

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Co-ordinated Management of the Landscape

Explaining the Landscape

Mechanisms for Implementation

Funding the Strategy

The Rest of the River and the Future





## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

### CO-ORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF THE LANDSCAPE

It is important that this Strategy should not just sit on the shelf. The following recommendations are designed to carry proposals into actions. The aim is to set up mechanisms for implementation and channels of communication which will help inform those responsible for planning and managing the landscape over the next century as well as the people who directly use and enjoy the riverside.

**The Planning System** is the backbone for the Strategy. The landscape relies on firm planning and conservation policies to maintain the resources we have inherited and to guide future development. Many of the Strategy recommendations already form part of local authority Unitary Development/Local Plans or are included in national agency guidelines. It is nevertheless useful to set policies and projects for the river corridor as a whole, grouped together in one co-ordinated document.

***It is therefore recommended that the Thames Landscape Strategy be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance and conservation area policy by the four local authorities and the London Planning Advisory Committee and gradually incorporated into Local and Unitary Development Plans as they are reviewed.***

**The Landowners** along the edge of the river will bear the main responsibility for implementing the Strategy. Much of the land is owned by the local authorities and statutory agencies. The project and management proposals set out in Chapter 3 are designed to inform existing programmes of work and link operations together across landownership boundaries. Private landowners and tenants are also responsible for significant sections of the riverside and the Strategy aims to explain how their land fits within the overall pattern, giving guidance on the part played in the wider landscape structure.

***It is therefore recommended that local authorities and statutory agencies formally adopt the Thames Landscape Strategy as the policy framework for their ownership and management of land in the area, and that they prepare an action plan to implement the project and management proposals. The policies and proposals in this Strategy are equally commended to private landowners and tenants to guide the management and development of their land.***

**The Community** will provide the ultimate sanction and momentum for the Thames Landscape Strategy. Local authorities will have consulted the public on the Strategy before adopting it as Supplementary Planning Guidance and continued regular liaison with local interest groups will be essential. Many of the projects outlined in Chapter 3 will most effectively be carried out through voluntary action by the community. Local groups, such as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the London Wildlife Trust, are already very active in the area and will be helpful in providing community co-ordination, local knowledge and practical assistance. Long-term maintenance of the river landscape will depend on the continued support and participation of the community.

***It is therefore recommended that the local community be involved as closely as possible in the communication, identification and implementation and continuing review of policies, projects and management of the riverside landscape. It is hoped that groups such as the BTCV and LWT will adopt the Strategy and seek actively to be involved in its implementation.***

## EXPLAINING THE LANDSCAPE

The Strategy relies on a flow of information to both receive an understanding of local landscape perceptions and to set proposals for the landscape in a context which makes sense. People need to know what is going on along the river and to feel that they have a voice in influencing projects.

**Local Publicity** will be an important first step in communicating the ideas of the Strategy and stimulating a continuing interest in the future of the riverside. Most of the local interest groups have already received information or presentations about the Strategy and many have helped to draw up policies through their comments. A broadsheet about the project will help to spread ideas to the wider public and the local press will play an important role in keeping people informed.

***It is therefore recommended that people are kept informed through an initial broadsheet, regular newsletters and the media.***

**The involvement of local schools** and education programmes would also be constructive. The Department of the Environment has already made a commitment to heritage education in the 1990 White Paper<sup>38</sup>, local authorities are keen to involve schools in nature conservation and environmental issues<sup>39</sup> and the Learning through Landscapes Trust has made great progress in setting patterns for environmental education. There may also be scope for including elements of the Strategy in the National Curriculum.

***It is therefore recommended that, where possible, local schools be involved in the practical implementation and management of projects of the Strategy and that the historical, cultural, ecological, geographical and design elements of the Thames Landscape be incorporated into the education curriculum.***

**Imaginative Interpretation** of the landscape will be key to communicating the ideas behind the Strategy. In addition to school education, there is scope for wider interpretation of the landscape for the public as a whole. Interpretation can take several forms. At its most direct, it involves better signing on the ground. Information boards about where you can go, what you can see and what is happening in projects in progress would do much to explain the landscape; though the riverside should not become littered with sign boards.

