

## **THAMES VISION PUBLIC MEETINGS**

Three public meetings were held in May and June at Putney, Southbank and Orsett to hear the public's views about the future of the River Thames. A summary of these views is presented here.

## THAMES VISION PUBLIC MEETING, PUTNEY: MAY 2015

### Question 1: If the Vision is successful, how will the Thames look in 2025?

#### ***Residents***

- A river community.
- A community spirit for all boroughs and new build developments on the river.
- More events helping local communities.
- More large well attended events.

#### ***Freight / Commercial***

- A genuine cost-efficient transport system.
- Busier.
- Better freight management with less road disruption / cyclist deaths.

#### ***Environmental***

- Cleaner more environmentally-friendly.
- Better water quality.
- Better managed use of the river bed and river space to incorporate all users.

#### ***Recreational***

- Better leisure and short stay mooring facilities.
- More sailing, boating, recreational sports.

#### ***General Aspirations***

- A high profile river - people should “remember it’s there”.
- Child-friendly – youth activities well supported.

### Question 2: How can we help recreational and commercial users share the Thames?

#### ***Residents***

- Houseboats were not felt to fall into either recreational or commercial use and should be addressed separately by the PLA. The key issue for houseboats is wash, which was also an issue for a number of recreational users.

### ***Freight / Commercial***

- There was a strong desire for more visitor moorings along the Thames as this can help to reduce capacity and incidents by providing layby moorings so that recreational users don't have to travel such long distances along the Thames in a single voyage. It was further requested that these moorings should ideally provide access ashore.

### ***Recreational***

- The speed of vessels below Wappingness was sighted by a number of individuals as being difficult / dangerous for recreational users and there was particular concern about the wash being generated by these vessels.
- Enjoying the Thames from the footpath was considered recreational use by some and the PLA should be supporting the development of the Thames Path.
- There was a desire for all new riverside developments to provide riverside access opportunities, such as landing places, to improve access to the Thames. This was further supported by a number of kayakers who felt there were insufficient launching points and some of those available were in a poor state of repair.

### ***Navigational***

- Consideration should be given to 'No Go' areas in key parts of the Thames at peak times and these could either be mandatory or advisory. For instance should recreational users be permitted in Central London at peak times if it is close to capacity?
- Where possible, recreational and commercial users should be segregated into lanes or areas. This could be achieved via a marked or buoyed channel in some areas of the river.

### ***General Aspirations***

- All river users need to understand each others' constraints and problems, including wash, how much space they need to manoeuvre, crossing points (both commercial and recreational). The current Vulnerable River Users campaign tries to specifically address this problem.

- The PLA should be enforcing river etiquette such as low wash areas or excessive wash near vulnerable vessels.
- There was considerable debate on structures in the river and whether structures enhance or inhibit the river. The emphasis was firmly placed on new structures providing value to river users as opposed to structure restricting use of the river without providing river related benefits.
- Excess and unused moorings were considered a hazard to small craft and should be removed if not needed especially from key locations. Coin Street was specifically identified. It was further noted that moorings are a hindrance to capacity, but essential for growth. Areas need to be identified for moorings where they will have minimal impact on other river users.
- Those moorings that are in the river should be made more visible due to the dangers to small craft.
- Mooring costs on the river are very high and it was felt that this was partly due to the high cost of PLA charges.
- There was strong support for the PLA to provide an App, which summarised NTM giving details of bridge works, events etc. They would also like to see tide tables incorporated into an App.

**Question 3: Shall we give more attention to users of the Thames Path, access to the river and the wider Thames environment?**

***Residential***

- Roads / cars should be discouraged next to River.
- River users are too middle class. Steps should be taken to make river more diverse.
- Steps and stairs should be better protected and better maintained.

***Environmental***

- Air quality / emissions from marine diesel engines need to be tackled.
- Salmon numbers in river should be increased (e.g. by reducing temperature of water).
- In west London, trees growing directly out of revetment wall should be removed.
- There are too many trees growing out of the revetment / embankment. It makes the towpath dark and reduces views of the Thames 'vista'.
- Some trees / shrubs also raise trip hazards for path users.

