

The Blue Ribbon Network

The Heart of London
January 2006



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Greater London Authority
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Foreword



Tony Arbour AM, Rapporteur

The Blue Ribbon Network element of the London Plan, containing policies for London's river, canals and other waterways, received almost universal praise when it was published. There is however a belief that progress on this has been neglected, which is borne out by the fact that the Mayor, in 'Reviewing The London Plan', published in December fails to mention the Network at all!

My Committee has revisited the proposals to see how they can be implemented to place the waterways of London at the heart of planning policy in the Capital.

The recommendations which this report puts forward would strengthen the role of organisations, both statutory and voluntary, working together to enhance the multi functional use of the waterways.

We believe that the London Olympics creates an unprecedented opportunity to maximise the use of the waterways for freight, tourism, recreation and public transport.

In recent years despite the creation of the Thames Pathway, which gives notional access to the riverside, there is a perception that waterways are hidden from the view of passers by and privatised by high rise development. It is for this reason that we propose all new development in the network should include publicly accessible water-related uses.

Several million people regularly take part in angling and boating; there is clearly a public desire for access to the water. The growing demand for environmentally friendly forms of transport should equally increase demand for access.

For too long London has harked back to the days when the Thames was its main artery but has made little real effort to restore its vitality. The Olympics will provide a catalyst to do just this.

We very much hope that the Mayor, who made an excellent start in creating the Network, will not miss this boat and will take on board our report and its proposals.

The Planning and Spatial Development Committee

Terms of Reference

The Planning and Spatial Development Committee is a cross-party committee of London Assembly Members, with the following terms of reference.

1. To examine and report from time to time on -
 - the strategies, policies and actions of the Mayor and the Functional Bodies
 - matters of importance to Greater London as they relate to spatial development /planning matters in London.
2. To examine and report to the Assembly from time to time on the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy ('The London Plan'), particularly in respect of its implementation and revision.
3. When invited by the Mayor, to contribute to his consideration of major planning applications.
4. To monitor the Mayor's exercise of his statutory powers in regard to major planning applications referred by the local planning authorities, and to report to the Assembly with any proposal for submission to the Mayor for the improvement of the process.
5. To review UDPs submitted to the Mayor by the local planning authorities for consistency with his strategies overall, to prepare a response to the Mayor for consideration by the Assembly, and to monitor the Mayor's decisions with regard to UDPs.
6. To consider planning matters on request from another standing committee and report its opinion to that standing committee.
7. To take into account in its deliberations the cross cutting themes of: the health of persons in Greater London; the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and the promotion of opportunity.
8. To respond on behalf of the Assembly to consultations and similar processes when within its terms of reference.
9. To consider, as necessary, strategic planning matters as set out in Statutory Instrument 2000, No. 1493 - The Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000 and to make recommendations as appropriate. (The Assembly itself has no powers in relation to any individual planning applications).

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Executive Summary

The River Thames, the canals, tributary rivers, streams, docks, reservoirs and lakes within London, make up the Blue Ribbon Network. The Network takes in some of the capital's best-known locations – from Hampton Court in the West to the Millennium Dome in the East.

The Mayor's London Plan, published in February 2004, set out a strategic vision for the Blue Ribbon Network, with a core concept that 'the water must be the starting point' in waterside development. Nearly two years on, this rapporteur¹ report for the Assembly's Planning and Spatial Development Committee has reviewed the effectiveness of the Mayor's policies.

The terms of reference for the investigation were:

- *to investigate the extent to which the policies in the London Plan relating to the Blue Ribbon Network have been implemented;*
- *to investigate what issues have yet to be fully addressed and what plans are in place to resolve any potential conflicting needs and resources; and*
- *to investigate the effectiveness of the partnerships between the range of stakeholders in implementing the policies relating to the Blue Ribbon Network.*

The investigation found that the Blue Ribbon Network is a vital strategic resource for London, but it needs better-coordinated protection, enhancement and management.

Many positive developments have been taking place – including the Mayor's recent introduction of a new London Waterways Commission which could help address the concerns about 'fragmented' management that a number of organisations have highlighted. The Committee welcomes this institutional support for the Blue Ribbon Network and encourages the Mayor to drive forward further progress.

The Blue Ribbon Network strategy within the Mayor's London Plan sets a groundbreaking policy framework. This Committee is concerned to ensure that London secures the benefits promised by the strategy. It is acknowledged that the Blue Ribbon Network is often, by necessity, a lower priority relative to other development imperatives, and that limits on Mayoral resources are a constraint on some of the recommendations put forward. However, **this Committee believes the case is made for viewing London's waterways as a significant strategic issue and wishes to raise their profile in the minds of developers and planning authorities.**

Freight and wharfage issues have received a significant level of attention and progress has been made on promoting water-based freight and protecting the infrastructure that could support it. Public access for recreation and enjoyment of the water – which relies on the presence of appropriate facilities – should be further enhanced. The Blue Ribbon Network

¹ A rapporteur takes personal responsibility for the conduct of a scrutiny, working with scrutiny support officers, up to the point where the report is presented to the relevant committee for review and approval.

is a major tourism asset for London, but it would benefit from a holistic approach to promotion and marketing as a destination in its own right – rather than as a backdrop to other attractions.

In the Committee's view, it is appropriate for the Mayor to act as the central strategic authority for the Blue Ribbon Network, and to move from treating the Blue Ribbon Network as largely a development control issue, to brokering solutions by smarter working with external organisations. The new London Waterways Commission should be a genuine and active force for delivery of the Blue Ribbon Network aspirations.

The London Waterways Commission should be empowered by the Mayor to facilitate the work of London's waterways campaign groups, and to champion the Blue Ribbon Network at a political level. It should complement rather than supplant existing waterways bodies.

The London Waterways Commission should channel and reinforce activities carried out by third parties, place them in a strategic context and drive forward the overall vision. The Commission should be focussed on pulling the levers that will secure delivery. It must not be a 'talking shop'.

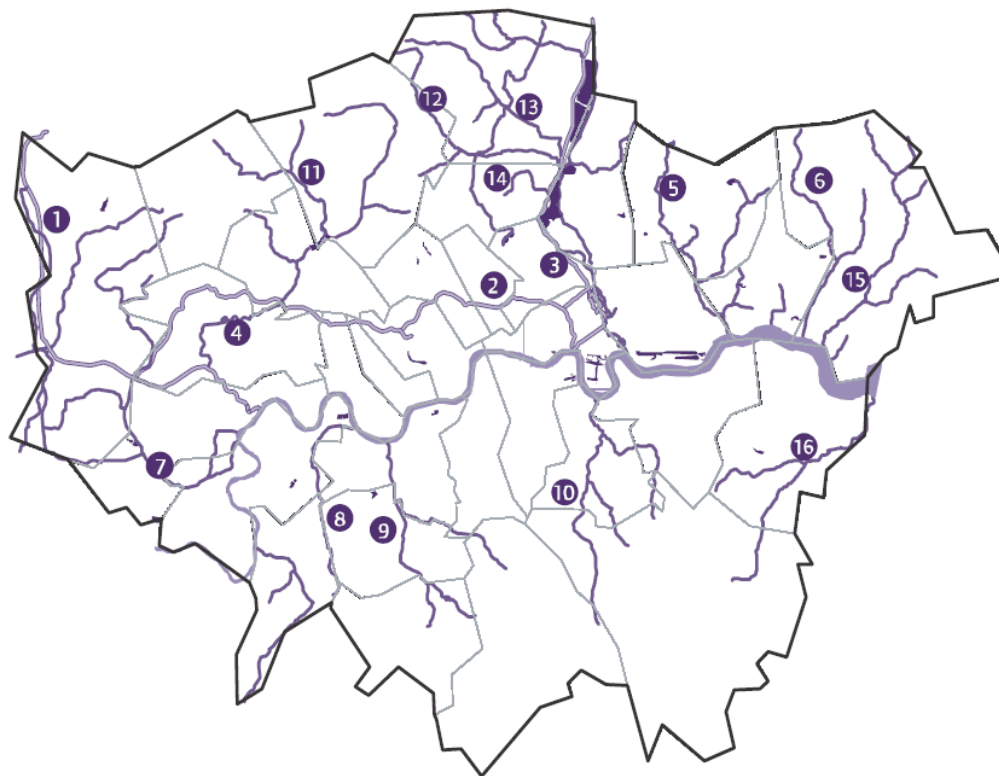
Given its value as a desirable setting for residential and office buildings, there has been an apparent 'privatisation' of the water's edge. However, while the march of riverside development is viewed by many people with concern, often it is the only means of reviving neglected stretches of water which would otherwise remain in disrepair and disuse. The London Plan calls for 'water-related uses' along the Blue Ribbon Network – but these are generally far less profitable than residential or office buildings with a view of the water. As a result, the development control process has a central role to play, and so this report recommends a strong approach to applying the Blue Ribbon Network policies in the assessment of planning applications.

New development on the water's edge often attracts controversy and some campaign groups have expressed concern about the extent to which the Blue Ribbon Network policies are applied. **This Committee urges the Mayor and London Boroughs to consider carefully the strategic impact of individual decisions that affect the Network to ensure its value is not incrementally diminished.**

The investigation also considered some of the tensions that can arise between different people's visions of what the water is for. The Committee is concerned that conflicts between different users of the waterways – particularly the relationship of some waterside residents to their commercial or industrial neighbours – can contribute to activities being stifled. A vibrant waterways environment is part of London's heritage, and the sounds and sights of the water today should be more than an echo of its past as the city's commercial heart.

1. Introduction

1.1. The River Thames, together with the canals, tributary rivers, streams, docks, reservoirs and lakes within London, make up the Blue Ribbon Network, the subject of this investigation. The Network encapsulates the capital, from the towers of Hampton Court and Westminster to the domes of St Paul's and the Millennium Dome. Figure 1, reproduced from the Mayor's London Plan, illustrates the network.



- 1 Grand Union Canal
- 2 Regents Canal
- 3 River Lee Navigation
- 4 River Brent
- 5 River Roding
- 6 River Rom
- 7 River Crane
- 8 Beverley Brook

- 9 River Wandle
- 10 Ravensbourne River
- 11 Silk Stream
- 12 Pymmes Brook
- 13 Salmons Brook
- 14 Moselle Brook
- 15 Ingrebourne River
- 16 River Cray

- Larger Tributary Rivers
- Canals and River Navigation
- Large Lakes and Docks
- River Thames

source Environment and Scientific Services, British Waterways
note Not all tributaries are shown

Figure 1: The Blue Ribbon Network²

1.2. The Mayor's London Plan, published in February 2004, included a substantial section laying out a strategy for the Blue Ribbon Network and establishing a principle that **'the water must be the starting point'**³ when considering waterside developments. The Planning and Spatial Development Committee

² The London Plan, p196

³ ibid, p210

applauds the vision for the Blue Ribbon Network set out in the London Plan and is keen to see it come to fruition.

- 1.3. This report sets out the findings of a review of the effectiveness of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Network strategy, conducted by Tony Arbour AM as a rapporteur for the London Assembly Planning and Spatial Development Committee. It highlights the ways in which London currently uses the river and waterways and the barriers and opportunities for making the most of this resource. Our focus is on access to the water for a range of riparian activities.

