



SUMMARY

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The Thames Through London

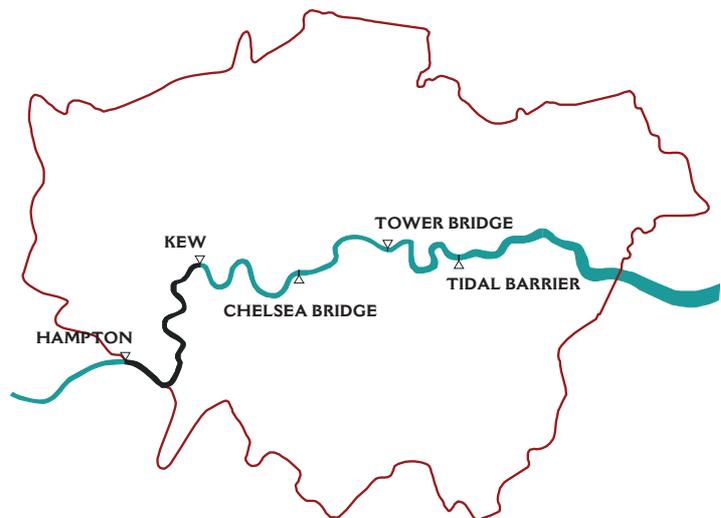
The Thames embodies both London's ancestry and its capacity for renewal and evolution. The river lies at the physical and spiritual centre of the capital, inspiring a special sense of identity in Londoners. The Thames flows through a metropolis of distinct towns and villages and unites them with a powerful natural force, linking London to the centre of England and the sea.

The river changes character through London. From the estuary in the east, the marshes and industrial areas give way to docklands upstream of the Tidal Barrier. Between Tower and Chelsea Bridges, the centre of the city is denser but turns greener and more residential towards Kew. Between Kew and Hampton the Thames meanders through a unique landscape of parks, royal palaces and working communities. Centuries of settlement have left a legacy of architecture, public access and nature conservation value unparalleled in the rest of the capital.

2012 Update: Upstream of Hampton towards the River Wey and the site of Oatlands Palace, the Thames meanders through a narrow river corridor characterised by the historic suburban commuter towns of Walton and Weybridge, separated by vast water treatment works, remnant meadows, leafy towpath walks and plotland housing.



Old Father Thames - the spirit of the river



The Thames through London, gradually changing its character from the estuary inland

The Evolution of the Strategy

The Thames Landscape Strategy set out to understand the river landscape and to respect its character - both natural and man-made. The 1994 Thames Landscape Strategy (Hampton to Kew) report drew together for the first time the history, topography, culture, politics and wildlife of this remarkable stretch of the river to form the basis for future policy and design.

Initially the Strategy developed from ideas about the network of vistas along and across the river, drawn up by Kim Wilkie Environmental Design for the Royal Fine Art Commission *Thames Connections* exhibition

in 1991. Stimulated by the interest of local groups and by a growing awareness of the need for integrated policies for the Thames, the project gradually evolved to cover an analysis of the character of the river landscape between Hampton and Kew as part of a vision for the river over the next century.

2012 Update: The Strategy's pioneering approach to integrated landscape planning was quickly recognised as a ground-breaking initiative winning many national and international awards. In 1997 it inspired the formation of the Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea and in 2004 the Thames Strategy East. In 2011, the scope of the Thames Landscape Strategy was extended upstream from Hampton to Weybridge.

The Strategy Partnership

The Strategy was commissioned and guided by the Thames Landscape Steering Group, composed of representatives from principal environmental agencies and the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond, the Royal Borough of Kingston and the Borough of Elmbridge. The 1994 Strategy was jointly funded by the Countryside Commission, English Heritage and the Royal Fine Art Commission Trust, with contributions towards the preparation of the final report by English Nature, the National Rivers Authority and private benefactors.

2012 Update: Since inception, the partnership of funding bodies has grown considerably, based largely on an enviable track record of success and achievement. In 2012 the funding bodies include: the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond, the Royal Borough of Kingston and the Borough of Elmbridge, Surrey County Council, the Royal Parks, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Natural England, The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Historic Royal Palaces, Port of London Authority, National Trust, The Crown Estate and Kingston University.