- There should be improved heritage / local river history boards next to river. (This could also be tied in to an improved public art strategy).

### ***Recreational***

- River is well used by rowers west of the Capital, but less well by others.
- Perhaps other boat users see the Thames as having too many hazards?
- There are insufficient visitor moorings / piers for small recreational craft all along tidal Thames.

### ***Navigational***

- The issue of cycling on towpath needs to be considered carefully – risk of collision with walkers etc.
- Link the passenger ferry and bus timetables.

### ***General Aspirations***

- Thames Path users – there should be more information for them about pathway use.
- Thames Path – it should be made continuous all along the tidal Thames.
- Thames Path – measures should be taken to stop property developments encroaching onto the path.
- Thames Path – it should be wider and clearer.
- Slipways / dry-docks should be better maintained.

## THAMES VISION PUBLIC MEETING, ORSETT HALL: 21 MAY 2015

### Question 1: If the Vision is successful, how will the Thames look in 2025?

#### ***Residents***

- Get more back from property developers. Have marinas alongside new housing developments.

#### ***Freight / Commercial***

- Trucks to be taken off the road.
- Need more repair yards for craft that regularly use the river.
- Transport and freight – more containers/goods moved along the river from the major ports in to London. Similar to European ports. Fewer lorries on the road.
- Everybody understands what the river can do for them. Commercial and leisure. Promotion. Communication.
- Fast commercial services from Southend to London
- Sailor friendly port – further infrastructure i.e. bus stops along the river near ports.

#### ***Environmental***

- Vibrant with lots of life.
- Need safeguarded wharves.
- Be able to walk from Southwark to St Katherine's along the path.
- 17m draft along whole route.
- Clean, green, blue and busy.
- Better catchment – working with Environment Agency as to what flows into the river.
- Less restrictive Thames Barrier.
- Retain green spaces along the river. Don't automatically assume that the Port should use them if housing has been turned down.

#### ***Recreational***

- More leisure berths and facilities.
- Would like to see sailing competitions along the river and better dialogue with commercial users. Work closely with them so both can exist happily together.
- Leisure users to be able to use commercial piers.
- Balance commercial costs against leisure.
- Thames path along the length of the river. Make it easy to get to the river - currently lots of industry in the way.

## ***General Aspirations***

- Should be proud of the organisation. Therefore should be similar to other European ports i.e. recreational and commercial.
- A lot more cohesion between river users.
- PLA under private ownership - can generate more funds / revenue.
- More engagement with public /education.
- An outer multimodal crossing (Dover – M1).
- “Angel of the North” on the Thames. Statues/arts along the river to encourage more people to come down to the Thames.
- Link into the culture / forts / history of the Thames. More accessible. Don’t destroy it. Advertise.
- More bridges – make sure that the design works well for all river users and that they look good.
- Tourists want to see heritage and we don’t want to lose it. Tourists bring in a lot of money.

## **Question 2: How can we help the various recreational and commercial users of the Thames to share the water space safely?**

### ***Freight / Commercial***

- Joint meetings for commercial and recreational users and improved feedback to wider recreational community on outcomes of meetings.
- Use of simulator for recreational users to gain understanding of large ship perspective.

### ***Environmental***

- Consideration of the impacts of future dredging, such as beach erosion.
- Consideration of the impacts of increased river usage on marine life.

### ***Recreational***

- Mandatory qualifications, vessel registration and insurance for recreational users.
- What will the impact be on existing river users / local yacht clubs of the potential thousands of visitors to Swanscombe peninsular development?

### ***Navigational***

- Mandatory AIS for all vessels, including small recreational vessels.

- Separation in time between commercial and recreational vessels – e.g. no large commercial vessels transiting at peak leisure times.
- More real time traffic information provided to recreational users – by VTS or via website.
- Separation zones between commercial and recreational traffic.
- VTS more pro-active to ensure commercial vessels stick to planned routes and don't cut corners.

