

Flotsam and Jetsam Busters!



The Setting

One of the defining characteristics of the upper Tideway are the low lying towpaths, parks and gardens – many of which are undefended from the high tides. Whilst this helps greatly in creating the Arcadian landscape we cherish and allows people, wildlife and the river to get close to each other it does have a significant impact on the amount of riverbourne litter that is deposited. On the high tides long reaches of low-lying towpath are inundated with water. As the water flows back to the sea significant amounts of flotsam and jetsam is left – mainly plastic. The Thames Landscape Strategy has been working with riparian communities and local councils for 20 years to reduce this being awarded a special commendation in the National Waterway Awards. Much more still needs to be done however.

The Challenge – Smart Litter Picking!

The TLS Towpath Management Plan identifies the known ‘grotspots’ along the riverside. These are those low-lying places where it is known flotsam and jetsam will be left when the tide ebbs out. Not all low-lying areas are included – many more factors come into play including vegetation, the time of year and whether the spot is on the inside or outside of a bend in the river. The Plan also sets out the days of the year that we expect riverbourne litter to be deposited. In this way local people and groups can plan their litter picking activities well in advance and local council contractors can be warned to pick up additional bin bags following volunteer collections. Some of the worst grotspots include: Mortlake, Brentford draw dock, Brentford Riverside, the Kew towpath, Isleworth Drawdock, Richmond Riverside, Cholmondely Walk, Richmond Promenade, The Old Deer Park, Petersham Meadows Towpath, Petersham Towpath, Twickenham Riverside and drawdock, Teddington drawdock and Canbury Gardens.

The Opportunity

Through the Towpath Management Plan, the TLS is proposing to formalise its volunteer litter picking activities working with existing and new volunteer groups. Local initiatives such as the Two Minute litter Pick in Richmond will also be included to target volunteer activity when it is most needed. The goal is to have each and every grotspot adopted by a local group by the end of 2019. This may be through an existing partnership agreement, a local business, a school or maybe a set of friends or a family group. Training and tools can be provided (there may be some restrictions on particular groups). If you would like to get involved please contact the Thames Landscape Strategy.