Report structure

- 1.4. Chapter 2 explains the Mayor's approach to the Blue Ribbon Network as set out in the London Plan, together with the case for treating it as a strategic issue for London, and the aims and focus of the current investigation. The current institutional arrangements for the Blue Ribbon Network are outlined.
- 1.5. Chapter 3 reviews some of the major activities on the Blue Ribbon Network – from freight and wharfage to sport, leisure and tourism. This section also looks back at a previous report issued by the Planning and Spatial Development Committee in 2003, on access to the Thames Path and foreshore.
- 1.6. Chapter 4 highlights an issue that came up time and again in discussion with waterways stakeholders: the conflicts that can occur between different users of the Blue Ribbon Network, and especially the tensions between river activities and adjacent residents.
- 1.7. Chapter 5 considers the influence of the planning process – how the Mayor and Boroughs are dealing with the Blue Ribbon Network in the decisions they make.
- 1.8. Chapter 6 considers how the situation might be improved through the new London Waterways Commission and sets out our recommendations on their future role in adding value to partnerships working, monitoring riverside development and helping to improve the quality of proposals for development.
- 1.9. Chapter 7 calls for the Mayor to push harder to secure benefits for the Blue Ribbon Network.
- 1.10. Finally, Chapter 8 draws together the key themes that have emerged from this investigation and advocates a more proactive role for the Mayor in implementing the Blue Ribbon Network policies.

2. The background to this investigation

- 2.1. This chapter sets out how the Blue Ribbon Network is dealt with in the Mayor's London Plan, the case for treating it as a strategic issue for London, and the aims and focus of the current investigation.

The London Plan

- 2.2. The Blue Ribbon Network includes the Thames, the canal network, the other tributaries, rivers and streams within London and London's open water spaces such as docks, reservoirs and lakes. It also includes culverted (or covered over) waterways.
- 2.3. London has approximately 100 miles of canal corridor, covering 270 hectares.⁴ The River Thames is 42 miles in length within Greater London.⁵ In all, about 3% of London is covered by water (twice the area covered by the congestion charging zone).⁶
- 2.4. Section 4C of the London Plan sets out six principles intended to inform decisions taken in respect of the Blue Ribbon Network. These principles are broadly summarised as follows:
- protecting and enhancing the multi-functional nature of the Blue Ribbon Network to support uses and activities that require a water or waterside location;
 - protecting and enhancing the Blue Ribbon Network as part of the public realm and London's open space network, and promoting sport, leisure and education;
 - exploiting the potential for water-borne transport, leisure, tourism and waterway support industries, and capturing the investment potential of the Network through appropriate waterside development and regeneration;
 - ensuring the Blue Ribbon Network is accessible for everyone and that its cultural and environmental assets are used to stimulate appropriate development in areas of regeneration and need;
 - increasing use of the Blue Ribbon Network for transport of people and goods; and
 - protecting and enhancing the biodiversity and landscape of the Blue Ribbon Network, and having regard to the need for water supplies, sewage disposal and the risk of flooding.

⁴ British Waterways: www.britishwaterways.co.uk/London/about/facts_figures.html

⁵ London Biodiversity Partnership: www.lbp.org.uk/O2audit_pdfs/11_tidalthames.pdf

⁶ British Waterways, *ibid*

- 2.5. The Blue Ribbon Network section of the London Plan (here referred to as the ‘Blue Ribbon Network strategy’) contains 34 policies aimed at meeting these principles. The overall policy context – the concepts on which the Blue Ribbon Network strategy is based – is that ‘the water must be the starting point’⁷ when considering waterside developments, and ‘uses and activities that need a waterside location’ must be prioritised.⁸

Blue Ribbon Network Policies

- 2.6. The Blue Ribbon Network policies most relevant to this investigation, in summary, are as follows.
- 2.7. The London Plan requires sustainable and safe use of the water and waterside land (**Policy 4C.2**). **Policy 4C.12** sets sustainable growth priorities for the Blue Ribbon Network, prioritising uses that specifically require a waterside location – water transport, leisure, recreation, wharves and flood defences.
- 2.8. **Policy 4C.20** calls for design starting from the water. Development should integrate successfully with the water space with a mix of uses to ensure an inclusive accessible and active waterside. Design statements, required by **Policy 4C.21**, should include a statement of how the water space will be used and affected.
- 2.9. The importance of access points to the Network is recognised by **Policy 4C.17**, which encourages the extension of waterside routes, and new access points. Waterway facilities, infrastructure and activities that support use and enjoyment of the Blue Ribbon Network are encouraged (**Policy 4C.18**); as well as moorings facilities where the impact on navigation, biodiversity and character is not harmful (**Policy 4C.19**).
- 2.10. There is a requirement to protect facilities for passenger and tourist traffic, and to introduce new facilities in Opportunity Areas and Areas for Intensification (**Policy 4C.13**). **Policy 4C.16** protects facilities for sport and leisure and encourages new development and facilities that increase sport and leisure use.
- 2.11. **Policy 4C.14** supports new development and facilities for water-based freight transport. The London Plan also allows for the safeguarding of certain wharves against alternative redevelopment. The potential for conflicts of use alongside safeguarded wharves is identified (**Policy 4C.15**).

⁷ The London Plan, p210

⁸ *ibid*, p206

- 2.12. The London Plan recognises the natural value of the Blue Ribbon Network and its contribution to London's open space network (**Policy 4C.3, Policy 4C.4**).
- 2.13. To progress the delivery of these policies, the London Plan requires relevant boroughs to designate a Thames Policy Area (**Policy 4C.25**) for which they should prepare a detailed appraisal and an action plan (**Policy 4C.26**).

The strategic nature of the Blue Ribbon Network

- 2.14. Policy 4C.1 of the Mayor's London Plan states that:

*'The Mayor will, and boroughs should, recognise the strategic importance of the Blue Ribbon Network when making strategies and plans, when considering planning applications and when carrying out their other responsibilities...'*⁹

- 2.15. The Mayor has said that the Blue Ribbon Network is 'London's most important and visible natural asset and... an under-used transport artery for people and goods'.¹⁰
- 2.16. The Blue Ribbon Network is identified as a cross cutting theme in the London Plan. It passes through all of London's Boroughs. It is important to London in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms, and the land alongside it is often sought after by developers of housing and office space.
- 2.17. Furthermore, a key point that this report seeks to emphasise is that the waterways do, indeed, have 'network' features. What happens on one stretch of water affects its other parts; the installation of boating facilities at one point, for example, is diminished in value if no provision is made at the end of the boater's journey. A coordinated approach is needed to make the most of the network.
- 2.18. The Examination in Public panel for the London Plan recognised the strategic status of the waterways:

*'While we accept the argument that priority in favour of uses requiring a riverside location will also need to take into account competing needs for land within London, we do not accept that this 'balancing' should be undertaken by Boroughs solely according to local circumstances. The Blue Ribbon Network... links sites together in a way that requires issues of wider significance than just local Borough circumstances to be taken into account.'*¹¹

⁹ The London Plan, p195

¹⁰ Mayor's Question Time 13 September 2000, question 0236/2000:
<http://mqt.london.gov.uk//public/question.do?id=236>

¹¹ The Draft London Plan Examination in Public Panel Report, p28
www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/eip_report/panel_report_all.pdf

2.19. This conclusion supported the Mayor's close attention to the Blue Ribbon Network within the London Plan, with its ground-breaking policies.

This investigation

2.20. The inclusion of the Blue Ribbon Network strategy in the Mayor's London Plan was undoubtedly a step forward for London's waterways. It was seen as a major improvement on previous government guidance.

*'London is cited throughout the UK as an exemplar of how strategic planning for waterways should be undertaken.'*¹²

2.21. But if this was a success for strategic planning, what about implementation? The Blue Ribbon Network strategy was greeted with great optimism and enthusiasm by the waterways interests. That optimism persists, alongside concern that the Network is not seen or managed as a whole entity.

2.22. The Planning and Spatial Development Committee resolved that Tony Arbour AM should be appointed as a rapporteur to investigate how effectively the Blue Ribbon Network policies have been applied. The terms of reference were as follows:

- *to investigate the extent to which the policies in the London Plan relating to the Blue Ribbon Network have been implemented;*
- *to investigate what issues have yet to be fully addressed and what plans are in place to resolve any potential conflicting needs and resources; and*
- *to investigate the effectiveness of the partnerships between the range of stakeholders in implementing the policies relating to the Blue Ribbon Network.*

2.23. The review was particularly concerned to discover the status of Londoners' access to the Blue Ribbon Network for transport, education, leisure, recreation and other riparian activities. Such activities range from boating, fishing, picnicking, bird watching and sightseeing to commuting, freight and green industries. We were mindful that the planning process can affect a number of features important to preserving or enhancing the uptake of waterway activities - including access points, boat houses, moorings, interchanges, passenger boat amenities, piers, wharves, docks, boat storage and maintenance facilities, and routes connecting to these features.

2.24. The investigation also looks back at a previous rapporteur investigation for the Committee by John Biggs AM, who reported on the Thames Path and foreshore in August 2003.

¹² Written submission from James Trimmer, Port of London Authority, 10 October 2005. Copies of the written submissions received by the Committee and records of meetings are available on request from the London Assembly Secretariat.

- 2.25. This report does not claim to be a comprehensive review of the Blue Ribbon Network, and there are numerous publications by other bodies that examine aspects of the Network in far more detail. Not all dimensions of water activity are included and not all the policies of the Blue Ribbon Network are covered. The Committee's investigation aims to give a sense of the value that the waterways hold for London, and the issues surrounding the application of the Blue Ribbon Network strategy.
- 2.26. In the words of John Burns, 'The Thames is liquid history'. While some of the huge changes that have occurred on the waterways over time are highlighted, the Committee is not nostalgic for the Thames of old. Nevertheless, we hope our report will remind Londoners of the great resource in their midst.
- 2.27. Tony Arbour AM wrote to a number of river and waterways organisations as well as relevant Boroughs to obtain their input. The findings were discussed with GLA officers during the production of the report.
- 2.28. The Committee would like to thank the London Rivers Association in particular for circulating the request for information among its membership and allowing Tony Arbour to chair a session at its December 2005 forum. To gain further information pertinent to the investigation, a few meetings took place with selected organisations; although no full Committee meeting was held on the subject. This report also draws on published material and data made available through a range of sources. A list of the evidence used can be found at Appendix 2.

The key players

- 2.29. This report makes reference to a number of organisations involved in working, playing and campaigning on the waterways – which are detailed in Appendix 3.
- 2.30. The key statutory organisations include British Waterways, the Environment Agency and the Port of London Authority. The London Assembly Transport Committee has undertaken an investigation into the operation of the Port of London Authority, and publication of its report is expected this Spring.
- 2.31. A number of partnerships have been established to develop and promote Thames Landscape Strategies setting out plans for the River Thames. In addition, many voluntary and community organisations champion waterways interests.

- 2.32. One issue identified by the Committee's investigation, and discussed further in Chapter 6, is that the management of waterways in London currently suffers from a degree of fragmentation. However, the Mayor has recently announced the creation of a London Waterways Commission within the GLA. This is a positive move with the potential to drive forward the Mayor's policies at a strategic level. The report includes recommendations for the working of the new Commission. These recommendations are also implicitly directed at the Mayor, who should ensure that the Commission has the necessary resources to fulfil the remit suggested here.
- 2.33. The report also makes frequent mention of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games because it is a major development opportunity for the Network as well as a potent vehicle for harnessing the energy of politicians, voluntary groups and the public at large.