### ***General Aspirations***

- Harbour patrols at peak leisure times.
- Greater understanding of each others needs.
- PLA App which gives up to date traffic information.
- Better education for recreational users to ensure they understand local rules and regulations.
- Provide more information on incidents and accidents involving recreational craft.

### **Question 3: Shall we give more attention to: Thames Path users; river access; and the wider Thames environment?**

#### ***Residents***

- There should be more cafes / restaurants near River in Essex.
- There should be more houseboats.
- How do we balance continued Port use with growth of residential development near River?
- Could unused riverside land be used to build affordable housing?
- Thames Path needs to be protected from property development.
- Access to the water needs to be protected from property development.
- Slipways need to be better protected – e.g. from property developments.

#### ***Freight / Commercial***

- There should be more passenger boat services on the Thames calling at piers in the Kent and Essex area (i.e. like there are in London).
- The PLA should use its boats to carry passengers across River (e.g. at Gravesend / Tilbury).

- There should be more cross-river passenger services.
- Small scale maritime enterprises in Kent and Essex should be encouraged.
- Would a Thames Estuary airport affect river use?

### ***Environmental***

- There should be more importance given to protecting the river from noise and air pollution.
- How do we balance need for good flood defences with good river access?
- How do we balance continued port use with environmental issues?
- River needs more protection from rubbish / litter / fly tipping.
- There is too much sewage from houseboats.
- Marine diesel engines still emit too much sulphur / NOx / SOx etc. – marine sector needs to use cleaner fuels.
- There is a continued need for a good oil (pollution) emergency response service.
- Sediment accretion – needs to be better managed.
- There should be more windfarms .

### ***Recreational***

- The Thames Path in Essex should be made more accessible.
- Thames Path needs to be 'joined up' – made continuous all along River.
- The silting up of creeks is impeding recreational use / access to the Thames.

### ***Navigational***

- There is a need for good coordination between marine / environment regulators.

### ***General Aspirations***

- There is a need for more importance to be given to the whole issue of the Thames Path – there should be a 'Thames Path Masterplan'.
- Is the PLA willing to be the lead 'champion' / 'lobbyist' for the Thames Path? (eg by taking on property developers / local authorities).

## THAMES VISION PUBLIC MEETING, SOUTHBANK CENTRE: 2 JUNE 2015

### Question 1: How can we help the various recreational and commercial users of the Thames to share the water space safely?

Top three – **Communicate, Educate, Facilitate**, all centred again around the word – **community**

#### **Residential**

- Educate the local community about the Thames and its use, encourage recreation at all new residential builds but get commercial operators to support training at various facilities - a Thames Centre of Excellence.

#### **Freight / Commercial**

- Educate – engage with commercial operators to show them the effect of wash on other vessels, moorings and residential properties.
- People were supportive of the PLA in many areas but indicated PLA information sharing was slow and dated. They supported the sharing of information between recreational clubs and commercial operators and all agreed that facilities are not adequate for continued growth in recreational use or for commercial development.

#### **Recreational**

- Communicate with each other – commercial users to brief recreational clubs on the normal activity of their business and vice versa.
- Facilitate – arrange for more berthing opportunities so that recreational users do not have to share berths with commercial users, or where berths are shared they are done so in harmony.
- The main areas of concern are those of high wash and those unfamiliar with the river. People were surprised that you could buy a boat today and come on to the tideway with no training or understanding.

#### **Navigational**

- Educate – familiarisation trips for anyone new to the Thames.
- Educate other agencies including the RYA and MCA about the dangers of navigating on the tideway for the first time, encourage all users to report to London VTS.

- Facilitate new legislation to indicate which bridge arches are best navigated, with red crosses and green arrows, rather than an obscure Thames rule about three red lights.

**Question 2: How can we help the various recreational and commercial users of the Thames to share the water space safely?**

***Residential***

- Better use of the water through docks.

***Freight / Commercial***

- Speed – reduction and also hinder different Vessel's speed. Wash is impeding the use of smaller vessels.
- Time – commercial at night.

***Environmental***

- Utilising empty space.
- Cleanliness – sewage, Thames Tideway Tunnel, fish.
- Tide timing – recreational vs. commercial.

