

Putting rivers at the heart of communities



Image © Jenna Foxton

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 army of volunteers enhance, protect and fight 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.



Image © Jenna Foxton

From the Chairman's statement

This year was a remarkable one for Londoners, for the country and for Thames21. The charity's work with rivers and communities contributed actively to the public events which unfolded, as well as to other far-reaching new initiatives piloted by Government on rivers around the country.

The Jubilee Pageant on the River Thames and the key role it played for communities in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations was a fitting reminder of the place of the River Thames both in the capital's history and in the hearts of Londoners. The London 2012 Olympic Games united the country in a truly inspiring way.

The trustees are pleased with progress made in a year in which Thames21 strengthened its voice and championship of urban rivers at a time of increased public interest and concern for the welfare of our waterways. We would like to give our heartfelt thanks for all the support – from the thousands of volunteers to our funders – which helped to achieve this success.

FRANCIS CARNWATH CBE

Chairman, Thames21



Francis Carnwath CBE
Chairman



Debbie Leach
Chief Executive

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Community action for London's rivers

Thames21 specialises in community-driven, localised waterway improvement projects which work to ensure people are at the heart of environmental improvements. Activities aim to be long-lasting and sustainable, encouraging community ownership and stewardship of their rivers, canals and ponds.

This year:



**Thames21 held 748 volunteering and waterway engagement activities
12,648 participants made these activities successful**

Image © Jenna Foxton

**813 cubic metres of litter and rubbish were removed by Thames21 volunteers
from the River Thames and other rivers, canals and ponds across London.**



Image © Jenna Foxton

Working with the Port of London Authority

The Port of London Authority (PLA) works hard to remove the debris and litter which does not make it to the Thames foreshore in support of Thames21.

2012 was a very busy year on the Thames – with the Olympic games taking place in London and the Queen's

Diamond Jubilee celebrations. During the course of the year, PLA specialist craft cleared away about 225 tonnes of debris the tidal river. Unwanted objects included small wrecked boats, trees, shopping trolleys, tyres, scooters, a fridge and a horse.

The PLA also helpfully supplies all Thames volunteer clean-ups with special very large foreshore 'litter bins' which are filled by our hardworking volunteers. These are then taken away by the PLA.

Partnerships for healthy catchments

This year, a new community-centred approach to river management was piloted in England by Defra in recognition of the many factors that affect water quality. The 'Catchment Based Approach' aims to integrate land and water management to balance environmental, economic and social demands to meet EU Water Framework Directive objectives. Thames21 was a key part of this pilot phase.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is European policy which sets objectives for fresh water and river health. WFD was spurred on by widespread public concern about water pollution and recognises the importance of community involvement.

A plan for the tidal Thames



YOUR TIDAL THAMES

Opinions from the tidal River Thames community were harnessed throughout the year in a partnership between Thames21 and Thames Estuary Partnership to help develop a working plan for the future. People's experience, concerns and wishes for the future of the river were sought in a range of ways to contribute directly to the final report submitted to Defra at the end of the year. 'Your Tidal Thames' continues to be developed alongside delivering practical improvements.



Image © Ziggy Folkmanis



'There is a passion to see further improvements in the access, habitat and usage of the Thames catchment among the members of the organisations to which I belong. It is through Thames21 and TEP that we have been able to make significant progress in these areas and it is key that we build on the work to date.'

Mike Sharp (left) sea angler and boat owner

Thames21 hosted the Maidenhead to Sunbury catchment plan on the non-tidal Thames, which continues to be developed. The charity also hosted the Roding, Beam and Ingrebourne river catchment plans in East London and was a leading member of the Lower Lee Catchment Plan steering group hosted by the Environment Agency.

Thames21 was also a key contributor to the River Cray, River Ravensbourne and Beverly Brook Catchment Improvement Groups.



Image © Richard Crimp



The Big Waterways Clean Up 2012 attracted a massive 4,667 volunteers to help prepare the waterways ready for and as a legacy of the London 2012 Games. This saw clean-up events delivered from the water by canoe, invasive Himalayan balsam removed and wildflower meadows created, as well as a wealth of educational activities and events. In June the project was runner-up in the volunteer category of the national Waterways Renaissance Awards 2013

BWCU2012 was a partnership campaign delivered by Thames21 under the aegis of the London Waterways Commission, with the support of Environment Agency, British Waterways (Now the Canal and River Trust), London 2012 Changing Places programme, Greater London Authority, London Legacy Development Corporation, Port of London Authority, Inland Waterways Association, The Coca Cola Foundation, London Councils and City of London Corporation.



