



17 December 2007

Dear River Centre Champion

Twickenham River Centre Update

2008 will soon be here, and it is a good time to take stock of what has been accomplished by the Environment Trust over the past year, since the selection of our proposal for a River Centre as the public benefit for the Twickenham riverside. In particular, I want to thank you for your personal interest and, in return, give you an insight into the many different activities which we are undertaking to make sure that our plans become a successful reality.

Two highlights of this year have been the support and encouragement that we received from City Bridge Trust and Sir David Attenborough. Sir David's record as an environmentalist and his strongly held views on the need to combat climate change make him the ideal patron for the River Centre. We are very grateful for his interest and declaration of support.

In July we were delighted to hear that the City Bridge Trust has awarded us £91,000 over 3 years to help with our development costs, enabling us to employ Rob Gray as building project manager and Clive Chapman Architects as design consultants, as well as funding a 3-year post for environmental education outreach to schools provided by Joe Pecorelli. This work will help in formulating the brief for the River Centre's education provision and will ensure that schools' involvement in the River Centre is already established when it is opened.

We have been heartened by the many professional people who have come forward to offer *pro bono* assistance in areas such as legal advice, market research and fundraising. We are working hard now on developing the brief and associated revenues and costs, to ensure that the River Centre will have a sustainable operating plan when it is open.

A conceptual design has already been drawn up by Clive Chapman and initial feedback has been received from representatives of the local community. Within this design, there are areas accommodating different functions, which fall broadly under the following headings:

Boathouse: To be leased to a boatman, who will also operate a pontoon enabling visitors' boats to be moored and a small fleet of electric boats to be hired, as well as providing a ferry link to Kew, Richmond and Teddington, and services to the boatyards on Eel Pie Island and recreational users of the river. The Queen's shallop *Jubilant* will overwinter here, and the maintenance of small craft will be carried out and taught to people of all ages, including young people on work experience.

Exhibition space: A showcase of the river, its history, tides and management, the weather, the natural life of the borough in general and the wider impact that we all have on the environment. The front desk will be staffed by trained volunteers who will offer information and advice. Interactive displays such as an aquarium of Thames life, webcams of nesting birds, a tide gauge and a camera obscura are all being considered. Braille signs, soundposts and describers will animate the experience for everyone.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Education space: Two flexible spaces that can be used singly or together will provide a base for school groups to learn outside the classroom and for environmental workshops for people of all ages on a range of topics such as climate change, river ecology and river art. The spaces will be available for family learning activities and for hire for community events.

Café/restaurant: Initial discussions have been held with local restaurateurs to investigate the viability of providing an eating venue that can span the spectrum from daytime family-friendly refreshments through lunches suitable for take-away or sit-down meals, to an attractive evening dining setting. This will be a significant income generator, supporting the work of the charities and educational functions.

Offices for environmental & voluntary organisations: An important part of providing daily continuity within the River Centre will be offices for charities such as Richmond Environment Network, BTCV, HANDS and the Environment Trust itself. All will occupy an open-plan space, sharing facilities and equipment, and working closely together to improve the environment of the whole borough.

The overarching ethos of the management policy will be to provide a pleasant, environmentally friendly, state-of-the-art community facility, suitable for use by all ages to relax, learn, contribute to others and provide a sense of pride in the community.

The next stage

The planning brief for the overall site development, including the River Centre, is currently being written by the council's consultants, and the Environment Trust is providing a major input to the River Centre component. On completion the overall brief will be put out to public consultation. The final document will be used as a brief for developers to bid for the opportunity to develop the site. The Environment Trust will be part of the team evaluating these bids when they arrive, later next year. A formal planning application will follow and, assuming this is successful, construction on site could start before the end of 2009.

The progress that we have already made is largely due to a group of dedicated volunteers who have invested their time and resources in this project to help to improve the lot of young and old in the local borough, while setting an example for other communities in London and beyond.

Thank you for all your help to date. Your support is extremely important to us and we greatly welcome any offers of assistance in achieving this project for the people of Twickenham.

With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year

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