***Recreational***

- Access – entry signs.

***Navigation***

- Experience and knowledge – having a minimum standard to access the river.
- Space – new technology on vessels.
- Passage planning.
- Segregation of the river into lanes, zones or barriers.

***General Aspirations***

- Policing and rules – points on licenses as if the river was a road.
- Appreciation and education on safety, blind spots, visibility.
- Draw off / scout for hazards.
- Have a wider array of rules and control for different sections of the river.
- RNLI.

- Experience and knowledge – having a minimum standard to access the river.

**Question 3: If the Vision is a success what will the river Thames look like in the year 2025?**

***Residential***

- Optimised use of river space for residential moorings and safe visitor moorings.
- Greater development of residential and recreational land in the lower reaches.

***Freight / Commercial***

- Freight vessels of appropriate size to support needs of industry.
- Optimised use for sustainable economic survival.
- Optimising transport for existing commuters and to encourage more.
- Limited number of cruise ship terminals – preferably downstream of the barrier.
- Maintaining industrial usage – not losing it through residential development.

***Environmental***

- A clean river.
- Floating resources in estuary e.g. solar farms.
- Efficient 24/7 usage based on vessel movement “windows” (tide allowing) using technology to enable low environmental impact e.g. acoustic baffling.
- Ensure sustainable environmental development to accompany economic progress and environmental awareness by all users.
- Better awareness, monitoring, publishing of water quality – like bathing water quality.

***Recreational***

- More sailing events without fast craft like that provided by the Thames Barrier Annual Closure.
- Appropriate use of local authority planning agreements to ensure good quality riverside paths and infrastructure to support. e.g. public transport access, toilets.

### ***Navigation***

- No loss of navigable water space.
- Limited encroachment of navigable channel.
- Centres of excellence for marine skills training based on the Thames.

### ***General aspirations***

- Changed relationship with the river – ownership of the river by more than those who live immediately on it – the whole of London.
- “Blurred” boundaries that facilitate more leisure activities including riverside walkways.
- Development that doesn’t compromise existing riverscapes – mixed views on the Garden Bridge.

**Question 3: If the Vision is a success what will the river Thames look like in the year 2025?**

### ***Residential***

- A swimming pool for the summer like the one Boris was talking about.
- A proper plan will be in place that all river users can refer to, so they know exactly what the processes are to build on the river, to develop the riverside spaces etc.
- More residential moorings.
- Fewer derelict jetties and craft.
- More public jetties.
- A cycle path running the entire length of the Thames. It could take cyclists off London’s dangerous roads.

### ***Freight / Commercial***

- More cross-river ferries.
- Greater numbers of dry docks, boat servicing businesses up and down the river.
- No new airport hopefully.
- More distribution hubs, river freight is delivered to these hubs and the goods can then be taken on to businesses in London and beyond. Perhaps they could be delivered in electric vehicles.

- A more realistic view of how much freight the river can accommodate in 2025.

### ***Environmental***

- Cleaner water forever.
- Less sewage/no sewage at all!
- More kinds of fish thriving in the Thames.
- An improved environment in all senses, up and down the river.
- An evolved drainage system, facilitated by the Thames Tideway tunnel.
- A new river walkway, extending paths already there to 12 metres wide.
- Use of the river to make green energy, wave power and wind power.
- A closed Thames Barrier to make the Thames non tidal.

### ***Recreational***

- Better accessibility to riverside paths. More piers and pedestrian walkways.
- More visitor moorings.
- A more welcoming Thames, we don't have that at the minute. A Thames that encourages recreational users to the nth degree.
- Peaceful recreation - less powerboating, fewer noisy and fast craft that create wash and disturb other users.
- More ladders down to the water.
- There will be more room at the back of public piers for row boats to use and for users to store their boats.
- As far as leisure users are concerned, there should be more consideration for us and better interaction with PLA staff. We don't just want to have byelaws read out to us when we ask for advice. We want to speak a friendly person who can offer friendly advice.

### ***Navigation***

- A busier river in the parts that can take it.

### ***General Aspirations***

- A more proactive PLA.