Both the Thames Path National Trail and the West London Waterway Walks Project show how the river has begun to work as a linear park through the capital, with a network of green walks radiating along tributaries and canals. Local authorities are already promoting green chains and river connections.<sup>40</sup> Way-marking, signs, guides and maps can contribute to this identity, linking local circuits into wider walks and connections.

Re-instating vistas and avenues will do much to reveal the patterns of the landscape just by re-establishing the visual links. A glimpse of a spire or villa across the river can give the clue to a whole story which can be more fully explained in guidebooks or illustrated maps. Not everything has to be spelt out on the ground itself. One needs to leave space for imagination and discovery.

That said, there are many subtle ways of stimulating curiosity and directing peoples' attention to interesting features. Common Ground and the Public Art Development Trust are working with the Countryside Commission on ideas for using sculpture to way-mark the Thames Path. The Thames Festival is also exploring possibilities for special events to bring people down to the river and to take advantage of the water, the open space and its cultural associations.

***It is therefore recommended that opportunities be pursued for interpreting the landscape through signing, way-marking, visual links, works of art and special events.***

**Joint marketing and tourism initiatives** will help to spread information about the river to the wider capital and visitors from outside the area. The promotion of a linear park would benefit tourists as well as local residents. Historically the Thames has been a focus for activity and communication in London. There is probably less activity on the river now than there has been for centuries. While the peaceful beauty and nature conservation value of the Thames must not be destroyed by over-use, there is nevertheless scope for more people to enjoy the river.

Many of the capital's tourist attractions lie side by side along the Thames, but because people usually come by road or rail, they often do not realise how close the places are to each other. Few tourists, for example, appreciate that Syon and Kew are only 60 metres apart on opposite sides of the river, or that Ham House and Marble Hill are connected by a ferry. There is great scope for joint marketing and planning of trips to more than one attraction, linked into better-organised car parking, river and public transport networks.

***It is therefore recommended that a joint marketing and tourism strategy be promoted between the riverside attractions, possibly linked by a mutual ticketing system and pleasure boat service, and co-ordinated with the rail and underground network and car parking.***

## MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The local authorities will be at the heart of the implementation of the Thames Landscape Strategy, both at policy and project levels.

Within the Strategy area, there is a cohesion of character and issues which could be dealt with at a sub-regional level. Richmond and Kingston already have special river forums which involve national agencies, but do not cross borough boundaries. Hounslow is consulting on a Waterside Strategy<sup>41</sup> and its Brentford Initiative is looking at developments along the Thames and Grand Union Canal. The Countryside Commission Stewardship Agreements are involving an increasing number of riverside open spaces and its Thames Path National Trail is furthering riverside access links. The West London Waterway Walks Project, the National Rivers Authority, the Department of Transport and the London Ecology Unit are also all working on studies which cover significant stretches of the river. Yet although there is overlap between these organisations and some co-ordination from LPAC and national agencies, there are still gaps in communication and duplications in initiatives.

LPAC's recent report on *London's Urban Environmental Quality* reported: 'The multiplicity of strategic policy and investment decisions that are constantly being taken by numerous public and private agencies, organisations and companies are generally taken in a strategic policy vacuum as far as London is concerned and without any particular London-wide perspective or dimension. There is no co-ordinating framework or agency for shaping and directing the different strategic policy strands and resources. Land-use planning and design policy are often regarded as merely regulatory and applicable at the Borough level or below. Despite the activities of SERPLAN in the region, and the advisory strategic planning role that LPAC in London has, the 32 London Boroughs and City Corporation are all preparing Unitary Development Plans separately, and without much of a common forward looking vision for London as a whole. While strategic advice from LPAC may be sound, visionary and influential to a greater or lesser extent with the Department of the Environment and the London Boroughs, it is insufficient to influence significantly policy and resource allocation of other Government Departments and agencies. Nor is the Secretary of State for the Environment's existing Strategic Planning Guidance for London.'<sup>42</sup>

Co-ordination is particularly needed where:

- strategic and local views cross borough boundaries and different landownerships;
- the character of either bank is controlled by separate boroughs and yet each bank has a direct effect on the identity of the reach as a whole;
- neighbouring designations differ in name or emphasis;
- development sites cover more than one administration;
- projects or grant aid mechanisms cross borough boundaries along the river.