Image © The Blue Mile



Empowering independent community action

Thames21's Training Programme to empower and equip people to improve their local waterways was established as a popular and successful course for community action with support from the City Bridge Trust. The two day-long course: 'Leading a Waterway Clean Up' was created to train volunteers in all they need to know to plan and run their own safe and effective waterway clean-up. This course is supported by a workbook and national NCFE accreditation. It combines classroom sessions with practical activities. The interest in the scheme steadily increased in the year; 150 people were trained by Thames21 during the year through the scheme and 32 courses delivered.

Extra modules have also been devised that include introductions to Water Quality Testing, Surveying Invasive Non-Native Species, and Reedbed Restoration.



Image © Jenna Foxton



Image © Jenna Foxton

A trainee's perspective

"I first got involved with Thames21 because I used to be a rowing cox and I really enjoy being outside and close to nature. It's my little way of looking after the river even though I don't cox anymore. The training programme gave me the opportunity to make the most of my skills and desire to improve my local environment, and has been a great way to meet people with similar interests." Chris Bridge (below) Thames21 trainee



Image © Ben Williams

Where we work



Working to inspire the next generation to care for Brent's waterways, with support from London Borough of Brent.



Salmons Brook Healthy River Challenge:
Combating pollution using natural systems (p 9)



Love the Lea, campaigning to save East London's rivers (p 10)

London-wide projects

- Educating young Londoners for a sustainable future (p 11)
- Thames21 training for community action (p 4)
- Increasing access to responsible angling (p 10)



Working with Hillingdon residents to encourage use and enjoyment of the borough's waterways with support from the Hillingdon Community Trust



Waterways and Wellbeing, working with the Big Lottery Fund to make volunteering open to all for environmental and social benefit



Inspiring community action in the Olympic year, Big Waterways Clean Up 2012 (p 3)



River Rescue; working with Thames Water to restore hidden gems in built-up and often disadvantaged East London



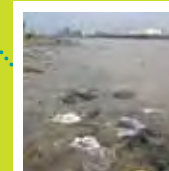
Hosting the Roding, Beam and Ingrebourne catchment (p 2)



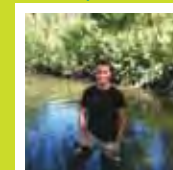
Creating a plan for the tidal Thames (p 2)



Working with London Borough of Bexley and Cory Environmental Trust to improve the River Shuttle and River Cray



Tackling London's litter legacy; site of the annual Deep Clean and corporate challenges (p 11)



Working with the Big Lottery Fund to put South East London's rivers at the centre of the community

Reaching rivers outside the capital



We are working with the Royal Bank of Canada's Blue Water project and the Environment Agency to improve the non-tidal stretches of the Thames upstream from Teddington Lock with: habitat restoration and creation, nature discovery days, invasive species control and litter removal. We work in collaboration with local groups including: Surrey Wildlife Trust, Weybridge Society, Thames Angling Conservancy and the River Thames Society.

Map used with permission from the River Restoration Centre

Improving waterways for wildlife



Greening urban river walls

Life was breathed into the hard flood defence walls of the River Thames, with experimental 'green wall' units installed at six places along the tideway. The green walls aim to support native plant growth on the hostile concrete walls of the river in central London, in work to boost biodiversity and naturalise the river wall environment. The growth is being monitored by Kings College London and is made possible with funding from the Crown Estate.

A similar approach was taken on East London's River Lea, with vegetated panels installed along the concrete walls of the tidal river near Bromley-by-Bow, with Environment Agency funding. 30 metal mesh 'waffles' were built by volunteers in the winter, and by late spring the panels had survived the tides and the plants were starting to flourish.



Volunteer Molly Gadenz braves the cold to prepare meshed panels with seedlings to help 'green the Lea'

Project Reedbed

Efforts to preserve the threatened Cody Dock Reedbed in East London revealed the pressure this precious river habitat was under. A comprehensive survey along the length of the Lea from the M25 south to Bow Locks mapped the condition of existing reedbeds and potential for habitat creation, supported by the Environment

Agency. Reedbeds are essential for the health of a river as part of the natural ecosystem and also help to remove pollution from a water body. Thames21 plans to incrementally establish reed beds at appropriate new locations along the Lea to help reduce pollution, boost biodiversity and provide refuge for fish and wildlife.



Restoring the River Pool

Sections of the River Pool in South East London have been transformed through weekly volunteer restoration sessions to improve the water flow and boost vegetation for fish and other wildlife, thanks to support from the Environment Agency.

A volunteer's perspective

'At my first visit I met some lovely people - there was a great team environment and I've been coming every week since.