3. The changing face of the Blue Ribbon Network

3.1. How the Network is used

- 3.1.1. This chapter reviews some of the major activities on London's waterways, highlighting issues that facilitate or impede our use of the Thames and canals.
- 3.1.2. The relationship of London to its waterways has altered over time. Once the centre of commerce and transport, they are now far quieter - no longer crowded by a myriad of vessels. Spatially, the River Thames is still the centre of the city but it is no longer the essential core of its commercial activity.
- 3.1.3. However, the level of interest expressed by individuals and organisations who were invited to contribute to this investigation suggests that the Blue Ribbon Network is still very important to Londoners. The story of the Blue Ribbon Network is not simply one of decline, but one of evolution and change.
- 3.1.4. Figure 2 below evokes a scene of river-based industry that is no longer familiar to Londoners.



Figure 2: The view from London Bridge towards Tower Bridge, 1894 - 1900¹³

¹³ Reproduced by permission of English Heritage.NMR. See <http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk/>

3.1.5. In the past the waterways were bustling with a range of life and activity:

'Little steam-boats dashed up and down the river incessantly. Tiers upon tiers of vessels, scores of masts, labyrinths of tackle, idle sails, splashing oars, gliding row-boats, lumbering barges, sunken piles, with ugly lodgings for the water-rat within their mud-discoloured nooks; church steeples, warehouses, house-roofs, arches, bridges, men and women, casks, cranes, boxes, horses, coaches, idlers, and hard-labourers: there they were, all jumbled up together...'

Martin Chuzzlewit (1843), Charles Dickens (describing the steamboats at the London Bridge Steam Wharf)

3.1.6. This thriving commercial centre changed most dramatically during the twentieth century. As industry has faded, some redevelopment in the East End has included new river-related facilities such as Greenland Dock watersports centre which runs courses on canoeing, sailing, windsurfing and power boating, as well as safety boat tuition (Figures 3 and 4).



Figure 3: An aerial view of Greenland Dock in 1957¹⁴

¹⁴ Copyright Simmons Aerofilms



Figure 4: The present day - water sports centre at Greenland Dock¹⁵

- 3.1.7. The shift from industrial and freight uses to recreation and leisure is also evident on the canal network:

*'Historically there was no public access to canals and they were almost exclusively used for transport. Today we have an annual 16 million visits from walkers, joggers, cyclists, dog-walkers etc, over 150 events, schools visits, c.2,000 private boats, marinas and moorings, community boats, trip boats, business barges, floating classrooms, location filming, new waterside destinations, four sites of special scientific importance, 62 listed structures, four scheduled ancient monuments and 100 miles designated Sites of Metropolitan Importance or County Wildlife Sites.'*¹⁶

3.2. Freight

- 3.2.1. Freight and industry on the waterways in London have received close attention in recent years through the Mayor's initiatives to safeguard wharves, and Transport for London's development of a freight strategy to include greater use of the canals and rivers for transporting waste and materials.

¹⁵ Copyright CNT. See www.lddc-history.org.uk/community/

¹⁶ Written submission from Edward Fox, British Waterways, 20 December 2005

- 3.2.2. The London Travel Report indicates that around 50 million tonnes of sea-going freight were carried through the Port of London over each of the last few years, with a 4% increase between 2003 and 2004¹⁷. Around a fifth of this was handled at one of the 39 operational wharves within the Greater London boundaries – the bulk is dealt with at the larger facilities at Tilbury, Purfleet and Thames Europort.¹⁸
- 3.2.3. At their peak, London's canals probably carried some 5 million tonnes of freight every year. This trade had effectively collapsed to nothing by the 1960s.¹⁹ More recently British Waterways established a contract for gravel barge traffic on Grand Union Canal between Denham and West Drayton, and is working on further projects. British Waterways' aspiration is for 2-3 million tonnes per annum to be moved by canal – levels not seen for 50 years. They say that a change in attitude is emerging, with developers waking up to the potential of freight by water.²⁰
- 3.2.4. Transport for London and British Waterways have spent £1.6 million on new canal facilities including dredging work, a barge turning point, a new wharf, and a major study.²¹ The study found that there are plenty of small, simple loading/unloading points but few locations suitable for significant freight transfer. More facilities for waste and recycle processing could be developed.
- 3.2.5. The key constraints on reintroducing economically competitive water freight include:
- origins and destinations – the strategic placement of pick up and delivery points adjacent to waterways;
 - minimising 'double handling' – the load has to be transferred from lorry to barge, and back to a lorry at the receiving end;
 - infrastructure and handling capacity – the size and suitability of barges and wharves;
 - passage through locks – having to go through more than two locks is likely to make a journey uneconomic; and
 - time sensitivity – transport by water tends to be slow, so aggregates, waste and recyclates tend to be the more suitable commodities for this type of transport.²²
- 3.2.6. The Study found that for certain commodities over short distances, barge transport can be the most cost effective option, as long as both ends of the journey are alongside the canal.

¹⁷ London Travel Report 2005 p39: www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/pdfdocs/ltr/london-travel-report-2005.pdf

¹⁸ University of Westminster for TfL, March 2004, 'Freight Transport in London: a summary of current data and sources', p24: www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/downloads/pdf/TFL-Data-Project-summary-report-18-03-04.pdf

¹⁹ Written submission from Edward Fox, British Waterways, 20 December 2005

²⁰ Written submission from Edward Fox, British Waterways, 28 November 2005

²¹ Peter Brett Associates for TfL and British Waterways London, *ibid*, 'West London Canal Network Study', September 2005, pp5-6: www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/pdfdocs/water-borne-frieght-exec-sum.pdf

²² Peter Brett Associates, *ibid*, for TfL and British Waterways London, 'West London Canal Network Study', September 2005, p1

- 3.2.7. The West London canal network offers 26 miles of lock-free canal through Park Royal. It also connects to Old Oak Sidings at Willesden Junction, which has been developed as a recycling centre with road, rail and canal connections. During the 1920s, the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal carried approximately one million tonnes of freight per year. The proposals for Old Oak Sidings would see over 500,000 tonnes (the equivalent of 100,000 lorry journeys) carried annually, with only 25 barge movements per day.
- 3.2.8. Another initiative has focussed on carrying waste from Hackney to Edmonton by water. A Multi-Modal Refuse Collection Vehicle (under development by the London Borough of Hackney and Transport for London) may sound as though it was inspired by a James Bond film, but it could smooth the way for more canal transport in future by transferring directly from land to water.
- 3.2.9. The Olympics site includes the River Lea and Bow Back Rivers network, offering the potential for construction materials and waste to be carried to and from the site by water. The scale of the Olympic project could bring protected wharves back into use. British Waterways estimated that up to 7,000 tonnes per day of construction materials could be moved by barge, saving 500,000 lorry journeys and 15,600 tonnes of CO₂ during the construction phase.
- 3.2.10. However, as yet it is early days for the logistics of Olympics transport to be decided – the extent that the waterways can be used will depend on the precise origins and destinations of the materials and the relative costs of road, rail and water. It would take time to bring the network into operation, with the risk that would entail for the Olympics delivery timetable. Some observers are also concerned that impounding the rivers for this purpose would remove wildlife habitats.
- 3.2.11. The London Development Agency is studying the potential to optimise both rail and water use. Potentially, the waterways could help deliver a sustainable Olympic Games, as well as providing a high-profile demonstration of water-based freight. For these reasons the Mayor should, as a priority, secure the necessary resources to make water-based transport viable, and fully exploit this opportunity wherever sustainable and affordable. As British Waterways has said, ‘if it can’t work here it can’t work anywhere’.²³

²³ New Civil Engineer, 15 December 2005

3.3. Wharfage

- 3.3.1. A report by the Mayor in January 2005 examined the viability of wharves on the River Thames, identifying those that could provide capacity now or in the future for cargo handling and recommending that they are safeguarded against other development.²⁴
- 3.3.2. There are 50 safeguarded wharves – 25 upstream and 25 downstream of the Thames Barrier. Proposals to reactivate wharves in Newham, Tower Hamlets and Hammersmith and Fulham are being taken forward.²⁵ The safeguarding process has protected sites from development pressure in order to retain the Thames' capacity for commercial freight. With each of these sites forming a link in a transport network, alternative uses for the land involved has to be considered in the context of London's wider strategic interests.

*'The Mayor's commitment to safeguarding wharves for the transportation of freight has been instrumental in stemming the loss of strategic facilities to higher value land uses.'*²⁶

- 3.3.3. However, the safeguarding of wharves is only part of the equation. The London Rivers Association call for a holistic port strategy with clear targets for delivery, including:

- strategic marketing of non-operational wharves,
- identifying and exploiting new markets,
- incentives and grants to operators for modal shift from road to water,
- expansion of the network for water transport (eg intra-port trade),
- identifying strategic transport hubs,
- exploiting new technologies,
- protecting support infrastructure (eg boatyards),
- developing strategic partnerships to explore investment and incentives,
- integration with other Mayoral strategies, and
- promotion of the Port.²⁷

²⁴ Greater London Authority, 'Safeguarded Wharves on the River Thames, London Plan Implementation Report', January 2005: www.london.gov.uk/mayor/planning/docs/safeguarded_wharves_05.pdf

²⁵ James Trimmer, Port of London Authority, record of meeting, 22 November 2005

²⁶ Written submission from Rose Jaijee, London Rivers Association, 21 November 2005

²⁷ Letter from London Rivers Association to Ken Livingstone, 14 July 2003

- 3.3.4. The Committee agrees that a more coordinated approach would be valuable, covering the range of issues identified by the London Rivers Association, and that the Mayor should take the lead.

Recommendation 1:

The Committee recommends that the Mayor, with the London Waterways Commission, develop an overall strategy for the carriage of freight on London's waterways. The Mayor should:

- build on work already carried out by Transport for London and through the wharves safeguarding process,**
- encourage the development of waste and recycling facilities at adjacent sites, and**
- ensure maximum sustainable use is made of the waterways for the transport of freight associated with the Olympics.**

3.4. Sports and leisure

- 3.4.1. Spending time on the water, in pleasure cruisers, sailing boats, barges, rafts or canoes, is an archetypal British pastime, as summed up by Ratty:

'Believe me, my young friend, there is NOTHING - absolutely nothing - half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.'

Ratty (Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*)

- 3.4.2. A national study for DETR²⁸ found that around 12% of the adult population made visits to inland waterways in 1998, and about 3% regularly participate in water-based sport and recreation. Estimates of participation by Mintel in 1998²⁹ suggested that around 87,000 people in the UK were dinghy club members. Sailing is growing in popularity with membership of the Royal Yachting Association having increased steadily for the last 20 years. Some 640,000 people in 1998 took part in windsurfing, and 80-100,000 people were regular water-skiers with 400,000 taking part occasionally. 100,000 people regularly took part in canoeing with up to 1 million occasional paddlers.
- 3.4.3. Fishing was far and away the most popular water-based sport or recreation, with 3 million regular anglers and 1.5 million angling club members. Angling is an increasingly popular activity, with 76,400 rod licences bought in London in 2004/05. The Environment Agency is aiming for 2% growth every year. Better water quality is making angling in urban areas more popular, with the Lee Valley being a particular draw following habitat improvements by the Agency.³⁰

²⁸ University of Brighton consortium for DETR, 'Water-based sport and recreation: the facts', December 2001: www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/resprog/findings/watersport.pdf

²⁹ Reported in 'Water-based sport and recreation: the facts', *ibid*

³⁰ Written submission from Kathy Warburton, Environment Agency, 29 November 2005

3.4.4. Another source of data on participation in water-related sports found that in 2002, 5.4% of English adults went fishing, 2.4% took part in sailing, 1.8% canoeing and 0.9% went windsurfing or boardsailing. People are also keen to do more watersports - 2.8% would like to take part in sailing, yachting, dingy sailing or boating.³¹

3.4.5. Of course, it's not for everyone:

*'Being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of drowning.'*³²

Dr Samuel Johnson

3.4.6. Moreover, to many people the idea of boating on the River Thames conjures images of wealthy yacht owners taking part in a rarefied and exclusive pastime, beyond the means of Londoners in general.

