



WORKING FOR

SUSTAINABLE URBAN WATERWAYS



Image © Reed and Mackay

ANNUAL REVIEW 2013-2014



## Our purpose

Thames21 is the voice for London's waterways. We work hand in hand with communities to improve rivers, canals and ponds for social and environmental benefit through: practical, educational, and awareness-raising projects. Our team of volunteers enhances, protects and fights for the capital's wide network of waterways, which provide vital habitat for wildlife and much needed green space in one of the most densely populated cities in Europe.

## From the Chairman's statement

It was a year of change and development for Thames21. Our work engaging communities and involving neighbourhoods in taking responsibility for their local rivers and in practical action reached out in a much more structured way to wider stakeholders, and to decision makers.

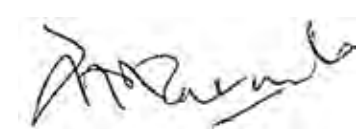
We hosted and led the development of many new Catchment Partnerships on rivers around London which brought together ranges of local interests, views and concerns in order to agree plans and activity required to improve the health of rivers.

It was also a year when Thames21 engaged Londoners increasingly with understanding the complex and damaging pollution problems affecting our watercourses and with the part that everyone can play in helping to achieve our goal of sustainable urban rivers.

We launched our Thames River Watch programme, training and supporting a network of riverside schools, community groups, residents and businesses to carry out regular water quality testing and monitoring along the Tidal Thames, each adding their data to a new public database of information - identifying patterns, issues that need to be addressed, and gaining greater understanding of the health of the river.

Our Love the Lea campaign commenced an extensive new programme Fixing Broken Rivers, working with schools and communities in East London to understand and help address issues from misconnected drains to road run off contaminating the river, and the urban water cycle.

All our work was done with Thames21's 'trademark' of delivery on the ground, in and with communities, for which the Trustees thank our partners, staff team and our thousands of dedicated volunteers.



**FRANCIS CARNWATH CBE**  
Chairman, Thames21



**Francis Carnwath CBE**  
Chairman



**Debbie Leach**  
Chief Executive

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Image © Luke Damerum



Robin Mortimer, Chief Executive of Port of London Authority helping out at a clean-up event at Gravesend. © PLA

## Clearing rubbish, pollutants and invasive species from waterways

The Port of London Authority's Driftwood service in support of Thames21's volunteers delivered 42 rubbish baskets at locations on the River Thames foreshore and cleared away a total of 362 tonnes of debris collected from the Thames. Items recovered by the PLA from the river included trees/piles, shopping trolleys, tyres, mopeds/scooters, a dead whale, a horse, a fridge, two cars, a dead dog and a sunken trawler.

## Non-native species

The battle against the damaging weeds and harmful animal species infesting our rivers continued, with Thames21 volunteers tackling invasive non-native plant species including Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed along sections of some of the worst affected river banks.



Non-native invasive species: Mitten Crab © Andy Loble

## A POLITICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

"The Thames and London's other waterways have been at the heart of our city's life for centuries and are an integral part of the communities in which we live. Thames21's community-driven work is an incredible example of how the grassroots efforts of local residents can help transform our environment and improve the places in which we live". **Matthew Pennycook, Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Greenwich and Woolwich**

## Engaging and supporting waterway volunteers



Image © Andy Loble

The total number of people participating in Thames21 programmes in the year was 11,088 and the total number of organised volunteering events was 479.

Thames21 engages local communities across London and volunteering remains at the very heart of operations. The charity aims to make activities long-lasting and sustainable and Thames21 actively encourages communities to take ownership of their local waterways.

## IN 2013-2014 THAMES21 DELIVERED:

**15** River Catchment Management events including consultations, Catchment Partnership meetings and Catchment walkovers for **246** stakeholders involved in developing plans for the river catchments. These included the Ravensbourne, the Tidal Thames, the rivers Roding Beam & Ingrebourne, the Marsh Dykes and the Lower (non tidal) Thames.

**54** River enhancement events, improving and adding features beneficial to wildlife to river channels.

**39** Family or informal river learning events for **2,154** participants.

**33** Invasive species controlling events. Many of these events also included litter clearance for **871** participants.

**20** Guided tours / walk and interest talks for **157** participants.

**4** Information stalls and talks promoting Thames21's work for **136** participants.

**133** Litter clearance events for **1913** participants.

**77** River maintenance events such as river bank vegetation cutback and tree pruning for **1,651** participants. Many of these events included litter clearance.

