

Adopt the Petersham Towpath (including its backwaters)

Adopted by Ham & Petersham Sea Scouts



The Setting

The towpath between Petersham Meadows at Richmond and Ham Street Car Park is one of the last 'rural' stretches in London characterised by Arcadian views, leafy walks, wild flowers and magical glimpses across the river. The adjacent Petersham Backwaters are a fragile ecosystem with nationally important wet woodland habitat.

The Challenge

To maintain this precious and varied environment takes considerable work, much of which has been carried out by the Thames Landscape Strategy. Of particular importance is tree and scrub management. Until 1996, many stretches of the riverbank were covered in scrub with very few views to the water from the towpath. Large growing Dock plants and self-seeded sycamore trees would continue to prevent people's enjoyment of the river if left unmanaged. Litter and floating debris are also a recurring problem on this reach, often washed up on the low-lying towpaths by the high spring tides which inundate the riverbanks. Invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam, would continue to choke the backwaters if not kept under control.

The Opportunity

Volunteers can help to preserve the views of the river by replacing the unwanted species with wild flowers and by helping to manage the vegetation through regular maintenance. New habitats for birds and bats can be created and, in particular, an opportunity exists to manage the important nesting habitat for Sand Martins on Eel Pie Island. Regular litter picking is also required to maintain a healthy and safe environment for the aquatic birds, mammals and visitors to the area. This will be linked to the Flotsam and Jetsam Busting! Programme of activities. During the summer months, the non-native species along the riverbank and its backwaters also needs to be removed.

Sponsorship opportunities exist – please contact the TLS at the address below.