Consultation and community participation has been key to the success of the TLS



The TLS Members' Review group, Officers' Steering Group and Community Advisory Group on a fact-finding visit to Hurst Park

The Community

The local community has also played an important part in advocating, directing and supporting the Strategy. Extensive discussions with local authorities, national and local interest groups and private landowners and tenants guided the project in its early years, culminating in the recommendations presented for consultation to local authority committees in February 1994. The final Strategy report of June 1994 incorporates the consultation comments and amendments. The Strategy, besides being a technical document incorporated in planning legislation, was also intended as a detailed handbook to help local people appreciate and protect their river.

2012 Update: The role of the community in supporting and shaping the TLS's strategic vision and in the implementation of projects on the ground has remained at the heart of the organisation. The Community Advisory Group has grown to embrace a wide range of interests whilst a wider Friends Group has many

thousands of members. The Strategy has provided the catalyst for community action through project work and volunteering has been particularly successful, culminating in a special award from London in Bloom in 2012 for community engagement. Between 2000 and 2011 just over 280,000 volunteer hours have been managed by the TLS across the four boroughs.



The TLS attends many summer fairs and riverside events such as the Kingston River Festival



Representatives from the local community and project funders at the opening a new boardwalk installed by the TLS

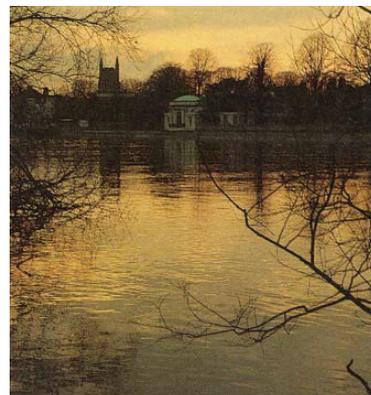
The Landscape as a Whole

The character of the landscape has evolved from its geology and history of settlement. The river flows north in tight bends around the mass of Richmond Hill, creating a sequence of intimate reaches. The towns and villages along the river banks retain distinct identities, each with its particular history, economy and architectural character, separated by rural open spaces.

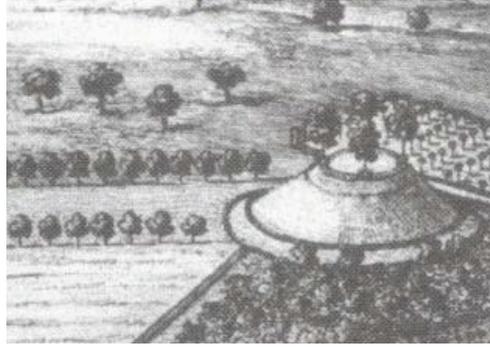
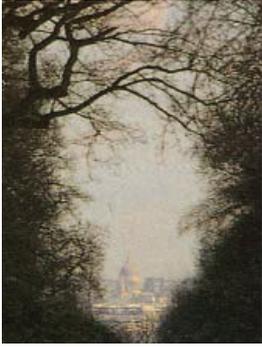
Many of these open spaces are the legacy of royal ownership. The sequence of palaces and villas established a landscape structure of riverside parks and gardens, ranging from Hampton Court Park to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. This stretch of the Thames was also the particular focus for royal and aristocratic patronage during the 17th and 18th centuries, becoming the cradle of the English Landscape Movement. The landscape is connected by an elaborate network of avenues and vistas and the river valley has become a symbol of idealised English scenery, still inspiring artists, musicians and writers. Interwoven with the royal landscape is a constantly evolving working landscape of boatyards, wharves and commercial frontages. This dynamism and activity brings the landscape alive and the details of the domestic architecture and boathouses contribute an essential element to the overall character of the river landscape.



The view from Richmond Hill which helped to inspire the English Landscape Movement



Isleworth, one of the series of distinct waterfronts along the river



Important historic vistas still survive, such as the ten mile view of St Paul's Cathedral from King Henry VIII's Mound in Richmond Park

The river provides employment and recreation opportunities

A Linear Park for People and Wildlife

Not only is the Thames the focus of the capital, it is a corridor for transport, people and wildlife; a linear park through the city. Between Hampton and Kew there is more open space than in any other part of London. The towpaths act as a link between the parks and towns, and the water itself is popular for many kinds of recreation. The Strategy explores the great potential which this stretch of the river has as a recreation and tourism resource for the capital as a whole.