- A river for all users.
- Many more people travelling on the river, making it an important commuter base.
- Stricter regulation of speed limits and perhaps reducing the limits further.
- The river was busier 100 years ago, so we have to recognise that it will become even busier than it is now. But with that, it should be safer as well as busier.
- A Thames that is better understood in schools, more education schemes for children so that they can learn about the river. And students in colleges in universities too
- More of everything, but with safety in mind.
- A charging regime for all boats in the water. Other ports (Mersey, Spain) charge users much more than the PLA does. Make all users pay to use the Thames.

**Question 4: Shall we give more attention to users of the Thames Path; access to the river; and to the wider Thames environment?**

***Residential***

- Concern about the loss of Waterman's Steps which are often locked, slippery and dangerous.
- A number of slipways are inaccessible shore side due to Barriers and other obstructions preventing their use by a vehicle and trailer – no specific examples were given.

***Environmental***

- Access to the foreshore should be managed due to the dangerous nature of the foreshore through organised events.

***Recreational***

- Strong support for the Thames Path and land side developers should be encouraged to support the Thames Path and provide Piers as appropriate. However; it should be noted the Thames Path can inhibit use of the river for freight and technical solutions should be sought in these areas so the 2 activities can work together. Examples were Vic Deep and Walbrook Wharf.
- Use of the river should be prioritised by location and then by activity.

***Navigation***

- The river can't be all things to all people: zoning or segregation is likely to be necessary.

### ***General Aspiration***

- There should be wider access ashore for all river users, including freight, passengers and recreational users.
- Events should encourage people onto the foreshore. For example the Thames Festival is too fluffy and could benefit from improvements in the following areas:
  1. Attendance by commercial vessels to allow tours of the vessels (Dredging Festival in Rotterdam).
  2. Encourage understanding of the Thames and its tides.
  3. Encourage participation with the river.
  4. Facilitate more engagement.
- Visitor moorings should be provided in key locations on the Thames.
- Efforts should be made to re-connect the public with the Thames and educate them on the tidal nature of the Thames and its hazards. The Evening Standard should provide tide heights.
- There should be more efforts to publicise and improve the Thames Path below the Thames Barrier where there is space and scope to make significant improvements.
- The Thames Path should be improved through the City of London.

### **Question 5: Shall we give more attention to users of the Thames Path; access to the river; and to the wider Thames environment?**

#### ***Environmental***

- Birdlife and wildlife should be encouraged near the river.
- There should be better environmental education e.g. about non-native invasive species.
- There are still concerns about the quality of the water in the Thames.
- It is important to state that there have been many good improvements to the Thames environment including alongside river.
- Cleaner marine fuels should be encouraged.
- It is very important to keep river clear of floating debris e.g. plastic waste etc.
- A strategy on siltation / scour / dredging is needed.

#### ***Recreational***

- Access steps to foreshore should be better protected and maintained.
- There should be information notices near top of steps to encourage safe / appropriate access to foreshore.
- Safe / sensible use of foreshore will help foster 'connection' with the River.
- Slipways / drawdocks should be kept open 24 / 7.
- Old disused cargo jetties: could these be used for river related 'public space' uses? eg for historic boats.
- There should be a footbridge over River Darent!

### ***General Aspiration***

- There should be a continuous Thames Path with access 24/7.
- There should be more clarity as to who exactly manages and governs the Thames Path.
- Local Authority planning powers should be used more to improve the continuity of the Thames Path.
- Any new development next to river (e.g. Battersea Power Station) should include Thames Path access / environmental enhancements.
- Could the powers of the Coastal Access Act be used to help improve Thames Path?
- Could there be more use of cantilevered walkways over river at locations where there is a 'break' in the Thames Path?
- The issue of 'shared use / conflict' needs to be tackled – e.g. walkers vs cyclists.
- East of London (e.g. in Kent area) there are locations where Thames Path is used inappropriately / unsafely – e.g. by motorised vehicles / quadbikes etc.
- The Thames Path should be better promoted – e.g. for tourism / leisure.
- There should be more cross river passenger ferries.

End