**26** Schools learning events for **889** participants.

**26** Volunteer training sessions for **256** participants.



# River Catchment Planning - for the benefit of rivers and people

In 2012 the UK Government introduced a new approach to river basin management. The catchment-based approach aims to integrate land and water management in a sustainable way to balance environmental, economic and social demands. Local river Catchment Partnerships have been set up across London in order to create and help deliver local plans to improve many of the capital's waterways. In 2013/14 Thames21 hosted the following catchment groups: Your Tidal Thames (in partnership with the Thames Estuary Partnership); the Ravensbourne Catchment Partnership; the Maidenhead -Teddington Catchment Partnership; the Brent Catchment Partnership; the Roding, Beam and Ingrebourne Catchment Improvement Group and the Marsh Dykes Catchment Improvement Group (in partnership with the London Wildlife Trust). In addition Thames21 was an active member of the: Beverly Brook Catchment Group; the Cray Catchment Improvement Group and the Lower Lee Catchment Partnership.



Image © Thames21

## Improving waterways for people and wildlife - river restoration and habitat work:

### Capacity building - Thames21's Training, Monitoring and Accreditation Scheme



Image © Andy Loble

The two day course "Leading a Waterway Clean Up" trains volunteers in all they need to know to plan and run a safe, effective waterway clean-up. Trainees receive an NCFE accredited certificate upon completion of the course. Participation continued to grow in the year and trainees and groups started delivering their own volunteering activities, with Thames21's support - events included collecting litter, planting wildflowers, installing bee boxes, removing invasive plants and other river improvements.

### River Pool improvements:

Weekly river improvement volunteering events on the River Pool at Catford constructed a series of low berms and other in-channel structures to improve marginal vegetation and variability of flow in this stretch of river, improving its aesthetics, water quality and wildlife habitat.

### The Glassmill Project:

At Glassmill Lake in Bromley ten community events were organised involving 60 local residents directly in delivering improvements to the lake and in planning the construction of a new channel through the lake.

### Greening River Walls:

Experimental Green Walls units on the flood defence walls of the tidal Thames continued to be monitored by Kings College London to assess the development of plant communities. Panels installed along the Tidal Lea in south Newham are now well established.



Image © Vincent Mok



# Thames River Watch



Image © Corporate Headshots London

The launch of Thames River Watch introduced a new project to train and support a network of volunteers to carry out water quality testing, surveying and monitoring of the River Thames' natural environment. The public launch on the Thames foreshore was attended by a wide range of partners including community groups, schoolchildren, businesses, statutory authorities and other institutions. The initial focus was on working with partners including the Environment Agency, Marine Conservation Society and London Invasive Species Initiative. Work included defining what specific issues should be measured by volunteer surveyors on the tidal Thames, methodology and then developing an online data recording and mapping tool which allows surveyors to enter their data on water quality, litter and non-native invasive species. Five Thames River Watch training sessions were held in the first project months with a total of 44 participants.



Image © Corporate Headshots London



Image © Corporate Headshots London

## Love the Lea

Public interest in the campaign continued to grow and 13 water quality tests were carried out in partnership with University College London. They showed that the average level of reactive phosphate for the River Lea between Tottenham and Bow was 2.25 milligrammes per litre. 1 milligramme and above is rated poor under the Water Framework Directive.

### A VOLUNTEER'S PERSPECTIVE

"As a volunteer on the River Pool at Catford for several years, the importance of our work in constructing berms, clearing trees and vegetation, and restoring the pond, is in the tangible benefits to the environment, for people as well as wildlife. Many local people and passers-by, such as cyclists and walkers, have said how much they enjoy the improvements we have made. For me, the reward is going to the pond and seeing flowers such as iris and marsh marigold, and insects like demoiselle damselflies, and finding, above my head, a greater spotted woodpecker feeding its young in a nearby willow. I even saw a fish spawning in the gravel of the river, to my amazement."

- Jonathan Starkey, volunteer.



"Human Waste" won the Thames21 2014 Annual Photography Competition. © Jairo Hurtado



## Filtering through - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

The Salmons Brook Healthy River Challenge: The project objectives are to create six SuDS systems and treat river catchment areas totalling 412 hectares by March 2015. Four initial sites were selected to create wetland areas to clean toxic road run-off before it contaminates Salmons Brook and the River Lea. Work started at Lonsdale Drive and Grovelands Park. Funding bids were submitted to create SuDS at The Spinney and the A10 in Enfield. Thames21 started to disseminate Best Practice.