2012 Update: The Thames Landscape Strategy has led the revival of interest in the river corridor between Hampton and Kew and its subsequent renaissance. In 2004 Kew Gardens was granted World Heritage Site status and in 2012 the London Plan recognised the Arcadian Thames as one of London's great cultural quarters.

The linked areas of public open space also provide a valuable range of habitats for nature conservation, allowing wildlife and human beings to live beside one another in the city. The Strategy addresses the traditional management practices essential to maintaining the balance of urban life and biodiversity.

2012 Update: An annual Towpath Management Plan is produced by the Strategy that guides work along the riverside. Much of this is achieved through volunteer action. A greater awareness of flood risk and the measures needed to take account of flood risk has helped to shape more recent project work, much of which is set out in subsequent chapters.



Clouds of purple hairstreak butterflies can be seen by the towpath at Kew



Great crested grebes breed in large numbers on the river



An arcadia in the city: wildlife and people

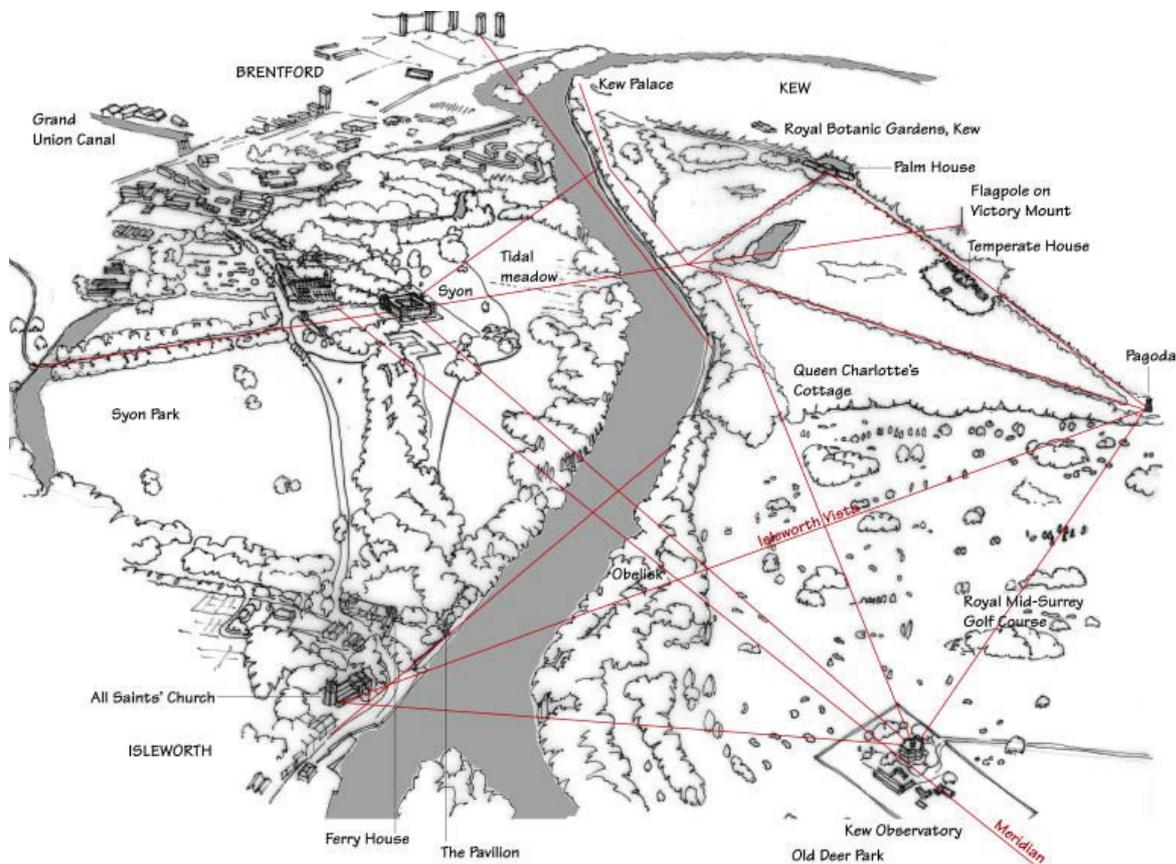
The Strategy into Action

The Strategy takes a long view of the landscape, looking forward over the next 100 years and operating at two levels. At a sub-regional level, it analyses the structure of the landscape, looking at its significance for nature conservation, recreation and tourism and proposing strategic policies for conservation and enhancement. At a detailed level, it then explores the character of the local landscape, relating it to strategic issues and proposing specific recommendations, projects and management practices which will have a direct impact on the ground.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS propose a co-ordinating partnership, crossing administrative boundaries, with particular recommendations that:

