

# INSPIRING PEOPLE TO **CHERISH** RIVERS



ANNUAL REVIEW 2015-2016





## OUR PURPOSE

We are the voice for London's waterways. Thousands of Thames21 volunteers protect and champion the capital's water network, vital for nature and people in one of the most densely populated cities in Europe. We work hand in hand with communities to deliver tangible, sustainable improvements to rivers, streams, canals and ponds for environmental, social and community benefit.

# CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Thames21 has had a good year. The numbers of people getting involved in the charity's activities, educational and community engagement events, initiatives and briefings increased significantly as we reached out with opportunities for people to work with us to protect our rivers and understand the environmental challenges they face. Thames21 engaged directly with over 30,000 people, which is hugely encouraging and demonstrates how people value the natural water spaces which contribute to life in London.

Throughout the charity's 22 year history, Londoners have been voting with their feet and coming onto the Thames foreshore to help clear away the rubbish and litter, responding in their thousands to campaigns such as the Cleaner Thames Challenge and the Thames Deep Clean. We are delighted that other organisations are now joining the initiative to address the issue of litter in the Thames. As one charity working with the Port of London Authority, we achieved a great deal - now, with the new interest and support of many others, we are seeking the permanent, societal change that will banish litter from our water environments and bring us steadily closer to Thames21's vision for healthy rivers at the heart of community life.

Educational activities with schools also expanded this year and Thames21 took on responsibility for the Environmental Education Centre at the Welsh Harp Reservoir, in the London Borough of Brent. We continued outdoor educational activities for schoolchildren in order to meet demand and are looking at developing further the huge potential of the Centre in coming years. At the other side of London to the east, our Fixing Broken Rivers Project reached schoolchildren in their thousands, connecting them with the natural environment.

Reducing river pollution and the damage it causes is the goal connecting and inspiring the huge variety of Thames21's work. This includes clearing litter with volunteers; agreeing partnership action to draw attention to misconnected drains contaminating rivers; installing integrated wetlands as sustainable urban drainage systems, encouraging others to follow suit; hosting seven Catchment Partnerships on rivers across London as well as the Catchment Partnerships in London Group; and increasing capacity to become ever more vocal as the voice for London's rivers.

In short it has been an extremely exciting year and I thank my fellow Trustees, the staff team, funders, stakeholders and volunteers for all that has been achieved.

MICHAEL HAMILTON  
Chairman of the Trustees



Michael Hamilton  
Chairman of the Trustees



Debbie Leach  
Chief Executive



# VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Volunteering and practical community involvement is fundamental to Thames21, running throughout everything we do.

We believe that energising the community in the issues affecting our rivers and involving them in solutions is the best way to manage our river networks sustainably and to improve public well-being.

## DURING THE YEAR:

**30,085 people** took part in Thames21 programmes and activities, an increase of **30%**.

This has been achieved through factors such as:

- Our Fixing Broken Rivers project and educational work
- Increasing outreach by the Development Programme
- Growing activity from Thames21 fully trained Badged Groups as they become more established.

There are now **11 active Badged Groups** working more independently all over London, from the River Shuttle to the River Crane, and along the Thames foreshore from Dagenham to Kingston.

## BADGED GROUPS ORGANISED:

**44 community events**, with **657 participants** and cleared more than **74m<sup>3</sup> of litter**.

The total number of people volunteering specifically to deliver river clean-up and other environmental improvements was **7,099 people** at **473 organised events** (compared with 5,673 the previous year). Improvements to rivers delivered by volunteers include clearing litter, tackling invasive non-native plant species, river maintenance, habitat enhancement, planting projects and river restoration work.



## DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

In its second year, the Development Programme put in place new systems, training and practical outreach, to better understand who Thames21 is engaging and why they are volunteering with us.

The programme worked in areas where Thames21 has not had much previous impact, opening doors into new funding opportunities and allowing wider engagement across Greater London; for example in Colindale, Uxbridge, Watford, Havering, Thurrock and Canvey Island.

A photography competition to develop wider awareness in the Brent catchment engaged **5,995 people** through social media.



## INTEREST IN OUR ONLINE ACTIVITIES CONTINUED TO GROW:

The total number of visitors to our website quadrupled on the previous year, from **14,774** to **58,850**.

Our Twitter following grew to **5,339**, while the number of people liking our Facebook page grew to **2,025**.



