



PRESS RELEASE

Thames21 to end lease at Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre

Date of release: Wednesday 26th May

Announcement from Thames21

Thames21, London's leading waterways charity, is sad to announce that it will give up its lease at the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre in Brent when it ends in July.

Since taking on the 5.5 hectare site in Brent in 2016, the charity has delivered curriculum-linked environmental sessions for thousands of school pupils, mostly in Early Years to Key Stage 2 year groups. In a typical year, 3,500 visitors took part in learning sessions, which were either organised school sessions or similar ones for families, held in school holidays.

Thames21's statement reads:

"With huge regret the Trustees of Thames21 have reached the conclusion that the charity can no longer afford to absorb the annual financial loss of delivering activities at the Education Centre. Despite best endeavours, we have been unable to identify the additional funding support that is required to ensure that the Centre pays for itself. As a result, we are forced to give up our lease when it ends in July 2021.

Thames21 is extremely sad to be in this position. The Centre is a much-loved local facility, and it has introduced many local children to their natural environment for the first time. The benefits to health and well-being of activities in outdoor green space are well documented, and it has been such a privilege to serve the community in Brent. The Education Centre has maintained a thriving programme of activities for around three thousand children a year at the Centre.

Volunteering groups from the local community have supported the running of the Centre helping with gardening, site maintenance and supporting the education sessions. We have also managed to raise some funds to start improving and developing the Centre site, including refurbishing the popular nature pond and building a new raised pond that is accessible for wheelchair users, improving the pathways and installing a gate to the adjacent Welsh Harp Open Space. However, the issue of annual general running costs has remained a challenge that we have not been able to address successfully, and so we have arrived at this point.

We would like to thank the volunteers, Brent Council and the many children and young people who have come to the Centre over the years that Thames21 has been running activities."



The staff member who delivered the educational programme for Thames21 will be diverted to other projects within its educational portfolio across London.

Notes for editors

About Thames21

Thames21 connects people with rivers by putting healthy rivers back at the heart of everyday life. We improve and restore rivers, educate and empower the community and campaign for positive change for the good of people and the environment.

www.thames21.org.uk | Registered Charity No. 1103997

How many sessions per year did Thames21 deliver at WHEEC?

The 2018-19 year (pre-Covid) was a typical one for the charity's education programme at WHEEC. During this period, Thames21 delivered 69 learning sessions to 41 different schools that involved 2,790 pupils and 659 accompanying adults. Family learning and fun activities, outside school times, during the school holidays involved a further 93 children and 48 adults. The centre was hired for private parties 16 times.

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Notes for T21 comms

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