I think it's really important in urban areas to maintain a connectivity between people and the environment. Growing up in London, everyone knows the River Thames, but then there are all the tributaries that people don't even realise are there, or how important they are as ecosystems. They are also areas where people can go and relax and enjoy the wildlife.'

Phil Taylor (right) regular volunteer on the River Pool enhancement project



Removing the green that shouldn't be seen

Unfortunately, urban rivers provide perfect conditions for some non-native invasive species which can cause significant problems for native wildlife, homes and people. Thames21 volunteers removed the pretty but prolific Himalayan balsam and the poisonous giant hogweed from 13.3km of riverbank in South London as part of the 3RiversCleanUp, while in the Lower Lea spreading patches of 55m³ of floating pennywort and 1800m² of Himalayan balsam were removed.

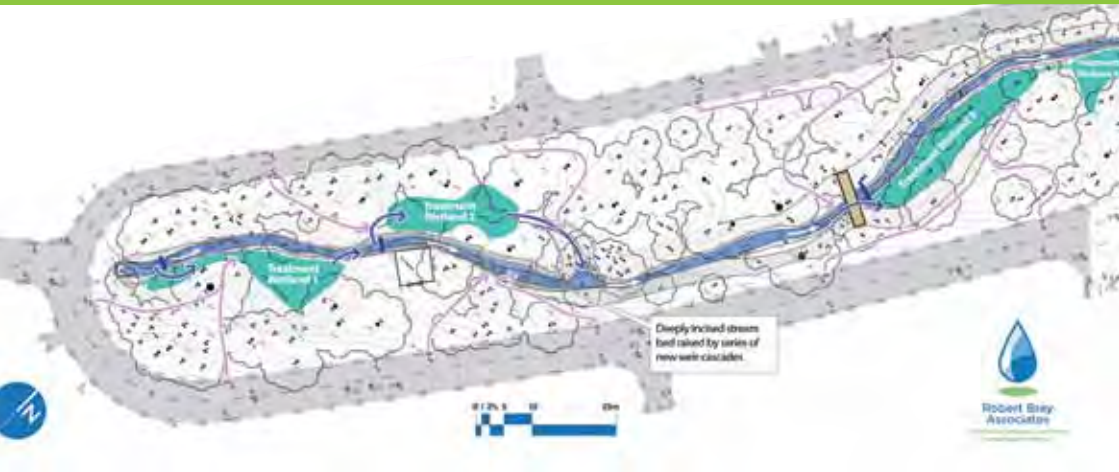


Image © Brian Aldrich

Salmons Brook Healthy River Challenge

Systems that mimic nature are being employed in Enfield to help clean up the polluted Salmon's Brook with funding from Defra. Thames21 worked with consultants and the local community to design six Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to clean the polluted river while improving the area for wildlife and amenity.

"This project will be a working example of how SuDS can easily be retrofitted in many locations in our towns and cities to benefit water quality. We hope it will raise public awareness of SuDS and move water pollution issues up the agenda within local authorities. Residents and the London Borough of Enfield are embracing the project and are proud to have this important scheme in their borough." Aimee Felus, Project Manager



Wetland areas are attractive and bring wildlife



A cleaner, clearer natural environment for all to enjoy



Yellow Flag Iris is a beautiful native wetland plant



New wetland areas will bring more biodiversity

Say what?

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) is a term to describe environmentally-sensitive water management techniques. SuDS can help collect and slow down the passage of precious rain water to reduce pressure on our storm drains and overflow to our rivers, and can also retain and clean polluted water. The vast areas of hard paving in London mean rainwater is forced straight into rivers and our over-capacity drainage systems rather than soaking into the ground naturally, increasing pollution and reducing ground water retention.

Love the Lea - campaign to save East London's rivers



Thames21 worked to identify, measure and highlight specific pollution problems in the River Lea and its tributaries to help drive practical solutions. The Love the Lea campaign continued water quality testing with University College London. Pollution levels in the River Lea south of Tottenham Locks remained high for both phosphates and e-coli throughout the year.

A new network of 40 'Citizen Scientists', from Enfield to the lower end of the Lea at Bromley-by-Bow, worked to increase the reporting of water pollution incidents and spread information about the health of the river network. Although still in its early stages, the results revealed that rivers in East London are constantly being polluted, preventing gains in river health. It is hoped that a strong data set of the health of the rivers will help us understand the scale of the problem and lead to clear action by local authorities and policy makers.

A volunteer's perspective

Sue Younger and Don Arthur test the water quality of the two lakes in Broomfield Park every two weeks. The pair report pollution incidents, monitor the build-up of rubbish and help educate park users about the problems the lakes face.

"In the end we hope to have more attractive and healthier lakes which will be of benefit to all users of the park.