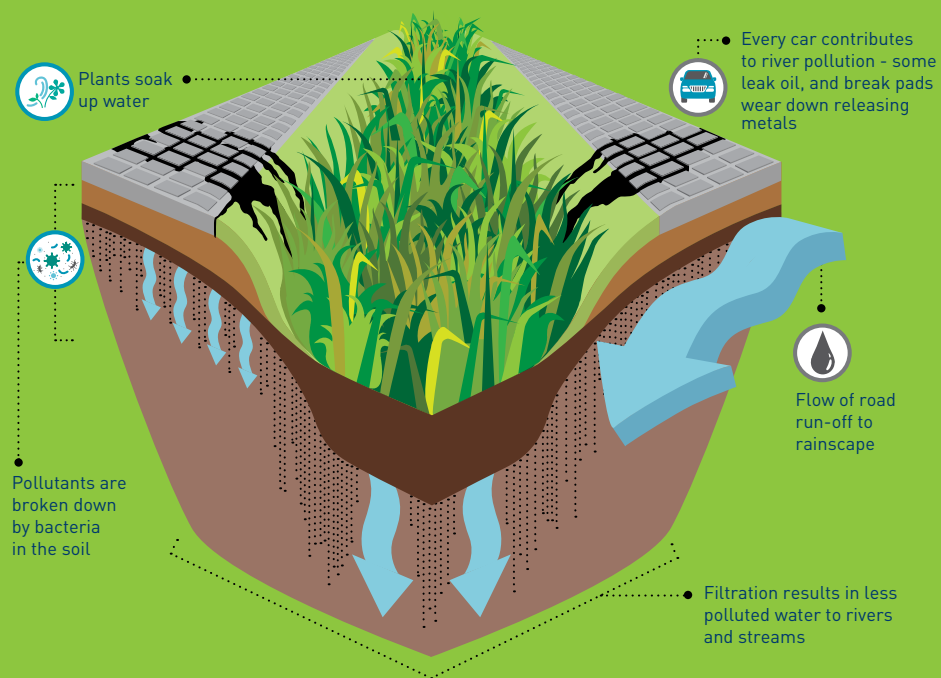
Thames21 also secured £100,000 to deliver outreach work engaging communities with flood risk and understanding the urban water cycle in a Critical Drainage Area in the London Borough of Haringey. This will see two more SuDS created.



Planting new SuDS will benefit Salmons Brook Image © Emma Crouch



Image © Emma Crouch



Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), such as this roadside rainscape are an alternative to using just concrete pipes to deal with draining rainwater. They are systems which mimic nature, holding water, slowing it down and cleaning it. SuDS have a 'green' component, planted areas that act as green sponges; that's what makes them sustainable.