**58,850**  
VISITS



**5,339** FOLLOWERS



**2,025** FOLLOWERS

## OUR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORK INCLUDED TAKING PART IN:

### PADDLE AND PICK:

This paddleboard clean-up event helped mobilise recreational river users to be part of the solution in cleaning litter from London's rivers. Communicating about this campaign via social channels and leading on the press release have cemented Thames21's involvement in this multi-partner campaign.

### LOVE THE LEA:

The second Love the Lea Festival attracted **1,898 people** to music, poetry, stalls, talks, activities – all linked to the River Lea – plus reached **20,000+** on Facebook.

### THE SURFACE TENSION PROJECT:

Part of Love the Lea, this commissioned art-science project was designed to show how the arts can be used to engage people with the natural environment, and was completed in April 2015. It included a book and CD, exhibition and evening talk. The Surface Tension single was played repeatedly on BBC Radio 6 and elsewhere.

### LOVE THE LEA LATE:

An evening event to raise awareness about local rivers and the Love the Lea campaign attracted **140 people**.





# EDUCATION

Public education, to inspire change, continued to be a key part of Thames21's work in 2015-16.

## THE WELSH HARP ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTRE

In January, Thames21 took on responsibility for the Environmental Education Centre at the Welsh Harp Reservoir in the London Borough of Brent. We see this as an extension of our activities in Brent and north west London, which have grown steadily in recent years, especially through our role hosting the Brent River Catchment.

This means that, for the first time, Thames21 has established a bespoke educational hub - something we see as a key device to achieve our mission of empowering the waterway guardians of the future.

Between January and the end of March, our Welsh Harp Education Centre education team provided environmental education activities for more than **700 pupils** from **10 schools**.



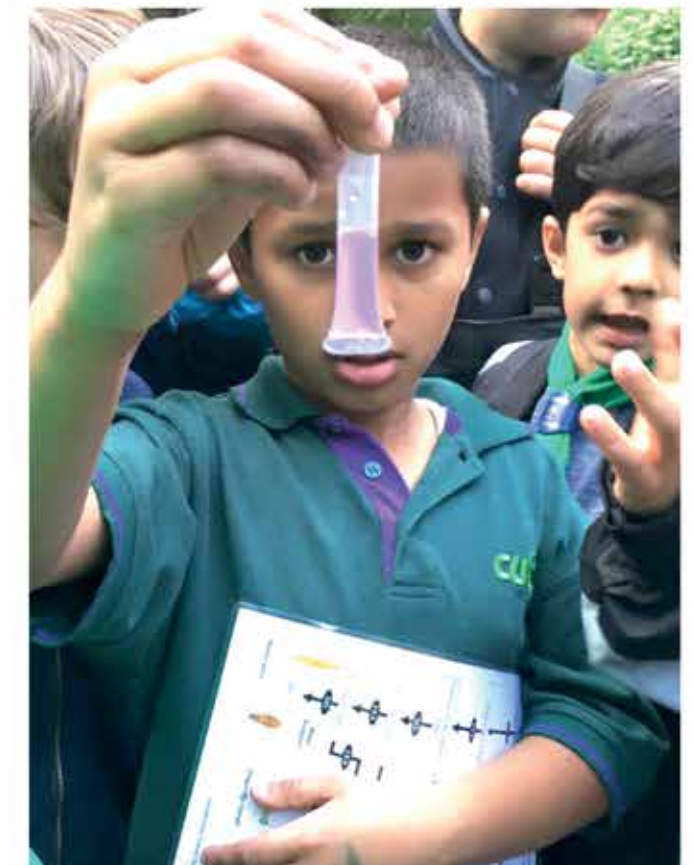
## OTHER MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN EDUCATION:

**12,090 people** got involved in our biggest education project **Fixing Broken Rivers**, in the East London Lea River Catchment.

Other successes in Fixing Broken Rivers included markers being placed on **150 roadside drains** to explain how they lead directly into the river.

Fixing Broken Rivers spent **67 days** delivering educational sessions in east London schools while, the Thames River Watch programme reached out increasingly to London schools along the Thames.

Other activities during the year included training **194 community leaders** to run events under our training programme, in order to be able to carry out their own river improvement activities on their local waterways.



In addition, the first group of **Waterway Engagement Volunteers (WEVs)** were trained in January and began to assist at environmental volunteering events. These volunteers act as ambassadors for Thames21 at clean up events.

In April, a new **Invasive Non Native Plant Management training module** was launched.

Training in maintenance of **Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems** was developed and a test session delivered to **15 volunteers**.





# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

Thames21 contributed to the enhancement of urban waterways in two main ways:

## 1. TACKLING WATER POLLUTION AND LITTER



### LITTER

The Port of London Authority's Driftwood team worked with Thames21 to remove **198 tonnes of debris** from the tidal Thames foreshore (compared to 190 tonnes the previous year), providing **31 baskets** for volunteers.

Items recovered included **14 trees, 20 shopping trolleys, 22 piles, 1 moped, 2 motorbikes, 2 sunken boats** and **3 Santander cycle hire bikes**.

The total amount of litter cleaned up by volunteers from other rivers and waterways across London was **237m<sup>3</sup> in the year**.

### WATER POLLUTION

Work to clean pollution from rivers focused on delivering Rainscapes (otherwise known as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems or SuDS). By strategic positioning, Rainscapes use the natural ability of plants to clean polluted water before it contaminates rivers. In partnership with Enfield and Haringey Councils, Thames21 has delivered nine such Rainscapes: Firs Farm, Pymmes Park, Bury Road Wetland, Alma Road, Grovelands Park Reedbed, and Priory Road (a system of four Rainscapes). These collectively treat nearly **400 hectares** of urban run-off. We have found measurable improvements in water quality – see Salmons Brook case-study.

Under the **Thames Road Wetland project**, a partnership was established with Sixth Form students at Haberdashers' Aske's Crayford Academy, to protect, preserve and enhance the wetland adjacent to the River Wansunt. Students created reptile basking sites, supported harvest mouse populations, created habitats for water voles and snipe and egg laying piles for snakes.

## 2. RIVER ENHANCEMENTS AND RESTORATIONS

### CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIPS

As a result of the EU Water Framework Directive to achieve targets for cleaner rivers, funding has been provided from Defra via the Environment Agency to develop River Catchment Management Plans for rivers throughout England and Wales. Thames21 has been hosting this activity by establishing and supporting partnership groups on the Ravensbourne, Thames (Upper and Tidal stretches), Rivers Roding, Beam and Ingrebourne, River Brent, London River Lea, and the Marsh Dykes.

Notable river improvements in these catchments include:

- New eel passes across three weirs in the culverted River Ravensbourne between Deptford and Lewisham.
- A new SuDS/rainscapes project is underway at Chinbrook Meadows, to tackle the polluted Grove Park Ditch and create an attractive wetland.
- On the Ravensbourne Catchment's River Pool, volunteers cut back willow at risk of falling into the river and used the timber to make flow deflectors and berms, to create pools and flow diversity. They opened up sections of the river to more light.
- Progress in delivering the Brent Catchment Plan included installing a river restoration and fish pass scheme on the River Brent at Bitterns Field in Ealing, and opening discussions for a coordinated approach to tackling giant hogweed across the catchment.
- On the River Lea, practical project delivery included installing 228m<sup>2</sup> of reedbeds on the Lea Navigation and developing plans for installing significantly more.

### TACKLING INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Invasive weeds drive out native plants and animals along our rivers, cause bank erosion and choke watercourses. Work included clearing **5.5 hectares of himalayan balsam**.

Trained volunteers and staff also removed:

- an estimated **1,300 giant hogweed plants** and stem-injected
- around **300 Japanese knotweed plants**
- The Friends of the Shuttle group worked with Thames21 staff to **remove floating pennywort** from lakes in Sidcup

### SALMONS BROOK

The Rainscape (SuDS) Salmons Brook – which runs into the River Lea – was expanded with **113 hectares** added in the year, including Houndsden Spinney 2, Bury Lodge and reedbed creation in Grovelands Park (pictured) and at Boxers Lake. These wetlands are now treating polluted water from **473 hectares** of urban land. Initial water quality monitoring showed the effectiveness of the Salmons Brook system in reducing pollutants – including ammonia (**by 67%**), nitrate (**by 68%**), total nitrogen (**by 55%**) and phosphate (**by 30%**).





# RESEARCH

Whilst partnerships with scientists and academics were strengthened during the year, volunteers continued to be the backbone of our research activity. With our training and support, the mass data collected by citizen scientists is improving knowledge about the health of London's waterways and influencing change for the benefit of river ecology in the region.

We measured dissolved pollution in rivers through the Love the Lea, Brent and Thames River Watch programmes.



## IN THE PAST YEAR:

**135 new volunteers** were trained as Thames River Watch citizen scientists, to monitor water quality, invasive non-native species and litter on the Thames. Thames River Watch rallies groups, individuals, schools and businesses, training and supporting a network of volunteers to discover more about the river and to champion its recovery.