- *The Thames Landscape Strategy be adopted by **national and local authorities** as the policy framework for their ownership and management of land in the area, and be incorporated into strategic plans and policies*
- *Other **public and private landowners** and tenants adopt the policies and proposals to guide the management and development of their land*
- *The **local community** be involved as closely as possible in the communication, identification, implementation and continuing review of policies, projects and management of the riverside landscape*

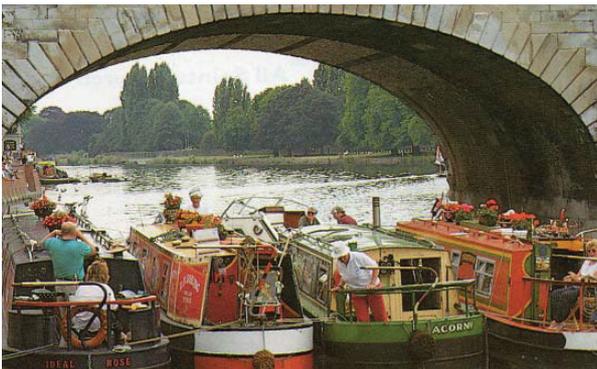
LOCAL POLICIES AND PROJECTS are based on more detailed analysis of the river in twelve consecutive landscape character reaches. Some projects for example, deal with the re-instatement of the historic landscape, some with the management of nature conservation areas and some with new initiatives for recreation, tourism and future development.



An example of the 12 landscape character reaches, showing project proposals and vista lines

Update: To guide adopted policies and projects, the following structure was established:

- **Sir David Attenborough** agreed to be **TLS Patron** in 1994 and has remained a committed supporter ever since
- A three year **Memorandum of Agreement** is signed by the formal funding partners
- An annual **Action Plan** is written and agreed by the funding partners that sets out the goals, aspirations and projects for the year. This is supported by a wide range of individual **Project Briefs** that are collectively referred to as **The Thames Landscape in Action**. The action plan and project briefs are agreed by the partnership and form the main way that achievements are monitored
- An **Officers' Steering Committee and Members' Review Group** meets quarterly, combining the relevant statutory agencies and the four boroughs
- A **Project Officer** was appointed, assisted by a **Project Development Officer**. Funding has also been available for a **Project Implementation Officer**
- A **Community Advisory Group** was established as a formal channel of communication with the wider public



Tourists enjoying the Thames at Kingston



Young volunteers from the German School in Ham help to clear Himalayan balsam



TLS Project Officer helping out on an educational day to the river



TLS patron Sir David Attenborough opening the restored terrace at Richmond Hill - with the help of some local residents

FUNDING: 2012 Update: The TLS has been particularly successful in securing a wide range of external funding to implement works on the ground that would not necessarily have been available to the formal partners. This record of achievement has been an important consideration in the high level of both community and statutory support that the TLS enjoys. It is estimated that the Thames Landscape Strategy has been the catalyst in securing £15,000,000 of external funding from a wide range of trusts, Landfill Tax Credit Schemes and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Of particular note was the London's Arcadia scheme to restore the view from Richmond Hill.