3.4.7. Participation in water-based sports is higher among men and is skewed towards social groups A, B and C1. However, while enjoyment of these sports is limited to a minority of the population the DETR research found that there is a lack of information about opportunities and the possibility of untapped demand.

3.4.8. It was also reported that many of the activities are or could be more socially inclusive. Constraints on participation, nationally, included the quality and proximity of facilities, the exclusiveness of some clubs, cost, perceptions of pollution and safety, and lack of time, skills and experience.

3.4.9. In our urban environment, the waterways are actually London's biggest 'open space'.³³ They are a resource for everyone living, visiting or working in London and action should be taken to open up opportunities for enjoying the river.

3.4.10. Not all water recreation is the preserve of high earners. The British Canoe Union, for example, insists that paddling with a canoe is a low-cost sport accessible to everyone, and is estimated to be the fastest growing watersport. Some take part daily or weekly; some participate on a 'come and try it' basis.

3.4.11. There are several ways that Londoners from all sectors of society can get onto the water. Watersports clubs and hire options mean that enjoying the waterways does not entail the huge investment of owning a craft. River cruises are not cheap but they are affordable for an occasional day out.

³¹ Sport England, 'Participation in Sport in England', 1992: www.sportengland.org/ghs_participation_in_sport_2002.pdf. Participation rates in the 12 months before interview.

³² In fairness, Johnson was speaking of the navy rather than leisure boating, and at a time when judges often sentenced criminals to serve as an alternative to land-based imprisonment.

³³ Written submission from Roger Weston, West London River Group, 28 November 2005

- 3.4.12. However, the Environment Agency reports that although some 26,000 craft are licensed on the River Thames, the number of craft using the non-tidal river has halved in the last 20 years – including an 85% decline in the number of hire boats.
- 3.4.13. Events like the Olympics, with accompanying campaigns to get more people involved in sport, could help inform Londoners about the opportunities on their doorstep. More promotion of the range of water-based activities, partnerships with sporting associations and the galvanisation of sports clubs to set up introductory events should be used to increase the rate of participation.
- 3.4.14. Most of this will be the responsibility of national agencies like Sport England. However the Mayor will have a key role in overseeing the Olympics preparation and promoting the Games, and has already established a London Sports Working Group.
- 3.4.15. If there is indeed latent demand for watersports in London, better promotion could increase the market for these activities. This in turn could help to build the business case for individual developers to include sports and access facilities in their plans, increasing the integration of water-related uses in new developments and enhancing the vibrancy of the Blue Ribbon Network.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Mayor, together with relevant delivery organisations, capitalise on the opportunity offered by 2012 to increase the use of London’s waterways by its diverse communities as a sport and recreational asset.

3.5. **‘Hydroculture’**

- 3.5.1. Many groups have taken up the opportunity to use the Blue Ribbon Network as a cultural and educational resource.

‘The Thames is the most wonderful laboratory we have for studying an infinite range of activities.’³⁴

- 3.5.2. In 2005 the HMS Belfast attracted 270,000 sightseeing visitors,³⁵ 2,764 children used British Waterways’ learning services programme,³⁶ and over 8,500 Londoners investigated the Thames with the Thames Explorer Trust.³⁷

³⁴ David Hilling, Inland Waterways, transcript of London Rivers Association meeting 13 December 2005

³⁵ Written submission from Chris Cook, Livetts Launches, 6 December 2005

³⁶ British Waterways: www.britishwaterways.co.uk/London/about/facts_figures.html

³⁷ Written submission from Alison Taylor, Thames Explorer Trust, 24 November 2005

- 3.5.3. A case study of one of the cultural and educational initiatives on the Thames is presented in Box 1 below.

Box 1: The Mayor's Thames Festival³⁸

The Thames Festival is an annual event which takes place between the London Eye and Tower Bridge.

In 2005 the site saw footfall of around 1 million in the space of three weeks, compared to around 650,000 in the same area without the Festival. Around 16,000 extra people visited Tate Modern during the Festival. The gallery also gave workshops relating to a Thames Festival Treasure Hunt which followed a trade route and an ecological route along the river, created by over 800 pupils from secondary schools across London.

The organisers say that the Festival inspires people with a new taste for returning to the river. 31% of students taking part in the Treasure Hunt had not previously been to the riverside, and 82% would like to visit again. Work with schools also provides a key sporting platform – for example, Westminster Boating Club appeared at the Festival to give demonstrations and encourage new members. Education and promotion activities continue beyond the Festival period itself, and the organisers aspire to having the funding that would be required to extend this further.

The Mayor supports the Festival, lending his title to it along with a £65,000 funding contribution, and 1,135 tube and bus sites for posters. The Festival's association with the Mayor is seen as important for helping to raise sponsorship and promoting international links.

It is unfortunate, however, that no direct link exists between the Thames Festival and the LDA. The organisers are keen to work with the LDA to promote London as a world city and work on Olympics and Paralympics projects, particularly relating to education.

- 3.5.4. The Thames Festival and other events such as the Great River Race help connect the riverside environment to the water itself and provide an opportunity for visitors and passers-by to better understand their surroundings.

³⁸ Thames Festival, record of meeting, 3 November 2005. See also www.thamesfestival.org

- 3.5.5. Thames21 work to improve the local environmental quality of the waterside in London – working in partnership and with local people to remove litter, improve access and signage, create artwork and run educational events. It has also helped riparian Boroughs to produce information panels with historical, ecological and Thames Path information.³⁹ The Thames Explorer Trust calls for greater provision of ‘intellectual access’ to the waterways.⁴⁰ However, overall there are few ‘interpretation features’ along the waterside to help passers by understand its rich history, or its local relationship with the land.
- 3.5.6. This dearth of prominent information currently applies online as well as on shore. There are several pages of information about the River Thames and related events on the Visit London website, but they are not given the prominence that they merit. A glance at its front page gives no hint that there is a major waterways network in London with so much to offer for visitors, and sections within the website include minimal information.⁴¹ A new project initiated by Visit London is intended to rectify this in the near future.
- 3.5.7. The London Life pages of the www.london.gov.uk website should also include a section dedicated to the Blue Ribbon Network – as well as appropriate content more prominently included in the sections on Sport & Leisure, Environment, and Transport & Travel.
- 3.5.8. An attraction for both tourists and Londoners is the availability of boat trips on the Thames. Approximately 2 million people per year travel from one of the main central London piers operated by London River Services – most of whom are tourists.⁴²
- 3.5.9. However, City Cruises estimates that fewer than 10% of visitors to London take to a boat during their stay, compared with 28% in Paris: ‘the ‘iconic’ status of the River Thames is not translated into visitors actually taking a sightseeing trip’.⁴³ British Waterways have called for the support of the Olympic transport planners for the development of trip boats and water taxis in and around the Olympic site.
- 3.5.10. The Blue Ribbon Network is a major tourism asset for London, but currently ‘nobody takes the lead in marketing or promoting it – there is no brand and no owner.’⁴⁴

‘The River Thames must be marketed as a destination in its own right – a constellation of sights, attractions and venues which will appeal to everyone – rather than as a backdrop.’⁴⁵

³⁹ See www.thames21.org.uk, and www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/living_environment/sustainability/liveable_city/liveable_city_awards_thames_21.htm

⁴⁰ Written submission from Alison Taylor, Thames Explorer Trust, 24 November 2005

⁴¹ See www.visitlondon.com

⁴² Written submission from City Cruises, ‘A tourism strategy for the River Thames in London’, October 2005

⁴³ Written submission from City Cruises, ‘A tourism strategy for the River Thames in London’, October 2005

⁴⁴ City Cruises, *ibid*

- 3.5.11. The Mayor has a role in promoting and developing tourism in London, and as such we consider that he should take the lead in raising the profile of the Blue Ribbon Network as a key attraction. The Mayor should ensure that work to develop a marketing strategy for the River Thames is progressed, and that the strategy exploits opportunities associated with 2012.

Recommendation 3:

The Committee recommends that the Mayor, through the delivery agents for his tourism plan:

- take the lead in developing a holistic tourism strategy for London's waterways;**
- afford the waterways a higher profile on the GLA website and relevant tourism websites; and**
- work with partners to produce and maintain interpretive material for the river and canal sides, including signage for access points and facilities for using the water.**

3.6. The Thames Path and foreshore

- 3.6.1. In August 2003 the Planning and Spatial Development Committee issued a report titled *Access to the Thames - Scrutiny of the Thames Foreshore and Path*.⁴⁵ Led by rapporteur John Biggs AM, the report called for a more carefully thought out riverside environment. Among other things, the report noted that the river's 'understandable attraction as a location for exclusive residential development... results in the Thames being barricaded from its immediate hinterland and the rest of London'. This theme has been evident during the development of the current report in terms of access to the water itself.
- 3.6.2. Access to the Thames Path and foreshore are key aspects of most people's experience of the Blue Ribbon Network. The August 2003 report made a number of recommendations to help improve that experience (see Appendix 4), to which the Mayor responded in a letter to the Committee dated 10 May 2004. The recommendations and responses are summarised below, along with supplementary information provided by Transport for London.⁴⁷
- 3.6.3. The Committee recommended a demonstration of best practice and key individual access points, which was initiated by the Thames and Waterways Steering Group before the group wound down. There were also proposals to extend the Thames Path eastwards, but the Mayor noted that while he would seek to achieve this through the planning process, he is not the delivery body for the Thames Path.

⁴⁵ City Cruises, *ibid*

⁴⁶ Available from <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/plansd.jsp>

⁴⁷ Written submission from Adrian Bell, Transport for London, 25 November 2005

- 3.6.4. It was recommended to extend the Path within TfL's Walking Plan for London and to maintain the Thames Path Online Project maps. TfL say the path has been extended on the South bank and promotional literature has been produced, although no work has taken place on the North bank yet. They are keen to see the online project developed but have concerns about its user-friendliness.
- 3.6.5. The Committee recommended a consultation to clarify responsibilities around access to the foreshore and develop a directory of access points, rights, ownership and repair issues. Work on this was started by the Thames Access Project but stalled due to resource constraints. However Peter Finch, a member of the River Thames Society, has produced an audit of the steps, stairs and landing places on the Thames.⁴⁸ This should provide a basis for prioritising a programme to improve and restore these access points – with the leadership of the new London Waterways Commission.
- 3.6.6. The Committee called for an overall review of current enforcement regimes and for a warden service for the Path. The Mayor noted that these may be worthwhile initiatives but would have to compete for resources, and are not priorities.
- 3.6.7. The current report concerns access to the water itself, rather than the waterside, and is complementary to the previous scrutiny. Access to the Thames Path and foreshore is an important element of Londoners' overall experience of the waterways. The Committee hopes that the advent of a London Waterways Commission will provide the focus necessary to drive forward the recommendations presented in our earlier investigation, but is concerned that resources are a significant constraint.