## OUR THAMES RIVERWATCH VOLUNTEERS CARRIED OUT:

**441 water quality** surveys on the tidal Thames

**20 litter surveys** as part of Thames foreshore clean-up events

**26 invasive non-native species reports.**

## ON THE BRENT AND LEA CATCHMENTS THERE WERE:

**682 water quality tests** carried out

**11 water quality testing community events** on the Brent river catchment

**38** on the Lea catchment, involving **53 volunteer testers.**



**THAMES RIVER WATCH**  
Understanding the health of the tidal Thames

Our Thames River Watch research found that **74% of litter in the Thames areas surveyed came from food packaging.**



In addition, a partnership with Zoological Society of London was set up to create a **Riverfly Monitoring hub** along the Ravensbourne that will monitor water quality through the sampling of invertebrate species.



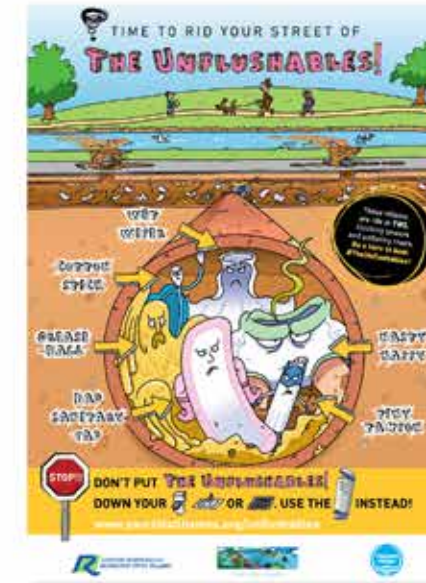


# ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNS

We advocate behaviour change and other solutions to improve the health of London's rivers.

Thames21 is involved in many river Catchment Plans across London and beyond, which has resulted in collaborative working and bringing together local communities, organisations, regulatory bodies and industry to agree and deliver river improvements.

Our efforts have also been set on chairing the **Catchment Partnerships in London Group** (CPiL) to bring together all river catchment partnerships in London to exchange experiences, share solutions and find ways to tackle London-wide issues together. One key issue CPiL has looked at during the last year is misconnections. This city-wide problem urgently needs addressing and a position statement on this issue has been developed for use in lobbying for change and raising public awareness on the issue.



## THE UNFLUSHABLES:

A Your Tidal Thames (Catchment Partnership) visual poster campaign, called the Unflushables, reached out to residents in an area of Richmond identified by Thames Water as a drain blockage hotspot. This was aimed at reducing the quantity of unflushable products, such as fats, oils, greases, cotton buds and other sanitary products, into the drainage system.

Unflushables were communicated as "super-villains" in a fun campaign designed to appeal to adults and children alike. Our aim is to roll it out across London.

Thames21 also invited the public to join in a number of campaigns to boost support for healthy urban rivers.

The recruitment of a communications manager is enabling a more strategic focus on how we communicate these activities.

## CLEANER THAMES:

A joint campaign with the Port of London Authority, Tideway and Thames Litter Forum, this has been encouraging Londoners to make the tidal Thames a cleaner place. It is supported by explorer Paul Rose and, with the development of campaign videos by the PLA, London communities are increasingly aware of the litter issue affecting the Thames.

## 3RIVERS CLEAN UP:

This three-week long series of activities in June and July was led by Thames21 with local partners and tackled invasive plants on the Ravensbourne Catchment in Lewisham, Greenwich, Bromley and Croydon.





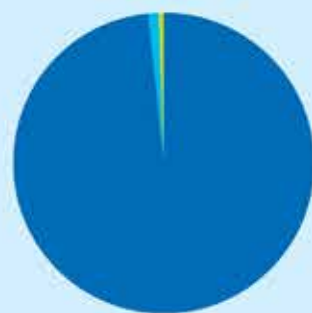
# OUR INCOME AND WHERE WE SPENT IT

## INCOME £ 2,022,546



Grants restricted	£ 1,650,366
Donations	£228,453
Gifts in kind	£141,786
Investment Income	£1,941
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,022,546</b>

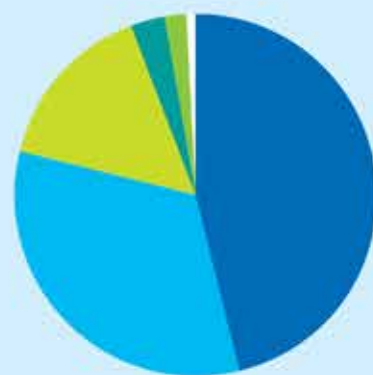
## EXPENDITURE £ 2,017,516



Charitable Activities	£1,986,756
Generating voluntary income	£20,373
Governance	£10,387
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,017,516</b>

