

TEDDINGTON SOCIETY 2015 AGM Reports

ENVIRONMENT GROUP - Geoff Howland

There was a slight interruption to the usual round of litter picks in the Spring occasioned by my Mother's sudden illness and subsequent demise, with all that involves for the eldest son. Enough said about that but suffice to report that we had several successful re-cycling site clean ups and litter picks including the most popular, and best attended, when we cleaned up in the environs of the War Memorial on the day before Remembrance Sunday. David Lawton told me that the weather was rarely inclement for any litter pick he organised during his 20+ years as Group Leader, but I obviously do not have the same influence with those who count (the Met Office and even Higher beings?) as the War Memorial pick was, again, a truly soggy affair but the whole team stuck at it for two hours or more to ensure the whole area was in a fit condition for the remembrance service the following day. Other ad hoc litter picks/clean ups were conducted including those in St Mary's church yard prior to the Easter Sunday Easter egg hunt and the "continuous litter pick" during the Teddington Village Fair and the post event clean up, which earned us an Alpha Plus from the Council official who conducted the post event inspection the following day. We also assisted Radnor House School in late September with the loan of litter picking equipment (and the Group Leader!) for their "Make a Difference Day" when a group of students, of various ages, undertook a day long litter pick in Twickenham and along the river front opposite Eel Pie Island. The day was great fun, if not a little tiring, and helped to instil in all the participants the importance of respecting and maintaining the environment. It is planned that the school will re-run the event in 2016 but will cross the border into Teddington.

Some of the equipment I referred to last year obtained from the "Capital Clean Up" scheme in 2014 has been diverted to the Riverside and Open Spaces Group and some loaned out on a semi-permanent basis to Group individuals to assist with their solo litter picks. I was conducting one such litter pick in the High Street in April or May wearing my orange Capital Clean Up tabard, which is a bit cooler than our yellow Teddington Society variety, when I was suddenly slapped on the back. I was about to remonstrate with the slapper until I realised it was, in fact, Boris Johnson who was in Town and had spotted my tabard as I was grubbing about the gutters. He seemed pleased to see the equipment the GLA had provided being put to good use in, to quote, "Leafy Teddington".

David Lawton kindly continued to report any graffiti he discovered throughout the year and I conducted a few solo "lamppost whisker" removal sorties along the length of the High Street and Broad Street. If that sounds Double Dutch it is the in house term for the removal of plastic ties which can be dangerous, particularly if a length is left at eye height.

Because of time, and other, pressures no formal TEG committee meetings have been held for some time. Apart from the Planning Group no other group holds, or held, group committee meetings and my view is that one's time is better spent on practical environmental matters than sitting in committee for hours discussing topics such as driverless cars in California, litter collecting arrangements in Hammersmith, the number of cigarette ends dropped per square yard of pavement etc. Of course an eye is kept on wider environmental matters which could, or do, impact on Teddington, such as the possible Heathrow expansion, issue and appropriate comments made to the relevant authorities following Executive Committee discussion. Therefore I propose to allow the TEG Committee, as such, to wither on the vine.

Finally I would like to congratulate one of the Group's litter pickers of many years standing, Dr Tania Mathias, for her success at the General Election in May.

HISTORY GROUP - Ken Howe

Verbal report to be given at the Meeting by a member of the History Group.

PLANNING GROUP – James Sinclair

The Planning Group currently consists of 10 members, who meet every four to six weeks to discuss any matters to do with Teddington's built environment. These might be, typically, planning applications, but will also include, for example, the local plan, the village plan and Richmond Council's attitude towards certain planning issues.

During 2015, we considered 106 planning applications. We submitted objections on 12, of which 3 were refused, 4 were approved and 2 were withdrawn. There remain 3 that are undecided, as of today. Typical reasons for an objection might be issues of scale and massing, as well as being out of character with either the street scene or a wider conservation area. The majority of the applications are from householders, for extensions and loft conversions, but there will also be larger projects in the pipeline that require more detailed consideration, for example:

- Teddington Studios site. The group met with the developers, Pinenorth, to discuss their proposals. Whilst we did not object to the principle of flats, we did comment on the original elevations. We were invited to attend a further meeting, when they presented revised drawings that put more parking underground and opened up the views to the river.
- Udney Park playing fields. The group has not had a significant involvement in this, pending a planning application being submitted. We have, however, supported the Friends of Udney Park Playing Fields in maintaining an objection to the principle of any development on the land.
- Teddington and Ham Hydro. A new design has been submitted to the Council, being smaller than the original version. Other groups of the Society have also been involved with this, but the Planning Group has decided that it will not be submitting an objection.

The group has also contributed to wider planning matters during the year. The Council is embarking on a review of its local plan policies and this started with a consultation on the scope of that review. The group responded to this consultation in January 2016, when we asked the Council to give greater emphasis to the following:

- Buffer zones around conservation area.
- Buildings of Townscape Merit.
- Design in conservation areas.
- Local distinctiveness, for example Teddington High Street.
- Emphasise the fact that development in certain designated areas will not be permitted.

