 24 hr. moorings (Public Open Day. 2013).

Runnymede Pleasure grounds, events, education, fishing (Runnymede Borough Council. 2013).

Community Wardens (Public Open Day. 2013).

Upton Court Park “Watercourses and Wetland enhancements – Slough Borough Council Strategy” (Runnymede Borough Council. 2013).

Gateway Slough to Jubilee River, Mercian Recreation grounds, Cippenham Green Chain Upton Court Park “Slough Borough Council Parks Strategy) (Slough Borough Council. 2013).

Green walk to Jubilee River (Public Open Day. 2013)

(47) Removal of weirs, redevelopment of path of river, better use and more of a feature in parks (Public Open Day. 2013).

Haymill area, Britwell Regeneration Scheme and Enhancement Management (Slough Council) (Slough Borough Council. 2013).

Slough Borough Park Strategy – GI Approach includes river corridors/ recreation (Slough Borough Council. 2013).

## SECTION 5: WHO DO YOU THINK COULD ASSIST IN HELPING ADDRESS PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED?

*In your view could any of the problems identified in the River Thames Maidenhead – Sunbury Catchment be helped by the assistance of other organisations and/or people? Please feel free to give ideas and examples in possible ways this may be achieved. Then go to section 6.*

The ideas written in below are responses to this plan which we have received Jan – Feb 2013.

(1) Environment Agency

(2) It is the Environment Agency that controls what the abstracted water is used for and we would like that open for evaluation.

Planning agencies, such as Defra, need to legislate to avert further damage to our natural, free flowing water resources before the problem becomes worse, in fact, with immediate effect. This means in this particular instance to push for more reservoir storage space, expanding the capacity significantly, as well as ensuring the water leakage issue is addressed by OFWAT, through the speedy repair and upgrade of old infrastructure.

Legislation is needed to enforce Thames Water to meter all those that use water commercially and domestically, before 2020 universally within the region, and for all stressed areas before 2015.

(3) Legislation from Defra to subsidise agriculture to implement benefits for the water environment. To ensure Thames Water and government are lobbied to ensure that all measures are taken to implement WFD and to limit opt-outs.

(4) Briefly, with the possibility of greater communication and coordination through the forming RBMP, there are endless opportunities to make the River Thames and its tributaries a 21<sup>st</sup> Century success story in terms of habitat maintenance and restoration, regeneration.

(5) There are many stakeholder groups that are willing to assist in the improvement of bank side habitats and the removal of rubbish; invasive plants etc. – with a forum based website – would give even greater impetus for bank side work parties among the whole stakeholder community.

The restoration of many more spawning areas on the Thames reaches would help to ensure healthy fish recruitment and that would go some way to mitigating the impact of invasive aquatic species. While the onus is very much on the EA in this regard, the TAC has, and will continue to be very enthusiastic to assist with as many projects of this nature as is possible.

Regarding fish migration: Habitat improvements in conjunction with the EA, and in accordance with Article 4.7 of WFD can only help to assist the riverine ecology and help to ensure a balanced aquatic ecology. The TAC, as ever, is willing to dedicate as much as we are able in terms of assistance to the relevant agencies.

Regarding the illegal removal of fish species etc. the recent initiative between the Angling Trust and the EA concerning the voluntary fishery bailiff scheme should soon begin to assist enforcement officers of the EA. This will hopefully continue to grow and is a necessary step to seeing improvements regarding the burgeoning problems that are present on the banks of our rivers.

## **SECTION 6: WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASSIST IN ADDRESSING THE PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED?**

*Would you like to assist or lead in addressing the problems identified by the pilot plan? Please feel free in ways you may possibly wish to do so. Then go to section 7.*

The ideas written in below are responses to this plan which we have received Jan – Feb 2013.

- (2) The TAC would be able to assist in lobbying for the fundamental changes necessary.
- (3) Once again, the TAC is always available to assist in the process of lobbying the relevant bodies.
- (4) The TAC can and will assist wherever and whenever possible.
- (5) The TAC is already actively involved and naturally will be able to assist where physical resources and man hours are available.
- (6-15) participate in working parties run by OWAC to maintain their fisheries, in which we take some steps to maintain the condition (e.g. litter picking, cutting back of foliage around fishing spots and making the bank safer for fishing), within the limited amount of time, effort, and cost OWAC and its members have available at their disposal (but hopefully still appreciated as a positive contribution).

## **SECTION 7: VISIONS AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE RIVER THAMES MAIDENHEAD –SUNBURY CATCHMENT**

*What visions and aspirations do you have for the River Thames Maidenhead – Sunbury Catchment? Please list as many as you wish and do not limit your ideas.*

The ideas written in below are responses to this plan which we have received Jan – Feb 2013.

A river that is full of wildlife and used by all sections of the community and not just for boating and fishing. More activities around nature and biodiversity – water and bankside (Runnymede Borough Council. 2013).

The River Thames is a wonderful river basin that requires every concerned stakeholder to focus on conserving it as both a resource for its users - be they pleasure or commercial – as well as enhancing its natural habitats to ensure its longevity as a healthy riverine ecology.

The Thames RBMP through its Liaison Panel and with a catchment based approach can deliver. However, it is absolutely critical that the catchment based approach uses all the best tools of communication available in conjunction with the Thames RBMP. That (in part), in our opinion, is a web based stakeholder forum which will enable integration among the concerned parties from the EA, RBMP and the stakeholders (Thames Angling Conservancy. 2013).

## **Appendix**

### **References**

Environment Agency. (2009). Working Together. Available online <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/portal/ho/wfd/working/together2012?tab=mylist>

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## **Contributors and Contact Details**