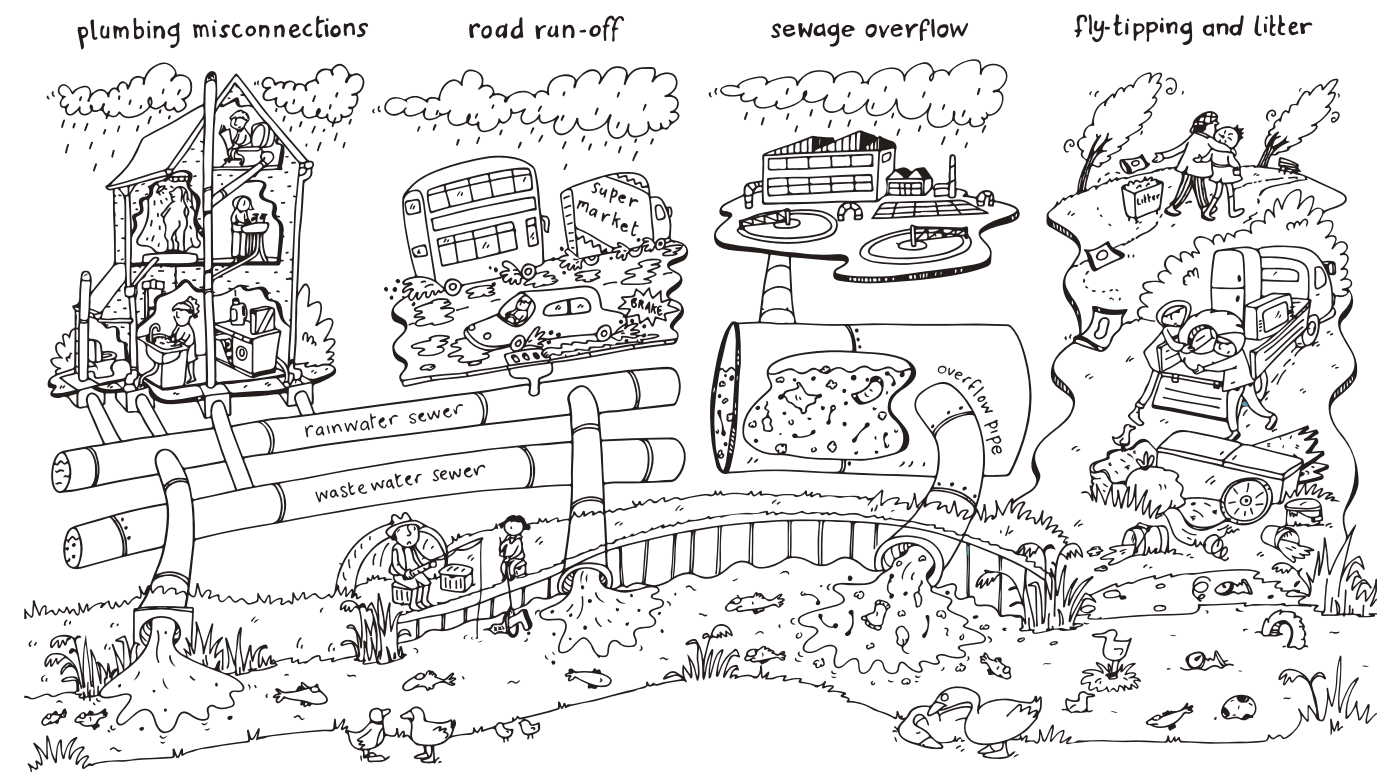
## Fixing Broken Rivers



Image © Lulu Ash

Fixing Broken Rivers launched in the autumn of 2013 and is a school-based education programme aiming to reach 32,400 children and 4,000 HSBC staff. The project focuses on creating and regenerating reed beds and installing mini Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Educational resources were developed, freelance educators recruited and sites identified where new reedbeds can be created. Schools were recruited and education sessions got underway.

## THIS IS YOUR RIVER – THESE ARE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS





## OTHER PROJECT AREAS

**EAST LONDON:** Environmental improvements were made to Beckton Lake in Newham hand in hand with local communities to increase its value both to wildlife and to the surrounding residents and establish long term attitudes of care and protection for the lake.

### BRENT WATERWAYS:

Thames21 engaged growing numbers of local residents through a popular calendar of river improvement events.

### GRAND UNION

**HILLINGDON:** Along with regular clean ups, project activities included helping to organise the first Hayes Canal Fair which was well attended. Thames21 worked with the Friends of Cranford Park to carry out Riverfly invertebrate surveys to determine water quality.



Image © getwestlondon.co.uk



Thames21 was nominated by a local volunteer through their employee grants scheme – and won! © Michael Heath

**RIVER CRAY:** Since Thames21 started working on the River Cray in 2003, the charity has engaged with thousands of local volunteers, community and youth groups, school children and businesses to care for and improve Bexley's rivers. During the year volunteers removed debris from the river, cut back bankside vegetation, removed invasive plants species removed and installed new wildlife habitat. These efforts contribute to the pride and ownership people feel for their local river.



### A VOLUNTEER'S PERSPECTIVE

"I am proud to be a small part of a team that cares for and aims to inspire others to care for the future of our H<sub>2</sub>O sources, constantly learning something new, meeting a diversity of people and just being curious." – Nic Shore, volunteer.



### A CORPORATE VOLUNTEER'S PERSPECTIVE

"It's very important to give back to nature and the city we live in! I was shocked to see how much rubbish there was in the water and am really happy we could pick some of it. 30 bags of rubbish in a space of 4-5 hours is quite a shocking number, considering we've covered only small bit of river Lea. If all companies take care of our environment at least as much as Reed & Mackay does, all of us would live in a nicer city!"

– Peter Holzbar, Reed & Mackay.



### Killer bags - Thames21 and the Break the Bag Habit campaign

A shocking 19 million single-use carrier bags are given out daily in England. The Break the Bag Habit coalition of which Thames21 is part worked to bring down that number. A website was launched [www.breakthebaghabit.org.uk](http://www.breakthebaghabit.org.uk) - where visitors can pledge to refuse single use bags and encourage friends and family to do the same.



### Thames Tideway Tunnel - the London super-sewer

Thames21 and the Thames Tunnel Now coalition worked to promote the case for the Thames Tideway Tunnel and called on MPs, Councils and communities to support the installation of the vital super-sewer to clean up the River Thames.