The group has also contributed to the Village Plan process and will continue to do so as this develops over coming months. In October 2015, the Society and the Council hosted an evening at the Landmark, when residents were invited to have their say as to the topics that should be covered by the Village Plan. The meeting was very well attended and the topics were collated by the Council's Village Plan team. More recently, members of the group attended the Leader's Question Time on the Village Plan and put a number of pre-prepared questions to the panel.

The group considers it important to maintain a relationship with the Council's planning officers, to demonstrate that the group is active and to ensure that our comments are taken seriously. To this end, we meet with officers once a year to discuss any matters of concern that have arisen during the year. The most recent meeting, for example, covered topics such as the Council's position on Udney Park, the protection of conservation areas and officers' reaction to residents' views on parking provision in new developments.

TREES & GARDENS - Sheena Harold

Teddington in Flower –Sunday June 14th 2015 we opened 10 back gardens to the public in aid of local charities. In addition St Mary's Parish Church held a Flower Festival, St Mary Teddington Bells rang their hand bells and cream teas were served in the Churchyard. The Deputy Mayor of Richmond, Cllr. Jean Loveland, visited all eleven venues. You can see photos on the website. Sadly 2015 was the last year that Sian Morgan could organise the event due to family commitments but we thank her for all her tremendous efforts during the past three years. The Society gave £660 each to Homelink Day Respite Centre and Strawberry Hill House (SHH). Homelink will use the money to provide activities and entertainment while SHH will be able to employ an injured gardener part time who cannot get full time employment. Thanks to all our garden owners, all the gate sitters and all who visited.

Richmond Borough in Bloom - This was the 25th anniversary of Bloom, of which I am a Vice Chairman, and LBRuT sponsored a Best Blooming Village category to celebrate. The judges toured Twickenham, Barnes and Teddington Villages who entered and Twickenham won the cup. In the Pubs category of the main competition both The Adelaide and the Kings Head won Silver Gilt Awards for their floral efforts.

Elmfield and Jubilee Gardens - Neither looked their best this year alas so we can only hope for an improvement in 2016. We did however 'plant' some commemorative metal sculpted Flanders Poppies outside Harlequin House which were sponsored by member Elizabeth Foster and the Society. They mark the centenary of the outbreak of WW1 and have proved very popular. A damaged ash tree had to be removed from Elmfield Gardens but will be replaced later this year.

Joan Freeman - Honorary Vice President Joan died on December 12th 2015. Joan was the mainstay of the Trees and Trees & Gardens groups having been the organiser of many Gardeners' Fairs and then Teddington in Flower for nearly 20 years. She was instrumental in having trees planted along the High Street. One of the 28 new trees to be planted in Teddington in 2016 will be a Black Walnut sited at the junction of Park Road and Adelaide Road. The council have invited members of Joan's family to join the Society at the planting in her honour sometime in April.

RIVERSIDE AND OPEN SPACES GROUP – Andy Weston

Litter Picks

Members of the group carried out weekly litter picks at the Teddington Drawdock from the foreshore and surrounding areas during 2015/16. The Environment Group is also active for periodic larger scale picks in the area. I am very grateful to everyone involved as I firmly believe that keeping the site clean assists in bringing it home to users that to throw litter either in the river or onto the dock is an anti-social act; especially where it can be swept up and down the Thames on the tides. The flip side to this is that the structures at the dock are now looking rather old and have maintenance issues (steel barriers and brickwork) which we are addressing with Richmond Council.

Environment Agency

Recent news concerning interests covered by the Group is that the Environment Agency (EA) held a “Drop In” session at the Tamesis Club on Tuesday 22 March. I found the event very useful in developing my understanding of what is proposed for Teddington and the rest of the EA’s River Thames Scheme. The main points were that the EA preferred option for our area is for new weir / spillway gates (either 5 gates or 3 gates) cut across the Teddington Lock Ait next to the boat rollers.

If this new weir was built it would change the scenery at Teddington Lock fundamentally, as when in use it would be spilling flood water towards the boatyard / flats and Wharf Restaurant. This would presumably affect the moorings and obviously create a significant new structure next to the Victorian boat rollers.

The EA preference for this option is that the lower down the river the new weir is, the greater the hydraulic effect in pulling flood water through. The other options were to build 3 new weir gates in the current structure if the Ham Hydro Scheme went ahead or 5 new weirs if it did not get approval. The rebuilt weirs would all be in the current line replacing the ones nearest to the Lock Ait (option 2) or further towards the current zig zag weirs – this is the EA option 3, the least favoured by the EA due to their calculations that they add least capacity.

At the drop in session I expressed my concern that the EA modelling is still in progress revising the potential risk from the 2009 data updated through to 2016 with all the known increased potential for flooding in extreme cases that this may reveal. I think that the EA needs to publish this as soon as possible as we are concerned that moving volumes of water faster to Teddington would lead to a real problem for the riverside community if it met a flood tide coming the other way below the lock

In terms of construction the EA also tabled options for open structures or roofed structures as regards the appearance of any new weirs. I personally voted for the roofed structure based on the appearance of the Molesey Weir recently reconstructed by the EA.