⁴⁸ Written submission from Peter Finch, 21 November 2005. See also www.thames-rrc.org/rowing-on-the-thames/access-to-the-river-thames/

3.6.8. One of the options for enjoying the foreshore is illustrated in Box 2 below.

Box 2: Oh, I do like to be beside the riverside



Figure 5: Families on Greenwich Beach in the 1930s⁴⁹

The Thames foreshore offers several small beaches at low tide, which have historically been a popular destination for many Londoners. The people pictured above at Greenwich Beach in the 1930s were paddling at the water's edge – the level of pollution at the time would have made full submersion in the river an unattractive proposition.⁵⁰

The Tower Bridge Foreshore was officially opened to the public on July 23 1934, with King George V promising 'free access for ever'. Over 500,000 people are estimated to have visited the beach between 1934 and 1939.⁵¹

Of course, greatly increased access to beach holidays elsewhere in Britain, Europe and beyond have diminished the special appeal of visiting the beach in London. Nevertheless, some Londoners still want to use the beaches along the Thames. At a free event organised by Urban 75, over a hundred people visited the beach around Festival Pier in July 2003 to dance and play (even in the rain) – as pictured overleaf.

(Continued)

⁴⁹ Copyright National Maritime Museum (Greenwich Local History Library Collection). See www.portcities.org.uk/london/

⁵⁰ www.portcities.org.uk/london/

⁵¹ BBC 'Inside Out', 18 February 2004: www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/extra/series-1/london_beaches.shtml



Figure 6: Reclaim the Beach event, July 2003⁵²

The beaches are still part of London's public realm and an open space to be enjoyed. Like the Blue Ribbon Network in general, the extent and prominence of information available about safely using the foreshore could be greatly increased. Having said that, genuine concerns about health and safety – in terms of the water itself and hazards from litter or contamination – are a constraint.

⁵² Copyright Urban 75. See www.urban75.org/london/beach.html

4. Conflicting uses

- 4.1. The Blue Ribbon Network is a multi-functional resource used by a range of people and groups in London. The Network is used for water-based transport, industry and recreation; but also as a setting for residential and office development. This diversity of uses can sometimes lead to conflict.

The 'bad neighbour' problem

- 4.2. A trend for riverside living has led to many former industrial buildings being converted to luxurious residential apartments. Unfortunately this is not always compatible with river-based industry and leisure.
- 4.3. Residents can feel that they are adversely affected by 'bad neighbours' on the river. Some residents claim that their enjoyment of their property, their visual amenity and their peace and quiet is disturbed by moorings outside their home or the loading and unloading of freight, and use environmental legislation to fight proposals for these uses. In turn, boat dwellers and business people argue that residents should recognise that they have bought into a vibrant, commercial waterspace; if they chose to purchase a home by a busy main road they would have to expect and accept a certain level of noise and disruption.⁵³
- 4.4. The London Rivers Association⁵⁴ consider boat movements, clattering chains, horns, and the tidal flow to be sounds distinctive to the water space, and ultimately linked to a 'deeper cultural relationship with the river'. A vibrant river environment is part of London's heritage, and the sounds and sights of the river today echo its past as the city's commercial heart.
- 4.5. Box 3 outlines the progress of an application to introduce new moorings and boats to the river scene.

Box 3: 'Heritage afloat' - Hermitage Community Moorings⁵⁵

The aim of the Hermitage Community Moorings (HCM) project in Wapping is to create a unique mixed development with commercial and residential uses onboard historic river craft. They want to preserve sailing barges, tugs and motor craft within a landmark mooring, giving context to the local architecture and its maritime history.

(Continued)

⁵³ Chris Livett, record of meeting, 1 December 2005

⁵⁴ Letter from London Rivers Association to Ken Livingstone, 17 June 2003

⁵⁵ Written submission from Anne Lydiat, Hermitage Community Moorings, 19 December 2005; Planning Application PA/04/01823 (submitted to London Borough of Tower Hamlets)

In addition, the proposal incorporates public river access with educational and recreational facilities – aiming to integrate the moorings culture with local people rather than privatising an area of the foreshore.

There has been a working mooring at the site since 1983, but to introduce residential boats HCM must apply for permission for a change of use. Unfortunately for HCM, local residents are said to be stridently against the proposals and launched a poster campaign complaining of the appearance of the vessels. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is expected to hear the planning application this Spring.

- 4.6. Another mooring, at Downings Road, attracted complaints from residents due to problems of noise and privacy, resulting in an enforcement notice from Southwark Council. The Council refused planning permission to regularise the change of use to mixed commercial and residential because the site was felt to be visually detrimental.
- 4.7. The Mayor came out in support of the Downings Road moorings, saying that an appropriate solution could help generate a vibrant community. In September 2004 the planning inspector ruled that permission should be granted – although he supported the enforcement action that had been taken in light of the genuine impacts on neighbouring residents. Planning consent for the moorings is now subject to improvements to layout, refuse disposal and noise.
- 4.8. The planning inspector considered that the moorings did not detract from the view, and that:
- ‘The characteristic [of the area] is that of a 19th Century townscape that owes its being and essence to the presence of a navigable trading river.... [The vessels] do provide a maritime flavour, which has not been lost through their conversion to residential use, in a location which is close to what is arguably the historic heart of our maritime consciousness as a trading nation.’⁵⁶*
- 4.9. This case highlights the importance of the development control process in preserving valued activities on the waterways while preventing conflict between different users.

⁵⁶ Planning Inspector, Mr Andrew D Kirby, quoted in Inland Waterways Association News: www.waterways.org.uk/library/waterways_mag/2004/November/navnews.htm

- 4.10. The British Canoe Union mentions that some canoe clubs operate in formerly run down areas, now occupied by exclusive housing which 'creates tensions with the activities they have undertaken in the past and new residents who resent Sunday mornings being disturbed by young people having fun out on the water'.⁵⁷
- 4.11. Local newspapers have reported that some boatyards have had to curtail their operating hours or the types of work they can undertake due to complaints about noise and disturbance.⁵⁸ The Environment Agency comments that 'other forms of regulation are supporting residents against [boatyard] activity. The practical nature of a working river needs to be better understood and accommodated.'⁵⁹
- 4.12. The Port of London Authority agrees that river activities, such as wharf operations, can conflict with existing or proposed residential development; particularly as access or egress with the tide can occur during the night.⁶⁰
- 4.13. Chris Livett, who operates passenger charter services, has received complaints from residents about the noise of people walking on the pier to reach his craft, and the signals sounded by boats. Indeed, he says that if 500 passengers aboard one of his cruise boats all laughed at once, it would contravene environmental legislation. Other activities on vessels, such as discos, can cause nuisance to adjacent residents.
- 4.14. There will always be tensions between different uses of a limited resource, but building design and the planning process can attempt to mitigate such difficulties. The impacts of industrial uses should be properly evaluated before permission is granted to non-river related uses nearby. Authorities should also seek to mitigate conflict and integrate different uses. Better noise insulation for riverside apartments and for river-based industrial or boating facilities can reduce negative impacts for residents. High design standards for river developments can improve their visual amenity both for residents and other observers. New residents should also be made more aware of the character of the working river.

⁵⁷ Written submission from Tamsin Phipps, British Canoe Union, 13 December 2005

⁵⁸ Eg Hounslow Feltham and Hanworth Times, 26 March 2004

⁵⁹ Written submission from Kathy Warburton, Environment Agency, 29 November 2005

⁶⁰ James Trimmer, Port of London Authority, record of meeting, 22 November 2005

Recommendation 4:

The Committee recommends that Boroughs work with developers and seek to ensure that the multi-functional nature of waterways is made clear to prospective residents. Boroughs should be mindful of the Blue Ribbon Network policies when considering complaints about river-related activities.

- 4.15. Difficulties between residents and users of the waterways are not the only issue – different water-related uses are not always compatible. Clearly, recreation, amenity and sport activities may not always sit comfortably alongside industrial or freight operations. There is sometimes conflict between canoeists and anglers, with concern that increased access to rivers for canoeists will disturb fishing areas. Furthermore, the safety of public access is a vital consideration. The river’s tidal nature, fast movement, and a degree of environmental pollution can make it hazardous.
- 4.16. Residential moorings can inhibit other uses due to issues of wash from passing boats, which need to slow down to avoid swamping houseboats.⁶¹ They can also have environmental implications.
- ‘Usually when there is a mooring proposal, objections are raised by the Environment Agency that quite rightly do need to be looked at.’⁶²*
- 4.17. Many types of activity can have adverse effects on biodiversity, and in an urban area the presence of strong local ecology should be particularly valued. Different uses of the waterways must be balanced, with the Blue Ribbon Network strategy providing a framework for this balancing act.
- 4.18. On London’s roads, the development of local schemes is informed by a policy framework for the treatment of different types of road. The Road Hierarchy is a separation of the road network into different categories determined by the functions they perform, helping to identify priorities for their use. For example, on most main roads there is a general presumption in favour of distribution, and for local roads there is a presumption in favour of access and amenity. This provides a framework for judging particular proposals at a local level while taking account of the operation of the overall network.

⁶¹ James Trimmer, *ibid*

⁶² Clive Wren, Residential Boat Owners’ Association, transcript of London Rivers Association meeting 13 December 2005

- 4.19. A parallel concept might be applied to London's waterways. This approach would more explicitly recognise the waterways as a network with a variety of uses competing for space – leisure, amenity, biodiversity, industry, transport and residential space - and help create a vision of how this network could operate as a whole. Such a hierarchy could help to focus the minds of developers and planners and act as a policy tool to operationalise the Blue Ribbon Network strategy.
- 4.20. Determining the designation of specific reaches of water would be the task of and build on the work of the Thames Policy Area appraisals, although the London Plan could provide guidance on how designations should be made. This should take into account the network character of the waterways, the suitability of particular stretches for different activities, and wider policy issues such as the London Plan's characterisation of the area.

5. The planning process

- 5.1. This chapter outlines the role of planning decisions by the Mayor and London Boroughs in the implementation of the Blue Ribbon Network strategy.
- 5.2. A key question is, how far do the Blue Ribbon Network principles and policies permeate actual decisions by the Mayor and Boroughs on individual schemes? The Mayor has said that:

*'The policies in the London Plan relating to the Blue Ribbon Network must be judged and appraised alongside all the other policies. In some cases this may mean that not all of the policy objectives in one particular area are achieved... I have to take a balanced view of the overall merits of the scheme. I can assure you that the Blue Ribbon Network policies are very important to me and are given serious weight alongside other concerns.'*⁶³

- 5.3. However, some observers feel that the balance is awry.

*'The Mayor is not supporting the implementation of his policies when applied on the ground to local planning applications... The major problem at the moment is the lack of balance that the Mayor or his advisors are taking in weighing up the Blue Ribbon policies against all the other ones when we have an actual decision on the ground about a piece of land.'*⁶⁴

- 5.4. The full picture is more complex, but a number of waterside planning applications have attracted considerable controversy, eliciting a range of views from waterways stakeholders and planning authorities.

Planning decisions

- 5.5. Waterways campaigners have expressed frustration that, in their view, water-related uses are often edged out of new developments and have cited cases where they considered that the Blue Ribbon policies were not enforced. The London Assembly Green Group published a list of planning cases where they considered that the Mayor's decisions did not meet the intention of the Blue Ribbon strategy.⁶⁵

⁶³ Mayor's Question Time 26 January 2005, question 0089/2005, <http://mqt.london.gov.uk//public/question.do?id=9843>

⁶⁴ Angela Dixon, West London River Group, transcript of London Rivers Association meeting 13 December 2005

⁶⁵ London Assembly Green Group, 'Thames and London Waterways- Are they being sold down the river?'