Image from You Poo Too video © Thames Tideway Tunnel



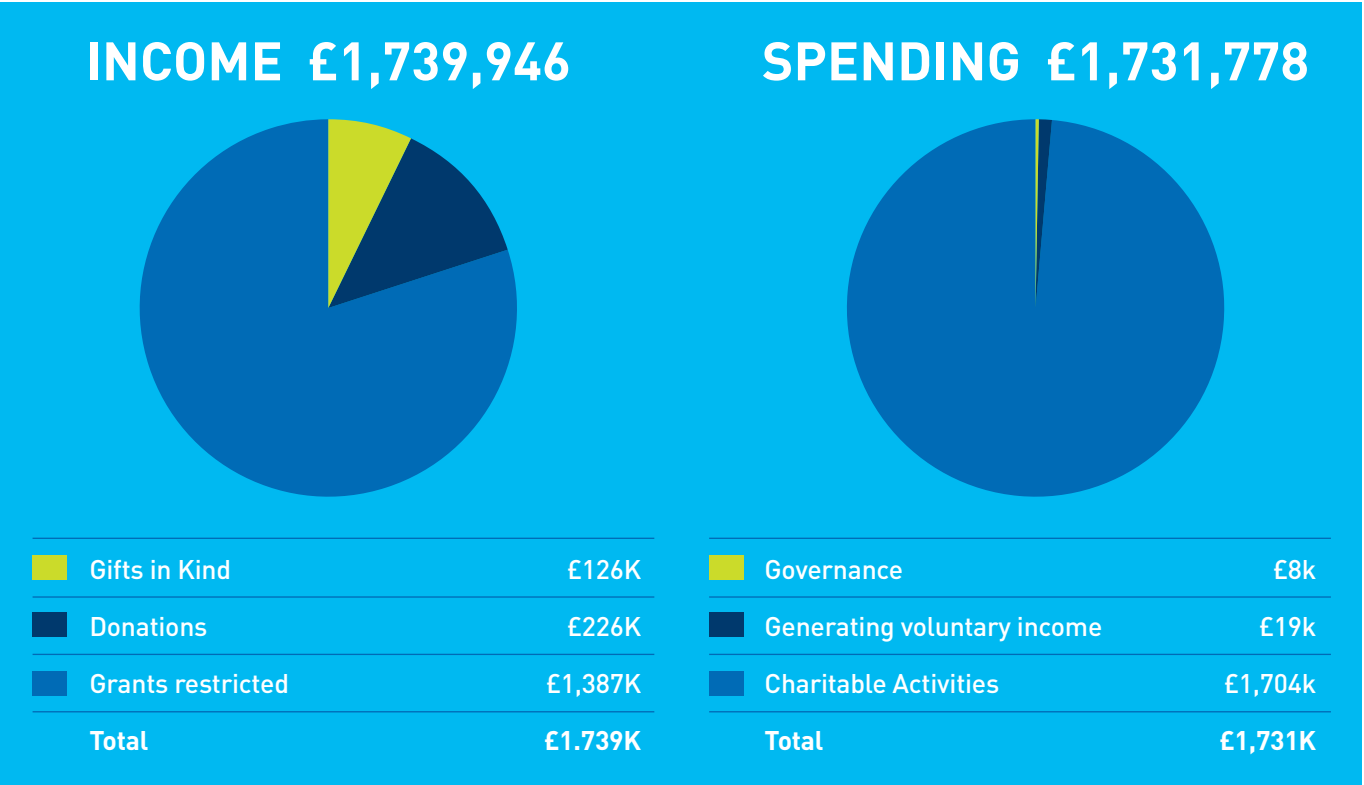


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# OUR INCOME AND WHERE WE SPENT IT



The financial information in this annual review is based on the draft accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014. The full audited annual report and accounts will be considered for approval by the trustees on 18th September 2014, when copies will be available on the charity website: [www.thames21.org.uk](http://www.thames21.org.uk)



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# WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS

Aimia	Glaxo SmithKline	Morgan Stanley
Bank of Montreal	Goldman Sachs	Mr Roger De Freitas
Biffa Awards	Halfords Media	NBC Universal
Big Lottery Fund	Hammerson PLC	Northern Trust
Bloomberg	Harney and Sons	Outward
Chalkhill Community Trust	Hillingdon Community Trust	Port of London Authority
Charities Aid Foundation	Hilton in the Community	RBC Wealth Management
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Coca Cola	HSBC Water Grant	Royal Docks Trust
Corporation of London	Kent County Council	Telstra
Cory Environmental Trust	London Borough of Bexley	Thames River Capital
Credit Suisse Securities	London Borough of Bromley	Thames Water
Crown Estate	London Borough of Lewisham	Treasury Wine Estate
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