Joint working arrangements would be assisted by setting up an Officers' Steering Committee, a Members' Review Group and a Community Advisory Group, served and co-ordinated by a Project Officer.

**An Officers' Steering Committee**, composed of officers from each of the sponsoring authorities, would take responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Strategy. Each borough would be represented by both a leisure and a planning officer and each agency by a senior regional officer:

Borough of Elmbridge	2	Countryside Commission	1
London Borough of Hounslow	2	English Heritage	1
London Borough of Richmond	2	English Nature	1
Royal Borough of Kingston	2	National Rivers Authority	1

The Committee would meet quarterly to guide the Project Officer and to give him/her access to the resources of the sponsors.

**A Members' Review Group** would offer strategic advice on direction and cement political support. The Group would be composed of borough members and officers, one of two representatives from the Community Advisory Group and representatives from the national agencies.

**Advisors** to the Officers' Steering Committee and the Members' Review Group may include representatives with particular expertise for the Strategy, such as Kim Wilkie, the Port of London Authority and the London Ecology Unit.

***It is therefore recommended that a Thames Landscape Officers' Steering Committee and a Members' Review Group, combining the relevant statutory agencies and the four boroughs in the Hampton to Kew stretch, should be convened.***

**A Community Advisory Group**, composed of representatives from of the local interest groups, landowners and business interests, would help to connect the Officers' Steering Committee and Project Officer to the local community. The Group could meet at least annually to raise matters of related interest and issues of concern and to receive a progress report from the Project Officer. The Community Advisory Group would provide one or two representatives to sit on the Members' Review Group.

The process of consultation and communication will be critical to the identification and acceptance of local environmental enhancement initiatives. Even small changes in the familiar local landscape can cause great alarm if the enhancements are not fully understood and discussed in advance. Community consultation will also be the key to contributions by the voluntary sector of manpower, financing, long-term maintenance and protection against vandalism. Since 1988, for example, the River Medway Project countryside management team<sup>43</sup> has managed to organise over 400 events with 8,000 volunteers from 20 different community groups. The meeting of local interest groups, convened in October 1993 to discuss the Thames Landscape Strategy, was well-attended and proved very constructive in helping to formulate the policies and projects set out in this report.

***It is therefore recommended that a Community Advisory Group be set up to act as a formal channel of communication with the wider public.***

**A Project Officer** is needed to co-ordinate the implementation of the Strategy, guided by the Officers' Steering Committee and Members' Review Group.

There are a number of Countryside Management Projects which could act as a model. These projects have been jointly run by local authorities and national agencies through the mechanism of a project officer. The project officer's main purpose would be to promote policies and action to achieve the implementation of the Strategy. Responsibilities would include:

- co-ordinating the annual programme of works for the river landscape, based on the projects identified in the Strategy

- securing sponsorship and funding to assist the implementation of the Strategy
- consulting with the local community and relevant interest groups
- promoting a programme of publicity and information to raise awareness of the Strategy and the river landscape as a whole

The Project Officer needs to be identified with the Thames Landscape Project, rather than any single group or authority, and thus become the link between the local community, the Thames Landscape Officers' Steering Committee and national and regional interests.

***It is therefore recommended that a Project Officer be appointed to co-ordinate the implementation of the Strategy.***

## FUNDING THE STRATEGY

There is often a fear that grand, strategic schemes cost too much money. How will it all be funded? Who will pay for it? But the majority of the proposals set out in this Strategy need not be very expensive. The emphasis has been placed on co-ordinating existing policies and budgets to work towards a common end and to simplifying management practices to be more cost-effective and sympathetic to conservation issues.

**Existing local authority budgets** already cover works along the river and would remain as the core of funding for local environmental management, particularly on borough land, but could be matched or supplemented by grant aid and voluntary and business sector sponsorship.

The Project Officer would also be partly funded by local authorities, though this need not be onerous. The costs could be split between each of the 8 organisations involved and the Countryside Commission, English Heritage and English Nature would jointly grant aid 50 per cent of the costs of the post for the first 3 years, with the likelihood that it would be extended for at least another 3 years. If these costs were estimated at £30,000 a year, the annual contribution from each of the remaining bodies should be in the region of £3,000.

