



## YOUR TIDAL THAMES

### Minutes

#### Your Tidal Thames (YTT) Strategy Group Meeting

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013 10am-4pm Mappin Pavilion at ZSL .

#### **10.00-10.30 Arrival and refreshments and introduction to meeting.**

The Chairman Roger de Freitas gave a brief introduction to the meeting and outlined his background. He's been involved with cleaning up the River for over 15 years, working with community groups interested in the tidal Thames and sharing learning between similar projects globally. The meeting brings together members of the YTT Strategy Group.

#### **10.30-11.30 Presentations**

##### **YTT new project team structure and current funding - Jill Goddard and Debbie Leach**

The tidal Thames spans 95 miles from the upstream tidal extent to the Outer Estuary. In 2011, there was an opportunity to bid for a catchment partnership through the Environment Agency to pilot the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) to river management. Both TEP and Thames21 bid separately and were asked by Defra to co-host the pilot on the tidal Thames area. The pilot was on going throughout 2012 - Phase 1 - which is now complete. The co-hosting arrangement was extremely successful as the two charities have wide networks of contacts and engage with local authorities, national agencies, industry, voluntary bodies, local community groups, local residents and environmental volunteers.

Debbie Leach gave an overview of what YTT achieved in the last 12 months.

The project has now moved into Phase 2 and has enhanced the team to include Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea (TSKC), Thames Landscape Strategy (TLS) and the Port of London Authority (PLA). Meetings have begun and will be held on a regular basis. The project team will work together with the Strategy group to represent the tidal Thames.

The new project team will be able to enhance communication across the length of the tidal Thames. This will ensure collaboration rather than duplication of networks of locally based delivery partners. YTT will jointly seek funding from now until spring 2014 to support local, measurable results on the ground.

Jill Goddard outlined how YTT is working together on the catchment based approach on the tidal Thames to deliver integrated water quality improvements.

By working together a bid for £20K to the EA was applied for in July 2013. £11,804 was awarded which will cover some salary costs, however will not include the new website which was part of the



## YOUR TIDAL THAMES

bid. We are now looking at identifying funding to continue after the end of March 2014 and pay for the website.

Debbie Leach gave an overview of Thames21's Thames River Watch project, this is a three year project which started in July 2013. The project aims to enable Londoners to better understand of the health of the tidal Thames through engaging people in monitoring the river. The project will be formally launched in January 2014. For more information on the project see the Thames21 website: [www.thames21.org.uk](http://www.thames21.org.uk)

### **Update from EA on national work of WFD - Alice Wilson**

The CaBA provides a clear understanding of the issues in the catchment, involving local communities in decision-making by sharing evidence, listening to integrated actions that address local issues in a cost effective way and protect local users. This supports transparent decision making; provides opportunities to deliver multiple benefits and helps to inform River Basin District Planning.

River Basin planning incorporates the output from the pilot projects. A national consultation called Challenges and Choices 2013 is currently on going, the results of which will feed into the next draft River Basin Management Plan in 2014. The second River Basin Management Plan will be published in 2015.

The Challenges and Choices consultation asks five questions including what are our challenges and choices and how do we tackle them. Regional consultations were launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2013 and will run for 6 months. The views received will shape and develop the approach to River Basin management planning. For more details on the Challenges and Choices consultation and to give your views see the EA website: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/140092.aspx>

### Questions raised

Following these presentations there was a time for questions and discussion. Conversations in this time focused around:

- If there will be funding to take this forward.
- A desire to see projects delivered on the ground and concern over recent non delivery.

### **11.45-12.35 Presentations**

### **Update from EA on local work on WFD - Alice Wilson**

Under the WFD estuaries are classified as Transitional water bodies. Each water body is given a status based on the most recent investigations. The investigations look at fish, invertebrates, plants,



## YOUR TIDAL THAMES

water chemistry and river morphology. Information on the status and details of each of the investigations including failures for the tidal Thames can be found on the EA website.

Investigations Update:

- Water quantity (freshwater flow)
- Water quality (chemicals) including Diuron, Tributyltin Compounds, Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen
- Dissolved Oxygen
- Heavy metals including mercury, copper
- Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs)
- Invertebrates
- Bathing and Shellfish waters
- Morphology

Investigations go through several phases: Phase 1 identifies failures, Phase 2 identifies the potential causes, Phase 3 identifies what measures would be needed to fully resolve the problem and Phase 4 analyses the cost/benefit of those solutions.

Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) – National Water Environment Benefit Survey (NWEBS) is a national survey looking into public willingness to pay for improvement to the environment. The UK Collaborative Research Programme into the WFD used survey methods to estimate, in monetary terms, the value placed by households on improvements to the water environment brought about by the WFD. In July 2007, 1487 interviews were undertaken in 50 locations throughout England and Wales. From the survey results a range of willingness to pay benefit estimates were produced. The results have subsequently been used by the EA in measures appraisal (especially water industry measures) and in the Impact Assessments (IAs). This approach looks at the value to length/area of waterbody that is improved. Some benefits will be given a cost, others will be described.

The Outcomes of cost benefit analysis:

- Final appraisal report for each sub catchment,
- Groups of actions and costs to Defra
- Inform second River Basin Management Plan



## YOUR TIDAL THAMES

### **YTT project progress update Dec 2012-Sept 2013 - Alice Hall**

Alice gave a brief recap of what the project completed during the pilot year in 2012. Between March and August 2013 time was spent understanding and on integrating EA WFD investigations data into the working catchment plan and revising the Final Report. This included mapping the new data, mapping completed and future opportunities identified as part of the pilot engagement and subsequent review and discussing the future of the YTT project.

During the review process it became clear that a static paper Catchment Plan would be insufficient for effective Catchment Planning on the tidal Thames therefore the structure for an interactive website has been developed. The website covers Background; The tidal Thames Catchment; Enhancement opportunities and Contact details. This will be a key way of communicating about the work of YTT.

At the same time as this review process, YTT were awarded an Awards for All grant to scope two projects arising out of the engagement work. Erith Yacht Club wished to protect Erith Marshes by building a new slipway for club members and the Cross River Partnership were approached to engage businesses along the central stretch of the river through installation of Green Wall Modules developed by Thames21.

### **13.20-14.30 Presentations and Group discussion**

#### **A new website to host the YTT catchment Plan - Becky Law**

YTT is currently working to produce a website to host the Catchment Plan and enable access to the WFD investigations data in a user friendly way. The idea will be free distribution of collective information to facilitate collaborative working. This will help participation of a wide range of stakeholders.

There are a few existing websites available which could be used rather than building a bespoke site which was the original option being looked at. The group based discussion will produce ideas of what we think we may need on the website in order for it to function effectively and become a working tool.

Questions:

- What would the website need to do, look like and function in order for you to use it?

Feedback:

Discussion points included:



## YOUR TIDAL THAMES

- Need some form of interactivity for example typing in Hammersmith would zoom to that area of the map.
- A wish list of what a Bronze, Silver and Gold standard website might be. Each option needs to be costed up to be able to do a bid.
- Difficult to have a one size fits all. Need to look at other websites and costs. Need to have funds to be able to update the website and not just produce it.
- Social media may play a part in directing people to the website.
- Should include links to other websites. The technical data should stay with data owner but the more user friendly information should be on the website.
- Look at raising funding by having sponsorship to allow it to continue.
- Have a very simple and user friendly website if the community groups are to use it. Info where new projects can be suggested and showing projects that have started. Word press is free and fairly simple to bolt information on. Look at discussing now with community groups.

### **14.45-16.00 Presentations and group discussion**

#### **Engagement work going forward – Jason Debney**

Jason presented information on future delivery of improvement works along tidal Thames. We have an immense task with huge issues in an urban environment.

WFD is meant to be stakeholder driven but can only be achieved by involving some of the major players. These will include DEFRA, Environment Agency, Local Authorities, as well as the YTT Partnership and local stakeholders.

How are we going to connect with our existing networks? We then need to use those partnerships to foster improvements on the ground. There are a lot of people who want to help but we need to help them feel that they can take those projects forward.

#### **Vision and future of the YTT projects over the next 3 years – Amy Pryor, Roger de Freitas and Alice Wilson**

Amy Pryor gave an overview of several case studies to facilitate group discussions on three themes arising out of the engagement work – Education and Access; Habitat and Fish Passage and Policy.



## YOUR TIDAL THAMES

Each case study detailed who the partners were, how funding was put together and how each project was delivered. This was to highlight different delivery models for three very wide ranging themes in order to facilitate discussion on how YTT should progress and which types of project would be most beneficial to focus project work and funding bids on.