- 5.6. However the Mayor strongly countered these claims, pointing to benefits that accrued to the Blue Ribbon Network and differing views on how the schemes would affect the vitality of the waterways. Planning authorities explain that they have to view applications in the round, and have to be sure that they can withstand legal challenge if they refuse permission because of shortcomings in a particular policy area.
- 5.7. London Boroughs that provided information for this investigation pointed out cases where they have sought to implement the Blue Ribbon Network policies locally, as follows.
- 5.8. The London Borough of Bexley has required landscaping at riverside sites; rejected an incinerator proposal that would diminish the attraction of the local riverside; and cited its UDP river policies in four planning refusals since 2000. The Borough stressed riverside access in its planning guidelines for three major upcoming sites.⁶⁶
- 5.9. The Corporation of London highlighted its commitment to the Blue Ribbon objectives within its UDP, which among other things has a policy to maintain facilities for river freight transport at Walbrook Wharf.⁶⁷
- 5.10. The London Borough of Greenwich secured new piers as part of the Greenwich Peninsula and Royal Arsenal developments. Its UDP includes a dedicated waterfront chapter, and the Borough expresses concern about developer pressure for tall buildings 'on what seems like every riverside site'.⁶⁸
- 5.11. The London Borough of Hounslow confirmed the importance of river access in its planning policies. Hounslow is considering the protection of river-related uses such as boat building in Brentford, with the aim of preventing these uses from being 'sanitised' out of the area.⁶⁹ However, Councillor Hibbs from Hounslow responded separately to say that her experience in relation to the Blue Ribbon Network policies has been 'extremely depressing'. She considers that the policies have been ignored.⁷⁰
- 5.12. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea noted that most of the Royal Borough's riverside is within conservation areas. The Royal Borough stated support for the Mayor's policies on river-based waste transfer.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Written submission from John Davison, London Borough of Bexley, 30 November 2005

⁶⁷ Written submission from Paul Beckett, Corporation of London, 28 November 2005

⁶⁸ Written submission from Steve Tyler, London Borough of Greenwich (officer views only), 29 November 2005

⁶⁹ Written submission from Gillian Bernadt, London Borough of Hounslow, 28 November 2005

⁷⁰ Written submission from Councillor Hibbs, London Borough of Hounslow, 21 November 2005

⁷¹ Written submission from David McDonald, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, 29 November 2005

- 5.13. The Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames has considered two relevant applications for river-related facilities. It intends to strengthen references to the Blue Ribbon Network policies when holding pre-application discussions in future.⁷²
- 5.14. The London Borough of Richmond highlighted that there are a range of policies in its UDP addressing Blue Ribbon Network issues. The Borough outlined how the policies were applied to ten relevant planning applications – for example, retaining a boat shed at Eel Pie Boatyard; creating a marina at Hampton Wick; and a public slipway at Toughs Boatyard in Teddington.⁷³
- 5.15. Despite some positive examples identified by Boroughs, several of the organisations submitting information to this investigation felt that there was an undersupply of various types of infrastructure to support activity on the rivers and canals - from maintenance facilities to moorings and piers:

*'There is not a problem with using [the Blue Ribbon Network] other than that you cannot get on or off it.'*⁷⁴

- 5.16. In some locations British Waterways has introduced new mooring basins, but says there is still a shortage with long waiting lists for houseboats. It favours Boroughs giving more consideration to a mix of residential, visitor and commercial moorings at appropriate locations:

*'Moorings.. can add to the housing stock, contribute significantly to the local economy, add life and vibrancy and provide natural surveillance.'*⁷⁵

- 5.17. It was highlighted that 30 cruise ships each year arrive on the Thames and need to load stores, but there is a lack of suitable facilities. Chris Livett suggested that Councils should install common user berths (public quays) for people to take a boat to ground for repair, to unload freight, or load stores for cruising⁷⁶.

*'One of the most pressing problems is the lack of boatyard facilities for the annual maintenance and repair of passenger vessels... boatyards have closed down within easy travelling distance of London and each year it becomes more difficult and expensive to find space in the remaining few.'*⁷⁷

- 5.18. Given these difficulties, the Committee is keen to see publicly accessible water-related uses included within new waterside developments.

⁷² Written submission from Andrew Lynch, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, 8 December 2005

⁷³ Written submission from Helen Cornforth, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, 24 November 2005

⁷⁴ Jack Faram, Transport on Water, transcript of London Rivers Association meeting 13 December 2005

⁷⁵ British Waterways

⁷⁶ Chris Livett, note of meeting, 1 December 2005

⁷⁷ Written submission from Rita Beckwith, City Cruises, 29 November 2005

Water-related uses

- 5.19. The London Plan calls for ‘water-related uses’ along the Blue Ribbon Network – but these are generally far less profitable than residential or office buildings with a view of the Thames. Getting relevant facilities included in development proposals – and preventing the removal of existing features – often requires the intervention of planning authorities.
- 5.20. There are many demands on planning gain in London, with developers’ margins squeezed by contributions for affordable housing, transport improvements, and other pressing priorities. Housing and economic development imperatives will inevitably rank as more significant than the possibility of securing river-related uses. As a result, after any planning gain available for these benefits has been secured, there may be no fat remaining in the developer’s profit margins to enable the planning authority to negotiate water-related benefits. If the planning authority insists on such benefits as a condition of planning approval, some developers may simply walk away and find a different investment.
- 5.21. Given its value, ‘privatisation’ of the water’s edge is perhaps an inevitable trend. However, while the march of riverside residential development is viewed by many people with concern, in many cases it is the only means of reviving neglected stretches of water which would otherwise remain in disrepair and disuse. Then again, the inclusion of a pier or mooring in new developments will often be economically unfeasible, given the wider context. However, it was suggested that:
- ‘One thing the London Docklands Development Corporation did do in their existence was to have the vision of putting in three piers in Docklands, one on the Isle of Dogs, one at Surrey Quays and one at Butler’s Wharf. They have subsequently become real assets, although they sat dormant for many years’⁷⁸*
- 5.22. Developers are of course reluctant to commit to providing facilities that add to their costs and are uncertain or risky in terms of financial return. The height of the tide can make piers and other water access particularly expensive. Neither are developers keen to amend planning applications having already incurred significant costs in producing their plans. GLA officers have pointed out that with the demands on their time, the variety of issues needing consideration and the need for detailed local knowledge, it may not be feasible to test the assumptions made by developers if they dismiss the possibility of a pier, or a boating club.

⁷⁸ Sean Collins, Thames Clippers, transcript of London Rivers Association meeting 13 December 2005

Planning decision reports

- 5.23. The Thames and Waterways Stakeholder Forum's response to this investigation stated that reports on relevant sites by planning officers sometimes do not include reference to the Blue Ribbon policies, or if they do, they 'have simply been listed by policy number without comment on their applicability', leaving decision-making committees 'completely in the dark'.⁷⁹
- 5.24. We also heard that there is sometimes a lack of knowledge about the policies.

'There is no ill will towards the waterways, but things do not go right because they just do not know about the Blue Ribbon policies and do not appreciate them... we have talked to the developers and asked them about the Blue Ribbon policies, and they say, 'What policies?'.⁸⁰

- 5.25. An examination of several planning reports by the GLA's Planning Decisions Unit (listed in Appendix 5) suggests that the level of attention given to Blue Ribbon Network varies considerably. While some reports do devote significant space to the issue, the inclusion of a specific section considering Blue Ribbon Network issues and considering the policies thoroughly is not a consistent feature of reports on development plans close to the waterside. Riverside walks are frequently mentioned, but reports are often silent on whether a development includes water-related uses.
- 5.26. Irrespective of the merits or demerits of these particular schemes, the Blue Ribbon Network policies are relevant by the very nature of the proposals. Although competing demands on resources may impede fuller analysis of this issue, officers need to be consistent in applying their minds to the question of whether schemes close to waterways are in line with the policies.

Recommendation 5:

The Committee recommends that the GLA Planning Decisions Unit and London Boroughs ensure that every report on a planning application close to a waterway includes a section assessing its compliance with the Blue Ribbon Network policies.

⁷⁹ Written submission from Nigel Moore, Thames and Waterways Stakeholder Forum, 23 November 2005

⁸⁰ Del Brenner, Regents Network, transcript of London Rivers Association meeting 13 December 2005

6. Structures for delivery

- 6.1. This chapter sets out our key recommendations for the new London Waterways Commission to provide institutional support for the implementation of the Blue Ribbon Network strategy.

Fragmentation?

- 6.2. The Committee heard concerns about a discontinuity across Borough boundaries in the way that river-related policies are understood and applied. The fact that the Blue Ribbon Network is cut across by administrative boundaries gives rise to the view that it is not 'managed' as a whole. Only Richmond straddles the Thames – elsewhere Boroughs face each other across the river and may have opposing policies. Statutory bodies such as the Port of London Authority and British Waterways exist to manage their respective parts of the network – but only the particular aspects falling under their remit.
- 6.3. The London Rivers Associations' membership has said that whilst the Blue Ribbon Network provides a sound policy framework, there is no strategic impetus to drive forward an agenda for implementation. They note the 'fragmentary' decision-making structure for London's waterways across thematic and geographical boundaries – 'consequently, a coordinated and prioritised plan of action to implement policy has failed to emerge'.⁸¹
- 6.4. While there are concerns about fragmentation of roles and responsibilities, the number and range of waterways organisations also provide a useful diversity of perspectives, with expertise on specific issues concentrated in local groups. However, the nature of a network is that it needs a fairly high level of coordination in order to operate successfully and efficiently. The partnerships established for the Thames Landscape Strategies showed how this can be done, particularly in relation to Boroughs working together across boundaries.

*'We need all of us. The thing we are debating and that needs sorting out is the structure in which we work together.'*⁸²

The London Waterways Commission

- 6.5. On 4 January 2006 the Mayor announced the appointment of Jenny Jones AM and Murad Qureshi AM as joint chairs of the new London Waterways Commission. The Commission has been created to advise the Mayor on the implementation of the Blue Ribbon Network policies, and to provide advice on the full range of uses of London's waterways including transport, industrial, wildlife, cultural, landscape, design, residential and leisure uses. It is intended to help the Mayor enhance the

⁸¹ Written submission from Rose Jaijee, London Rivers Association, 21 November 2005

⁸² Jill Goddard, Thames Estuary Partnership, transcript of London Rivers Association meeting 13 December 2005

use of the waterways and canals as well as protect what is already there. The first meeting of the Commission is planned for February 2006.

- 6.6. The adoption of Jenny Jones' proposal for a London Waterways Commission is a promising step forward, but it is crucial that the Commission has the clout to genuinely influence policy. This will depend to some extent on the resources available to it – which are expected to be limited.
- 6.7. With the help of the Commission, the Mayor should take a proactive and ambitious role – moving from treating the Blue Ribbon Network as largely a development control issue, to taking a key role in the brokerage of solutions. This does not necessarily entail a much greater commitment of resources than already planned; it means smarter working with other organisations.
- 6.8. With the benefit of experience with the new Commission, the Mayor should start to review whether more could be achieved and what organisational model could be applied in the longer term. This report does not seek to promote a definitive proposal for a bigger or better Commission, but to contribute to a developing vision for management of the waterways.