In many cases it will be a question of targeting existing local authority resources to achieve the most effective results and supplementing projects with outside grant aid.

***It is therefore recommended that local authorities consult with the Thames Landscape Officers' Steering Committee on the allocation of resources and priorities for their environmental enhancement and land management programmes.***

**Grant aid** from the following sources might be considered:

- British Tourist Authority grants for initiatives to promote wider use of the area
- Countryside Commission grants for public access initiatives
- Countryside Commission Stewardship Schemes for the sensitive management of historic and riverside open space
- English Heritage grants for listed buildings, their settings and parks and gardens of special historic interest
- English Nature grants for the enhancement of habitats of special nature conservation interest;
- European Community grants for historic and cultural landscapes
- Local Charities and Parish Organisations for schemes of local public benefit (depending on the scope of their charters)

- Metropolitan Open Spaces Society grants for public parks
- National Rivers Authority grants for water-related amenity and recreation projects and help in kind/advice for water-related wildlife habitat creation and environmental projects
- Port of London Authority direct action and grants for the improvement of river access and tourism
- Public Art Development Trust grants for riverside art
- Sports Council grants for sports and recreation facilities.

***It is therefore recommended that the Thames Landscape Officers' Steering Committee investigate the full range of opportunities for grant aid and communicate the information to participating local authorities, interest groups and landowners.***

**Sponsorship** from the private sector could also supplement government funds. A number of businesses, industries and commercial centres front the Thames, deriving prestige and direct economic benefit from their position. The quality of the landscape affects property values and the attractiveness of the location for customers and employees alike. Direct sponsorship or support from the local chamber of commerce for specific local projects is available.

***It is therefore recommended that the Thames Landscape Officers' Steering Committee pursue discussions with local businesses and the chambers of commerce about sponsoring specific projects.***

**The voluntary sector** also offers possibilities. In addition to the large number of active local interest groups, private individuals are keen to contribute their time and money to the local environment and central government funding can be raised to match local contributions. Local '*indignation*' groups along this part of the river have a tradition of protecting the environment. The 1902 Act to preserve the view from Richmond Hill was one of the more notable successes of such groups.

Furthermore organisations such as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the Richmond and Twickenham Friends of the Earth already provide valuable support to Richmond and arrangements for additional help could be made with local schools and the Probation Service. These initiatives should be pursued and co-ordinated by the Project Officer.

***It is therefore recommended that the Thames Landscape Officers' Steering Committee take full advantage of the voluntary sector in organising and implementing its work.***

**Fund raising and holding** from outside contributors will need to be addressed by the Officers' Steering Committee and Project Officer. Funds could be held by one of the public bodies sitting on the Officers' Steering Committee, or by an existing related trust, or even by a new trust. There may well be local individuals who are keen to raise and contribute funds and become involved in the organisation of the Strategy.

***It is therefore recommended that the Thames Landscape Officers' Steering Committee explore arrangements for fund raising and holding which best suits its needs and situation.***

## THE REST OF THE RIVER AND THE FUTURE

Although this strategy has concentrated on the Thames Landscape between Hampton and Kew, the principles and approach could be applied along the river through the remainder of the capital.

**Extending the Strategy approach** downstream would link the Strategy to other initiatives being undertaken along the river. Wandsworth Borough Council<sup>44</sup> has produced guidelines for the Thames Riverside and Greenwich is employing a project officer to co-ordinate policies in the town. A series of cross-borough Thames Landscape Committees, reporting to a central strategic body for London, would help to co-ordinate policies and projects for the Thames.

*It is therefore recommended that the national sponsors of the Strategy consider the desirability and potential for extending the approach to other parts of the Thames, perhaps associated with their response to the Department of the Environment on the 'London - Making the best better' consultation<sup>45</sup>.*

**Regular updating of the Strategy** will be essential to keep the policies relevant and the landscape assessment current. The landscape is dynamic and society's priorities change. Much of this Strategy is an updating of the GLC *Thames-side Guidelines* of 1986. Between updates, interim information and policy notes could be circulated to the national and local authorities as particular issues arise.

*It is therefore recommended that the Thames Landscape Officers' Steering Committee should monitor and update the Strategy every 5 years to coincide with the review of UDP's.*