Habitat and Fish passage possibilities were highlighted through review of the Home Park Paddocks Habitat Restoration project in the Thames Landscape Strategy Area in Hampton Court where water quality and fish migration was improved. This was achieved with local collaboration, volunteer working and a grant to fund the project. Historic reed beds had dried up and were clogging up the channels in the area. These were cleared to improve water flow to the reedbeds restoring the pollution mitigating services of the beds. Other historic ditches were dredged to improve habitat and water flow for fish and invertebrates. The sluices installed aided water level management but were a hindrance to fish migration. Through a recent masters project, the site was found to be an important habitat for European Eel with a silver eel population resident and healthy elver recruitment into the small exit ditches. However, elvers couldn't reach the rest of the system due to the sluice arrangement. There is multi-organisational interest in taking the management recommendations in the masters project output forward. TLS are also seeking further funding for more habitat restoration work.

Roger de Freitas talked about a project in the Philippines where there was a local lake that was polluted in order to highlight the possibilities for education and access. Unilever, the local river authority and a single teacher worked together to get local school children involved and educate them into improving the water quality. Each year children are picked from several schools within the River Basin to complete a three day course on the lake. The first day celebrations are held with the local dignitaries, the next day water sampling techniques are taught on the lake and the results collated. On the final day each child has to give a presentation of what they have learned and what they are going to do with their new found knowledge when they get back home. Six months later each school is visited to check up on what has happened since and the next year each child who has completed the scheme is invited back for the first day celebrations with the new set of children. 28 towns have been involved to date, they are now better educated about their local environment. This scheme has now been running for 15 years and each of those children has a passion for the lake and water environment regardless of what career path they have chosen.

Alice Wilson discussed another case study which is being looked at, Erith Yacht Club to highlight the opportunities for working within policy. Erith YC wants to protect the last area of salt readings in the Thames Estuary through the construction of a slipway. They have been trying for years to develop this idea but hadn't been able to sit down with the right people. YTT facilitated a meeting between the EA fisheries, geomorphologists and the Catchment Coordinator and the yacht club representatives to fully explore all the options. This meeting helped EYC understand the estuary



## YOUR TIDAL THAMES

dynamics better and the EA Encroachment Policy which requires habitat offsetting for the building of new river structures. Following the meeting a mutually beneficial proposal is now being drafted.

### **14.45-16.00 Group discussion: themes and suggested project ideas for discussion.**

#### **Habitat and Fish passage**

Is this type of project what we should be focusing on? It was felt that YTT should be bringing together ideas rather than leading. YTT can be used as an enabling group so where there is local community interest in seeing a project happen, YTT can bring together the right partners to help make it happen with Strategy Group members taking a lead on project delivery. YTT can take the overview of the whole estuary with smaller local projects contributing to the 'bigger picture' ensuring multiple benefits are delivered. Coordination of activities and communications is key.

#### **Education/Access**

EA would prefer that education be weaved into delivery of projects not environmental education for its own sake. Education should be developed through the educators but YTT should be pivotal in strengthening links with and between educators. Existing networks such as Thames21, Groundwork's London Sustainable Schools SUDs programme, IFCA's and the Thames Learning Group all provide excellent educational opportunities. By working with the existing networks YTT can help provide quality assurance of information being delivered by educators in the curriculum.

#### **Policy - Working with Developers**

We need to take a proactive stance on policy and actively influencing using the weight of the Strategy Groups combined influence. Particularly since policy is not always implemented due to lack of resource and government cuts, YTT can take an active role in engaging with developers to ensure mutual benefits and recognised good practice for green infrastructure e.g. SUDs is weaved into development plans. This could be linked to education to enhance social benefits, create demand from communities and ensure people understand they are part of a bigger picture. Future funding bids need to integrate this need into the project work.

#### **Vision and future of the YTT project over the next 3 years – Steve Colclough**

Steve Colclough gave his perspective on the WFD and his history up to the present day. This is the first time a Directive has stated the need for citizen involvement throughout the assessment, planning, implementation, and management phases of the legislation's introduction and adoption (Article 14 of the Directive). DEFRA have a responsibility for direct delivery but individual



## YOUR TIDAL THAMES

communities should be involved which YTT should be assisting in coordinating as a group. Funding is difficult but together we are more powerful in being able to help achieve the targets in the WFD.

### **Next steps**

Following this YTT Strategy group meeting the next steps for the YTT project team are:

- To take the feedback from this meeting about developing a new website to host the YTT Catchment Plan and use this to inform funding applications to enable the production of an interactive website. If funding is successful then the new website should then be developed – the development phase should incorporate opportunity for the Strategy Group to give input and provide feedback on the functionality of the website.
- To look at suitable funders and develop a funding application to support the YTT project from April 2014 onwards – ideally for an initial period of 3 years.
- A further Strategy Group meeting will be arranged for February 2014.