Delivery through partnership

- 6.9. The GLA is not itself a service delivery organisation – some of its key strengths are the ability to lever institutions and to spearhead and 'brand' initiatives in order to secure policy objectives. These capabilities should be put to greater use in the service of the Blue Ribbon Network strategy.
- 6.10. The new London Waterways Commission should complement rather than supplant existing waterways bodies. The London Rivers Association, in particular, expressed strong concerns about possible duplication of their work in bringing together a forum of diverse waterways interests, and this should be taken into account. The Commission's main mode of operation should be to draw on the work of other organisations and empower them to help deliver on the Blue Ribbon Network. Working with outside organisations was successful in producing the Blue Ribbon Network strategy; a similar approach should be used to implement that strategy.
- 6.11. The Commission and the Mayor should channel and reinforce work carried out by third parties. It should take an overview of the various activities and initiatives that are ongoing, place them in a strategic context and drive forward the overall vision. The Commission should be focussed on pulling the levers that will secure delivery. It must not be a 'talking shop'.

- 6.12. Working with external groups, the Commission should:
- facilitate liaison with Boroughs, the Mayor, developers and waterways groups;
 - mediate the communication and application of recommendations from waterways groups at a political level;
 - advise waterways groups on their approach to maximise its effectiveness; and
 - act as a conduit and a champion for the services delivered by waterways organisations.
- 6.13. A particular focus for the Commission should be to steer the Mayor's approach to waterways around the Olympics site, including issues around freight, design, environment, culture and tourism.
- 6.14. Most of these functions are consistent with the Commission's remit – although a key issue will be the availability of resources.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Mayor ensure that the London Waterways Commission:

- **adds value at an executive and strategic level rather than duplicating the work of existing organisations;**
- **facilitates partnerships, particularly between Boroughs; and**
- **supports the work of external waterways bodies.**

Monitoring

- 6.15. A particular area of activity where the Commission could add value is supporting monitoring of the development control process. This would provide a check on the treatment of the Blue Ribbon Network in planning applications and decisions. We heard from the London Rivers Association that up until three years ago, when funding became too constrained, they had a remit to review planning applications and decisions for waterside developments. With a proposed new structure for the London Rivers Association, this role may be reactivated.

*'Coherent monitoring of new waterfront development is crucial if we are to understand the trends in new development and their strategic impacts.'*⁸³

⁸³ Written submission from Rose Jajjee, London Rivers Association, 21 November 2005

- 6.16. Such monitoring must be robust and objective in order to inform and influence the planning process. The Commission should work with the London Rivers Association to help develop this function. It would be interesting to explore whether the GLA's new development database could in future be used to help manage this monitoring of waterside schemes.

Limited resources, competing priorities

- 6.17. The previous Chapter noted the difficulties faced by developers and the planning profession when assessing the feasibility of water-related facilities within new developments. So what can be done to ensure that the waterways 'win' more often?
- 6.18. The Committee suggests that waterways interest groups are a locus for precisely the type of expertise and local knowledge that could add value to the pre-application stage of new waterside developments.

*'The feeling we got from [developers] was that if they had a clearer understanding of what was required of them, they would be more likely to satisfy it.'*⁸⁴

- 6.19. The London Waterways Commission should support relevant organisations to work with developers to raise awareness of the Blue Ribbon Network strategy, with the aim of improving the quality of applications - at the earliest stages when plans are mooted. Crucially, advice to developers needs to take into account the commercial and financial implications of any proposal. The Commission should also help waterways groups to engage with Boroughs and ensure they have the relevant knowledge to interpret and apply the policies on the ground.

Recommendation 7:

The Committee recommends that the London Waterways Commission support the proposed watchdog role of the London Rivers Association in relation to the Blue Ribbon Network implications of decisions by planning authorities.

The Commission should also give backing to relevant waterways groups to provide guidance to developers and Boroughs with the aim of improving the quality of applications and alignment with the principles of Blue Ribbon Network strategy.

⁸⁴ Rose Jaijee, London Rivers Association, transcript of London Rivers Association meeting 13 December 2005

7. Getting Tough

- 7.1. As discussed in the previous chapters, the creation of a London Waterways Commission could provide a welcome institutional structure to drive forward the Blue Ribbon Network strategy. To support this initiative and maximise its effectiveness, the Committee wishes to raise the profile of the Blue Ribbon Network in the minds of developers and planning authorities.
- 7.2. The development control process needs to serve local and regional regeneration objectives, but it should not neglect other strategic considerations including the Blue Ribbon Network policies.
- 7.3. The Blue Ribbon Network is undeniably one among many policies that must be promoted by planning authorities, and other policies will (and should) often be treated as a higher priority when negotiating with developers. Nonetheless, this Committee urges the Mayor and London Boroughs to consider carefully the strategic impact of individual decisions that affect the Network.
- 7.4. The Mayor and London Boroughs should increase the attention given to the Blue Ribbon Network policies in their planning decisions process, and actively negotiate appropriate amendments to schemes that do not include publicly accessible river-related uses. Greater priority for the Blue Ribbon Network would help to reduce the fears of some stakeholders that the waterways are being stripped of their character:
- 'I think that all riverside Boroughs should have at least one pier and encourage developers to put piers there. Otherwise the river will be sterilised.'*⁸⁵
- 7.5. Developers of riparian sites may own the land involved – but they do not own the river. Developers can secure significant premiums for riverside apartments and offices. They derive a benefit from this resource, but have not paid for it. Sometimes they also diminish its value or useability for others. In this context, several of the people who provided information for this investigation felt that planning authorities should be tougher in insisting that developments include better provision for the waterways.
- 7.6. There is a requirement for developers to provide access alongside the water, but not onto the water itself. The Committee believes that a more powerful policy for securing river-related facilities would be appropriate. Indeed, waterways campaigners have called for the Blue Ribbon Network to be given strong protection along the lines of greenbelt land:

⁸⁵ Jack Faram, Transport on Water, transcript of London Rivers Association meeting 13 December 2005

*'When we were first talking about this idea of a Blue Ribbon Network... we were proposing a strong planning designation for waterways so that developers would have a series of principles they would have to satisfy before being allowed to build on waterfront land.'*⁸⁶

- 7.7. A requirement for all relevant planning proposals to accommodate river-related uses would be powerful indeed, but unlikely to be accepted. It is acknowledged that some sites will not be suitable for this approach, and Boroughs would be concerned that an excessively prescriptive policy could frustrate their aspirations for local regeneration.
- 7.8. Developers should, however, be required to give active consideration to possible river-related facilities within their plans, helping to ensure that the waterways are considered creatively at the outset. This is in line with policies already contained in the London Plan – but the force and application of these policies should be increased. Institutional support from the London Waterways Commission could facilitate this process by helping to strengthen links between developers and waterways groups.
- 7.9. Moreover, the use of river or canal transport for transporting materials associated with waterside developments should be a consideration in planning applications. This would help build the market for water-based transport, ensuring that the development contributes to the waterways economy.⁸⁷
- 7.10. Some contributors to this study have commented that wharves, river cruise services and other water-based businesses pay toward the upkeep of the waterways, for example through license fees to the Port of London Authority. Riverside developers benefit from the waterways but generally make no specific payment towards maintaining that asset.
- 7.11. We recognise that in some cases it will prove unfeasible to include water-related uses within a development itself. For that reason, we think that the Mayor should also closely examine how other mechanisms could return benefits to the water.

⁸⁶ Rose Jaijee, London Rivers Association, transcript of London Rivers Association meeting 13 December 2005

⁸⁷ Chris Livett, record of meeting, 1 December 2005

Recommendation 8:

The Committee recommends that the London Plan be revised to introduce a requirement that development proposals alongside the Blue Ribbon Network include an assessment of how publicly accessible water-related uses could be incorporated into the development, with proper justification if it is judged to be unfeasible to include such uses.

The assessment should have regard to the Thames Policy Area appraisals and local development plans.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1. We conclude that there are valuable initiatives taking place on the Blue Ribbon Network, many opportunities, and a range of active groups. The missing piece is an overall perspective and drive from the strategic level to harness the energy available for investment in the waterways.
- 8.2. The recommendations in this report which are directed at the London Waterways Commission are also directed at the Mayor, who should ensure that the Commission has the necessary resources to fulfil its potential.
- 8.3. Drawing on our recommendations, we advocate the following key themes for the London Waterways Commission and the Mayor to focus on in the coming year.
- Strong political commitment to the Blue Ribbon Network.
 - Strengthening partnerships with other organisations.
 - Exploiting the opportunities presented by the Olympic and Paralympic Games and their legacy, to the extent that this is sustainable and affordable.
 - Working with partners to promote the capital's rivers, canals and water bodies as a destination in their own right for tourists and Londoners.
 - Exploring options for extracting more from the development process for the Blue Ribbon Network.
- 8.4. Our assessment is that the protection, enhancement and management of the Blue Ribbon Network is a genuine strategic issue for London which deserves a high profile and a strong approach to implementation.

Appendix 1: Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

The Committee recommends that the Mayor, with the London Waterways Commission, develop an overall strategy for the carriage of freight on London's waterways. The Mayor should:

- build on work already carried out by Transport for London and through the wharves safeguarding process,
- encourage the development of waste and recycling facilities at adjacent sites, and
- ensure maximum sustainable use is made of the waterways for the transport of freight associated with the Olympics.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Mayor, together with relevant delivery organisations, capitalise on the opportunity offered by 2012 to increase the use of London's waterways by its diverse communities as a sport and recreational asset.

Recommendation 3:

The Committee recommends that the Mayor, through the delivery agents for his tourism plan:

- take the lead in developing a holistic tourism strategy for London's waterways;
- afford the waterways a higher profile on the GLA website and relevant tourism websites; and
- work with partners to produce and maintain interpretive material for the river and canal sides, including signage for access points and facilities for using the water.

Recommendation 4:

The Committee recommends that Boroughs work with developers and seek to ensure that the multi-functional nature of waterways is made clear to prospective residents. Boroughs should be mindful of the Blue Ribbon Network policies when considering complaints about river-related activities.

Recommendation 5:

The Committee recommends that the GLA Planning Decisions Unit and London Boroughs ensure that every report on a planning application close to a waterway includes a section assessing its compliance with the Blue Ribbon Network policies.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Mayor ensure that the London Waterways Commission:

- adds value at an executive and strategic level rather than duplicating the work of existing organisations;
- facilitates partnerships, particularly between Boroughs; and
- supports the work of external waterways bodies.

Recommendation 7:

The Committee recommends that the London Waterways Commission support the proposed watchdog role of the London Rivers Association in relation to the Blue Ribbon Network implications of decisions by planning authorities.

The Commission should also give backing to relevant waterways groups to provide guidance to developers and Boroughs with the aim of improving the quality of applications and alignment with the principles of Blue Ribbon Network strategy.

Recommendation 8:

The Committee recommends that the London Plan be revised to introduce a requirement that development proposals alongside the Blue Ribbon Network include an assessment of how publicly accessible water-related uses could be incorporated into the development, with proper justification if it is judged to be unfeasible to include such uses.

The assessment should have regard to the Thames Policy Area appraisals and local development plans.

Appendix 2: List of organisations and individuals submitting written and oral information

The Committee would like to thank all those organisations and individuals who took the time to contact the Committee and provide information for the scrutiny.

Copies of the written submissions received by the Committee and records of meetings are available on request from the London Assembly Secretariat.