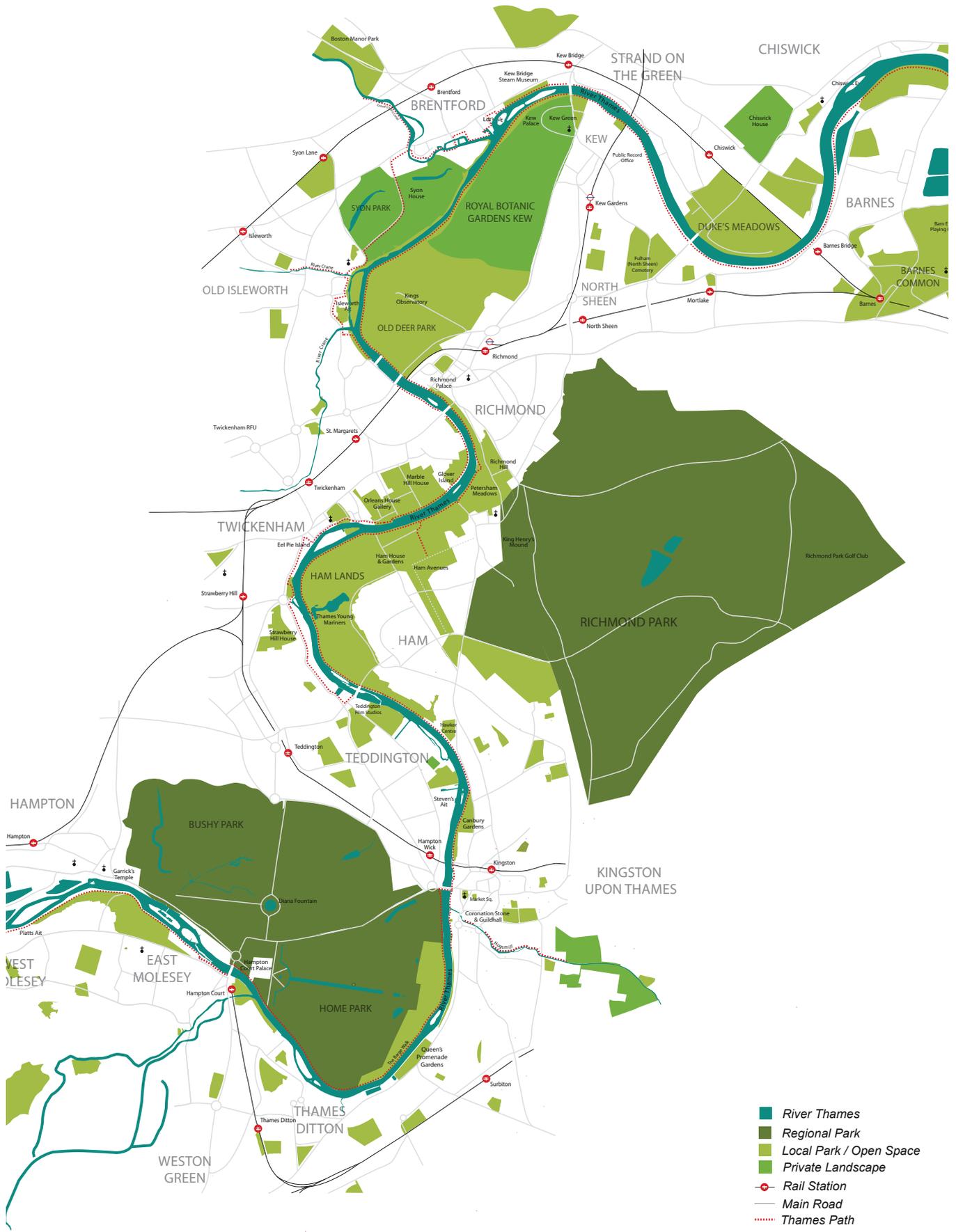
An independent charity, the Father Thames Trust chaired by Lord Watson of Richmond, was established in 1995 to support the Thames Landscape Strategy and has provided much support over the years.

COMMUNICATING the significance of the river corridor and consulting on and explaining projects was recognised as critical to the agreement and involvement of the people who live and work in the landscape. In addition to the Community Advisory Group and the Project Officer, it was recommended that:

- People are kept informed through a **broadsheet**, newsletters and the media
- Local **schools** be involved in the practical implementation of projects and that the Strategy be used as an educational resource
- A joint **marketing and tourism** strategy be promoted between the riverside attractions

2012 Update: The TLS established an Education and Outreach Programme in partnership with Orleans House Gallery. A Travel Plan Network was set up in 2010.





- River Thames
- Regional Park
- Local Park / Open Space
- Private Landscape
- Rail Station
- Main Road
- ⋯ Thames Path