I joined the Love the Lea campaign and became a water quality tester because I was concerned about pollution levels in the lakes in my local park. I have lived in the area for over 30 years and remember when there were fish in the lakes and swimming was a regular occurrence. Now we rarely see any signs of fish or amphibians and are more likely to see detritus such as beer cans, plastic bottles and mouldy bread in the lakes." Sue Younger [right] volunteer water quality tester



Developing angling in the capital



Angling was given a welcome boost in the capital this year through a new partnership project with the Environment Agency, Sport England and the Angling Trust. The Angling Development Officer post, hosted by Thames21 allowed anglers and anyone interested in the sport to directly shape its future. The programme developed the new 'London Angling Action Group' in a pan-London strategy to create new and develop angling clubs and fisheries in the capital for social and environmental stewardship.

Corporate social responsibility for our rivers

Thames21 continued to engage with a growing number of corporate clients to help provide vital funds for community projects, while working to foster environmental and social responsibility among London companies. Companies lent their staff, who worked hard at 53 practical events over the year from river clean-ups by canoe to non-native species removal and habitat improvement days.

“Thames21 provided a unique volunteering opportunity for our team to contribute to the community, get to know partners that we haven’t worked with previously and also to have some fun. The organisation on the day was excellent, with Thames21 taking care of all equipment and ensuring a well-coordinated and safe event for all. It is certainly an organisation that we would work with again.” Robert Heppell, Senior Vice President, Northern Trust Global Investments



Image © Ford Dagenham



Image © Kent Photonews Derek Hope

Thames21 inspires and engages children and young people in their natural environment through practical education sessions. We worked with 4,310 children through schools and family days over three years to July 2012 to encourage understanding and appreciation of our waterways, kindly supported by Old Mutual. Sustainable links with schools ensure that pupils and local rivers can continue to benefit from the project into the years to come. Thames21’s education engagement work will continue into 2013-2014 through funding from The Disney Company.

A pupil's perspective

“Mayesbrook Park is so full of nature and living things, which is something I never realised. In our groups we found a stickleback fish, a water scorpion and lots of small creatures. We really enjoyed making rafts out of natural things we found in the park and then we sailed them on the brook. I would recommend the pond dipping and I am most definitely planning to make more trips here with my family to show them what I learnt. Thank you Thames21 for the opportunity.”

Yasmin Roel Perez (right) Year 5 Manor Junior School, Barking

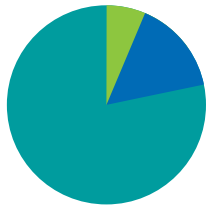


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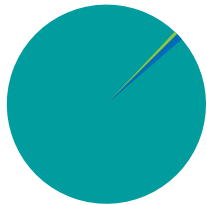
Our income and where we spent it

Income £1,672,568



Gifts in Kind	£107K
Donations	£255K
Grants restricted	£1,310K
Total	£1,672K

Spending £1,666,006



Governance	£9k
Generating voluntary income	£19k
Charitable Activities	£1,638k
Total	£1,666K

The financial information in this annual review is based on the draft accounts for the year ended 31st March 2013. The full audited annual report and accounts will be considered for approval by the trustees on 19th September 2013, when copies will be available on the charity website: www.thames21.org.uk

With special thanks to our funders

Angling Development Trust

Big Lottery Fund

Bloomberg

Canal and River Trust

The Challenge

City Bridge Trust

City of London Corporation

Coca Cola

Credit Suisse Securities Ltd

The Crown Estate

Cory Environmental Trust

Defra

The Disney Company Ltd

Donald Forrester Trust

DP World

Eco Minds

Environment Agency

Faraday Property Mgmt

Food and Env Research Agency

GlaxoSmithKline

Golden Bottle Trust

Goldman Sachs International

Hands on London

Hammerson (Brent Cross) LTD

Hammerson PLC

Harney Teas

Heathrow Community Awards

Hillingdon Community Trust

HSBC Bank Plc

Hypernaked

John Lyon's Charity

JP Morgan

LB Bexley

LB Brent

LB Southwark

LB Wandsworth

Marks and Spencer PLC

Morgan Stanley

Northern Trust

Old Mutual

Port of London Authority

Rackspace

RBC Wealth Management

RBC Blue Water Project

Royal Docks Trust

Thames Water Utilities

Toyota

Treasury Wine Estates

Waterway Trust

Trustees:

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Michael Hamilton
Celia Hensman MBE

Richard McIlwain
(appointed March 2013)
Louise Moore
Richard Rutter
Clare Sandels
Anne Wadsworth
Matthew Watts (resigned March 2013)

Company Secretary Tony Denton

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