## INCOME % FOR THE YEAR BY SOURCE

Companies	46%
Public Sector	33%
Trusts & Foundations	15%
Landfill Tax	3%
Other	2%
Individual	1%



## WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS

- Biffa Awards
- Blackstone Group International Partners
- Bloomberg
- Charities Aid Foundation
- City Bridge Trust
- Corporation of London
- Cory Environmental Trust
- Credit Suisse
- Environment Agency
- Environmental Trust
- Essex County Council
- Greater London Authority
- Glaxo SmithKline
- Goldman Sachs
- Halfords Media
- Helen and Geoffrey De Freitas Trust
- Hillingdon Community Trust
- HSBC
- John Lyons Charity
- JustGiving.com
- Lee Valley Regional Park
- London Borough of Bexley
- London Borough of Ealing
- London Borough of Haringey
- London Borough of Harrow
- London Borough of Lewisham
- Marks & Spencer
- Merrill Lynch
- Modern Times Group Ltd
- Nineveh Charitable Trust
- Northern Trust
- Port of London Authority
- Risk Management Solutions
- Royal Bank of Canada
- Salesforce UK
- Smith and Nephew PLC
- Stag Brewing Company
- Thames Water
- Thames Water Community Investment Fund
- Tideway
- Toshiba of Europe
- Tower Hill Trust
- Treasury Wine Estates
- Veolia
- WME Entertainment
- Zoological Society of London

## TRUSTEES

- Michael Hamilton (Chairman)
- Deputy John Barker OBE
- Francis Carnwath CBE
- Howard Davidson
- Alistair Gale
- Charles Green
- Celia Hensman MBE
- Richard McIlwain
- Louise Moore
- Robin Mortimer
- Nicholas Tennant
- Company Secretary: Anthony Deaton



# HOW TO SUPPORT US



We would like to thank all those who work with us, commission expert services or support our work through donations, either as individuals or through developing a corporate partnership with Thames21. You can help us in various ways. For further details of anything below, visit our website [www.thames21.org.uk](http://www.thames21.org.uk)

## INDIVIDUALS

**TEXT:** The easiest way to donate is by using your mobile phone. Simply text **LOVE21** followed by the amount you want to donate, eg £10, to 70070. A confirmation text will tell you how to Gift Aid your donation, which will be deducted from your mobile phone credit or added to your monthly bill.

**ONLINE:** Please visit [www.justgiving.com/thames21](http://www.justgiving.com/thames21) and click on Donate.

**BY POST:** Cheques can be made payable to Thames21 and sent to:  
Thames21, Walbrook Wharf,  
78-83 Upper Thames Street,  
London EC4R 3TD

**A SPONSORED EVENT:** Our supporters take up many challenges to raise funds for us, from running and cycling in major events to canoeing along parts of the River Thames or climbing mountains. Keep our fundraising officer Vincent Mok informed on **020 7248 7171** or email [vincent.mok@thames21.org.uk](mailto:vincent.mok@thames21.org.uk)

**LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL:** If you wish to include Thames21 in your will, you will need to provide the charity's full details: Thames21, London River House, Royal Pier Road, Gravesend, DA12 2BG and registered charity number 1103997. We strongly recommend using a professional legal adviser, such as a solicitor, when drawing up a will.

For further guidance on donating through your will, please phone **020 7248 7171** or email [legacies@thames21.org.uk](mailto:legacies@thames21.org.uk)

## CORPORATE SUPPORT

**CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING:** We can tailor corporate volunteering and team building for your staff or organisation.

For more information, visit our website [www.thames21.org.uk/corporate-volunteering/](http://www.thames21.org.uk/corporate-volunteering/) or to discuss opportunities contact Seren Nelson at [seren.nelson@thames21.org.uk](mailto:seren.nelson@thames21.org.uk) or phone **07826 913 307**.

**DIRECT PROJECT FUNDING:** Our projects have huge and measurable impacts on London's waterway environments as well as strengthening communities and empowering individuals.

**ENGAGE YOUR STAFF:** From team volunteer days to staff fundraising ideas, all Thames21 projects have opportunities to involve the skills, energy and enthusiasm of your colleagues.

**ENGAGE YOUR CUSTOMERS:** We are committed to local communities and to improving their waterways. Why not work with us to improve your relationship with your customers and to strengthen your public profile.

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICES:** Thames21 has a wealth of specialist expertise and experience which can be contracted to help deliver your own organisational goals.