The Flood Working Group are looking at the Hydro scheme and the potential for flood risk to Teddington but it is apparent that the EA proposals for the new work at Teddington and elsewhere between 2018 and 2025 are quite fundamental in terms of potential changes to the Riverside landscape.

Illegally Moored Boats

Richmond Council and the EA have commenced actions against the remaining boats illegally moored on the Ham Bank. So far the Richmond Council bye law has been upheld in the courts and the EA have also been taking action to get any illegally moored boats fined for remaining in position. All legal proceedings normally proceed slowly and this is no exception as the next round of action is not expected until May / June 2016. The situation regarding these boats has been highlighted both by local residents exerting their views and a pressure group Reclaim our Riverbank

ROADS AND TRANSPORT - Brian Holder

1. More free turnover and ordinary parking spaces still needed

The CPZ consultations were concluded with a “No Change” decision with less than 51% of residents voting in favour which was good news for most residents and our hard-pressed Broad Street and High Street shopping centres. The very recent completion of the new London Square development with two underground parking spaces per property, and the disappearance of all the builders’ vehicles from nearby roads should free up many of the spaces that have been full for many months.

2. Twenty MPH Zones, more safety for pedestrians, better for shoppers and businesses

At the recent Village Meeting I asked Council Leader Lord True for 20mph zones to be installed in Broad Street, High Street, and Park Lane, plus in the CPZ areas both sides of the station. As speeds in all these areas are usually well below 20mph I had hoped for a positive response, but the tired old excuse for non-installation was that the Police will not enforce a 20mph zone unless proven average speeds are under 24mph was rolled out. Neighbouring Boroughs are all introducing 20mph “Home Zones” without expecting Police to monitor the areas – we will continue pressing for the same.

3. Teddington Station Foot Bridges – upgrades - No progress to report

4. Crossrail 2 consultations – Heathrow Link possible?

- The Crossrail 2 and Network Rail Teams displayed little understanding of the importance of our Loopline Services (which are now to be retained), or of the role of the Strawberry Hill triangle which allows trains to be turned around quickly and efficiently to meet constantly changing demands, They have proposed that Crossrail 2 services should terminate at Hampton Wick with a turnaround near the old Jewsons yard (now flats, a nursery and a nursing home), giving a 12 per hour service to London for Hampton Wick and no improvement to the 6 per hour service for Teddington. I have lodged the strongest possible complaint and there is now a chance that the turnaround will continue to take place at Strawberry Hill as has been happening for more than half a century – plus a 12 per hour service to London for Teddington.
- It has become quite clear that the two rail teams have been so busy concentrating on getting new links in place in South and East London that they have not recognised that there is a golden opportunity to connect the whole of Southeast, South, and Southwest London to Heathrow by rail with no more than one change of train. We have told them that all is required is a relatively short tunnel from the Fulwell Station area, possibly under the golf course and along the Crane River valley to Hatton Cross, or better still, directly to Terminal 4 where it would link to the new Crossrail 1 service – providing a rail “South Circular” service for the whole of London.
- Passengers from any station on the present Richmond/Wimbledon Loopline would be able to go directly to Heathrow without changing. Passengers from stations further afield, including from Surrey and Berkshire, would just need to get to any Loopline station and change on to a Fulwell/Heathrow service. This new service would make several million car and taxi trips through South London redundant with a consequential massive reduction in air pollution all along every route to Heathrow. I am in contact with the teams’ press officer suggesting that this new route should be progressed. I have also suggested that a new tunnel from Twickenham to Barnes would allow additional overground Loopline services, with fast underground services with stops at Twickenham and Richmond to Clapham Junction and Waterloo.

FLOODING – Brian Holder

As reported last year, the Society’s Executive Committee was so concerned about future flood risks in the light of the warmer, wetter, winters and hotter, drier, summers expected under Global Warming, that I was delegated to set up a Flood Working Group (FWG) to identify flood risks for Teddington. The good news is that the original oversized and outdated Mark 1 Hydro scheme which, in our view, was a major flood risk as it had to be closed down in flood situations, is in the process of being replaced by a more modern and compact design, which employs a three screw design which pivots clear of all floodwaters allowing them to pass through without any delays of any sort. The Teddington Society’s Executive Committee is in agreement with the Council’s decision to treat this major re-design as a variation of the original design approved under 14/3732/FUL, rather than a new Planning Application which would have resulted in a reduced Feed in Tariff. I am aware that several problems have been identified by other organisations such as the Broomwater West Association and the Lensbury Club. Various individuals and other Groups will also be registering their objections and concerns.

Until we have the latest EA River Flow Modelling Reports for the River Thames Scheme, and more information about noise, it is not possible to make a recommendation about this Planning Application. However, such are the improvements over the original oversized and outdated Mark 1 design, that a formal objection to the mark 2 design on flood risk grounds alone is extremely unlikely.

In the meantime, I have circulated the River Thames Scheme documents from the 22nd March 2016 Environment Agency meeting at the Tamesis Club, with its proposals for new sluices or gates at three locations along the weir to maximise flow in flood conditions– I will bring a copy along to the AGM, to get members views.