Written submissions:

British Canoe Union
British Waterways
City Cruises
Corporation of London
Environment Agency
Hermitage Community Moorings
HMS President
Livett's Launches
London Borough of Bexley
London Borough of Greenwich (officer views)
London Borough of Hounslow
London Borough of Hounslow
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
London Rivers Association
Peter Finch
Peter Makower
Port of London Authority
Reachout
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Thames and Waterways Stakeholder Forum
Thames Explorer Trust
Transport for London
West London River Group

Meetings:

Thames Festival, 3 November 2005
James Trimmer, Port of London Authority, 22 November 2005
Chris Livett, 1 December 2005
London Rivers Association Forum, 13 December 2005

Appendix 3: Glossary of organisations

This glossary lists the key organisations involved in London's waterways.

Statutory bodies

- British Waterways
Public, not-for-dividend corporation responsible for Britain's network of canals, rivers and docks. Comprises Grand Union Canal, Regent's Canal, River Lee Navigation, River Stort Navigation and the West India and Millwall Dock complex within London.
- Environment Agency
Government agency that, with the Crown, owns the majority of the bed of the Thames upstream of Teddington Lock.
- London Development Agency
GLA Group organisation responsible for driving London's economic growth.
- London River Services
Section of Transport for London responsible for passenger transport on the Thames.
- Port of London Authority
Public trust responsible for conservancy and regulation of navigation of 96 miles of the tidal Thames from Teddington Lock to the Thames Estuary. Owns most of the river bed and foreshore up to the high tide mark, as well as some riparian land in Richmond.
- Sport England
Agency responsible for delivering the Government's sporting objectives.
- Transport for London
GLA Group organisation responsible for London's transport network.

Sub-regional partnerships

Public, voluntary and private sector partnerships working to develop and implement the Thames Strategies:

- Thames Estuary Partnership (responsible for the Thames Strategy East).
- Thames Landscape Strategy Hampton to Kew.
- Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea.

Other partnerships

- Lea Rivers Trust
Charity promoting environmental work; formerly known as the Lower Lea Project.
- London Biodiversity Partnership
Nature conservation partnership of public, private and voluntary organisations.
- River Thames Alliance
Partnership of public and private sector organisations. Producing Thames Waterway Plan for the non-tidal Thames upstream of Teddington with the Environment Agency.
- Tidal Thames Alliance
Partnership working for the tidal Thames.
- Visit London
Official visitor organisation for London.

Charities and campaigning organisations

- Inland Waterways Association
Lobbying organisation for Britain's canals.
- London Rivers Association
Association of interest groups, community organisations, businesses, statutory agencies and local authorities providing a forum for cross-sectoral debate and partnerships for delivery of projects; being restructured to cover all London waterspaces.
- Regents Network
Campaigning group of canal users and enthusiasts.
- Residential Boat Owners' Association
Working for the interests of boat dwellers on the coasts, rivers and canals of Britain.
- River Thames Society
Charity concerned with facilities for access to the Thames.
- Thames21
Environmental charity working with communities to improve and maintain London's rivers and canals.
- Thames Explorer Trust
Charity promoting education about the Thames and access to the river.
- Transport on Water
Charity promoting water-based transport.
- West London River Group
Grouping of riparian amenity societies and residents' associations from Kew to Vauxhall.

Other organisations

- British Canoe Union
Canoeing governing body.
- Thames Festival
Delivers annual festival between Westminster and Tower Bridges.
- Thames and Waterways Stakeholder Forum
One of three advisory groups set up by the Mayor.

Businesses

- City Cruises
Operator of passenger services on the River Thames.
- Livett's Launches
Maritime consultancy, filming and civil engineering. Run by Chris Livett, who also heads Thames Luxury Charters, Tidy Thames and Maidenhead Steam Navigation Company.
- Thames Clippers
Operator of commuter services on the River Thames.

Appendix 4: Previous scrutiny recommendations on Thames Path and Foreshore

1. The Planning and Spatial Development Committee should conduct a further scrutiny to review progress, considering riverside developments referred to the Mayor since May 2000, to assess performance against the objectives outlined within the Blue Ribbon Annex to the Draft London Plan.
2. Although the Blue Ribbon Network sets out a potentially suitable framework for Thames side developments, clear political will and leadership is needed to provide the framework with impetus. A statement of strategy from the Mayor is needed as to how he will ensure that delivery of an improved Thameside environment, driven by the Blue Ribbon Network, will be championed and procured.
3. That the Mayor, Boroughs, sub regional partnerships and where appropriate other agencies identify key individual sites where best practice could be established in line with the standards promoted in the Blue Ribbon Network. Opportunities for this may be available in the Thames Gateway and in particular in areas identified within the draft London Plan as areas of opportunity and regeneration.
4. We recommend that the Thames Path be extended beyond its current Eastern Boundaries towards the Greater London Boundary, on both sides of the Thames.
5. That TfL extend the Thames Path strategic walking route identified in their Draft Walking Plan for London to include the whole of Thames riverside. As the path is extended and completed downriver it should be added to the signed route network.
6. That to supplement the work already carried out for the Thames Path Online Project, TfL ensure that the mapped information (Annex A) is updated regularly and that the survey work done is extended to include the eastern section of London not covered by the National Trail.
7. That the management of the path remains in the control of local boroughs.
8. That the Mayor co-ordinates an overall review of current enforcement regimes along the River Path, to see whether good practice and better coordination can be developed.
9. That as part of this review, the Mayor considers funding arrangements for a warden service, or a pilot service, as part of TfL/ GLA's budget planning process, justified as an initiative to encourage tourism, the environment, pedestrian safety and economic development along the Thames corridor.
10. With a view to increasing public access to the foreshore, the Mayor should facilitate a consultation between the relevant different agencies to:
 - Clarify boundaries of responsibilities for resources and management issues presented by supervised and unsupervised access to the foreshore
 - Develop a directory, either by Borough or for the whole London Thames area, of access points and the rights attaching to them, ownership and repairing responsibilitiesThe results of this consultation to be reported back to the Planning Committee at a later date.

Appendix 5: Blue Ribbon Network planning cases

These findings are derived from a separate investigation undertaken by the Planning and Spatial Development Committee reviewing Mayoral decisions on strategic planning applications. The report associated with that investigation is available at <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/plansd.jsp>

Proposal Title	Refusal directed by Mayor?	Reference to Blue Ribbon Network	Decision Date
London Arena, Limeharbour	N	Blue Ribbon issues covered.	13/10/2004
former Sutton Sewage Works, Kimpton Industrial Area, Sutton	Y	Not named as policy issue but noted concerns about diversion of Ply Brook.	12/01/2005
Site at 3-5 & 19-25 Payne Road, E3	N	Not named as policy issue.	09/02/2005
31-39 Millharbour, Isle of Dogs	N	Not named as policy issue, but mentioned existing access for Millwall Dock.	09/02/2005
The Warren, Woolwich Arsenal	N	Named as policy issue, discussed riverside walk.	23/02/2005
Crown Wharf, Canning Town	N	Not named as policy issue but dealt with pedestrian bridge across Lea and riverside walk.	23/02/2005
Former British Gas Site, Harford Road	N	Referred to canalside open space; recommended marina/mooring dock.	23/02/2005
1 Millharbour, Isle of Dogs, LB Tower Hamlets	N	Not named as policy issue but requested new link from dockside to Millharbour.	14/04/2005
Lower Lea Crossing, Leamouth Peninsula	N	Blue Ribbon issues covered.	14/04/2005
Desalination Plant, Beckton, LB Newham	Y	Not named as policy issue (but mention of riverside walk).	11/05/2005
UEL Docklands Campus	N	Blue Ribbon issues covered.	10/08/2005

Appendix 6: Orders and Translations

For further information on this report or to order a bound copy, please contact:

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You can also view a copy of the Report on the GLA website:

www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/index.htm

If you, or someone you know, needs a copy of this report in large print or Braille, or a copy of the summary and main findings in another language, then please call us on 020 7983 4100 or email assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

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જો તમને કે તમે જાણતા હો તેવી કોઈ વ્યક્તિને, આ અહેવાલમાંથી કાર્યકારી સંક્ષેપ અને બેલામણોની નકલ મોટા અક્ષરોમાં છપાયેલી, બ્રેઈલમાં કે તેમની પોતાની ભાષામાં વિના મૂલ્યે જોઈતી હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને ફોન દ્વારા 020 7983 4100 ઉપર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો અથવા આ સરનામે ઈ-મેઈલ કરો assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

Se você, ou alguém de seu conhecimento, gostaria de ter uma cópia do sumário executivo e recomendações desse relatório em imprensa grande ou Braille, ou na sua língua, sem custo, favor nos contatar por telefone no número 020 7983 4100 ou email em assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਜਾਂ ਕੋਈ ਤੁਹਾਡਾ ਜਾਣ-ਪਛਾਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਇਸ ਰਿਪੋਰਟ ਦਾ ਸਰਜ਼ੈਕਟਿਵ ਸੁਮਾਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਸੁਝਾਵਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਕਲ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਬ੍ਰੇਅਲ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਅਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਫਤ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿ੍ਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ 020 7983 4100 ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ assembly.translations@london.gov.uk ਤੇ ਸਾਡੀ ਈ-ਮੇਲ ਕਰੋ।

Si usted, o algún conocido, quiere recibir copia del resumen ejecutivo y las recomendaciones relativos a este informe en forma de Braille, en su propia idioma, y gratis, no duden en ponerse en contacto con nosotros marcando 020 7983 4100 o por correo electrónico:
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اگر آپ یا آپ کا کوئی جاننے والا اس انگریزی کیٹوسمری اور اس رپورٹ میں سے سفارشات کی ایک کاپی بڑے پرنٹ میں یا بریل پڑھنے والی زبان میں بلا معاوضہ حاصل کرنا چاہیں تو، براہ کرم ہم سے فون 020 7983 4100 پر رابطہ کریں یا assembly.translations@london.gov.uk پر ای میل کریں۔

Ta ba ri enikeni ti o ba ni ife lati ni eda ewe nla ti igbimo awon asoju tabi papa julo ni ede ti abinibi won, ki o kansiya lori ero ibanisoro. Nomba wa ni 020 7983 4100 tabi ki e kan si wa lori ero assembly.translations@london.gov.uk. Ako ni gbowo lowo yin fun eto yi.

Haddii adiga, ama qof aad taqaanid, uu doonaayo inuu ku helo koobi ah warbixinta oo kooban iyo talooyinka far waaweyn ama farta qofka indhaha la' loogu talagalay, ama luuqadooda, oo bilaash u ah, fadlan nagala soo xiriir telefoonkan 020 7983 4100 ama email-ka cinwaanku yahay assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

Appendix 7: Principles of Assembly Scrutiny

The powers of the London Assembly include power to investigate and report on decisions and actions of the Mayor, or on matters relating to the principal purposes of the Greater London Authority, and on any other matters which the Assembly considers to be of importance to Londoners. In the conduct of scrutiny and investigation the Assembly abides by a number of principles.

Scrutiny reviews:

- aim to recommend action to achieve improvements;
- are conducted with objectivity and independence;
- examine all aspects of the Mayor's strategies;
- consult widely, having regard to issues of timeliness and cost;
- are conducted in a constructive and positive manner; and
- are conducted with an awareness of the need to spend taxpayers' money wisely and well.

More information about the scrutiny work of the London Assembly, including published reports, details of committee meetings and contact information, can be found on the GLA website at www.london.gov.uk/assembly

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