

Twickenham River Centre

An update from the Environment Trust River Centre project team

Since our Spring 2009 update we've been very busy bringing forward plans for Twickenham's most exciting new attraction. Our team of staff, volunteers and specialist advisers has been working with great flair, imagination and commitment to plan the interior of the River Centre as well as planning and starting the delivery of education and other activities for it.

In March, the winning team of architect and developer for the project was announced. Well-known local architect Clive Chapman, along with Countryside Properties, were chosen to design and build the River Centre, new landscaped open space and housing on a revitalised Riverside.

It's easy to see what life the River Centre will bring to the Twickenham Riverside in three summers time. There will be a buzzing hub of activity on and by our beautiful river, with eating and drinking outside and in the café restaurant, and kids running freely in the boat-themed playground or exploring the nature garden. There'll be a stunning river ecology exhibition and aquarium attracting visitors from the area and further afield, and learning activities ranging from sustainability forums for adults to boat building qualifications for youngsters.

“ I was enormously impressed by the commitment of local environmental and amenity groups to proceed with the River Centre. The Centre, with its boat-house, learning area and exhibitions will be a major addition to the borough; and a focal point for 'green' organisations to pursue an environmental agenda. I am delighted that Sir David Attenborough is firmly behind the plans. ”

Vince Cable
MP for Twickenham



Each year, many hundreds of people will learn new skills and hobbies, and many more will visit the exhibitions or hire boats. The commercial benefits of a destination that attracts hundreds of new visitors to Twickenham every week are an exciting prospect for the whole town, in addition to the important opportunity for the community to be guardians of our own environmental future.



We would really value your input. We want this to be a place that appeals to you and your family and friends, so we're asking you to let us know what you want in the River Centre. Please take a minute to jot your ideas down on the attached form and send it back to us. Then we'll present some of your most popular and creative ideas on the River Centre website (www.rivercentre.org.uk).

Make sure that children have a chance to think about it too; their input – whether written or drawn – is really important to us.

“ I really want to see the River Centre come together because it looks cool and I'll be able to look at the fish and the wildlife and help save it. ”

Jack from Twickenham and Jasmine from St Margarets

Revitalising Twickenham's riverside for the benefit of the **community**



“ I am delighted that the scheme by Countryside and Clive Chapman has been chosen. It was certainly the one with which I was most impressed. It seems to me a very elegant and appropriate solution. The River Centre is cleverly integrated into the overall development and relates particularly well to the new public open space and playground. Together they will provide a lively focus for activity on the embankment and will be a great benefit to the town. ”

Sir David Attenborough
Patron of the River Centre



What the team thinks about the scheme:

- The position of the River Centre under the rising grassed open space is an ingenious idea, providing a large informal public lawn connected to the play area and including a new vantage point for viewing the river.
- The River Centre is an innovative but practical building, with flexible internal spaces, river views and easy access from street level for boats and people. It is designed to make best use of solar energy and will be a demonstration teaching aid for sustainable building.
- The café/restaurant and play area are ideally sited to be used together, above the flood level and with sunny open views to the river. The play area is a mini boatyard, providing learning about boatbuilding and ecology and will be fun for a wide range of ages.
- The flats and houses at the rear of the site are of mixed sizes and values,

Footbridge to Eel Pie Island



do not appear exclusive, and are integrated with the street pattern and the open space, creating a new square for the town that encloses new public open space.

- The freeing of a large part of the waterfront from parked cars will integrate the wide embankment into the public open space, and access to the river will be easier via a new pontoon. The embankment will be landscaped and provide a revitalised riverfront for Twickenham, ideal for public events and fairs.

www.rivercentre.org.uk

“I love the enthusiasm and creativity of kids when they get ideas from nature. As soon as we got talking about the river, which they’d just crossed on the way here, they were raring to draw and paint.”

Emily Burton (local artist)
at the Twickenham Festival



“The River Centre will be of tremendous value to the borough in helping teach students about the environment, an issue which will become more and more important in their lifetimes.”

Sarah Brown
(Christ’s School)



“I think the riverside site needs to be developed in a way that benefits the whole community. Extra open space by the river would be fantastic, and I like the idea of the River Centre, as it will help people understand local and global environmental issues. Regenerating derelict land is always expensive. I’d much rather this bill is footed by a developer than by the council tax payer. It’s a win-win situation.”

David Bleicher (Friends of the Earth and Environment Trust member)

“This has the potential to revitalise Twickenham as a town. Commercially we are struggling, and what we need is to attract people from further afield to shop here. An education centre for young people to learn about nature and the environment is a first-rate idea.”

Perminder (Pindi) Tamana
(T Group Fresh Foods,
past-president of
Twickenham Rotary Club)



“The scheme has a bit of poetry about it with the raising of the grassed level over the River Centre.”

Brian King (retired architect)



“Facilities on the river have been in decline for the last 100 years. This will really buck that trend. It’ll put the river back on the map, not just as a pretty thing to look at, but as something to use, and provide a getaway for young people.”

Mark Edwards
(traditional boatbuilder)

“I’d love to take my children, it’s perfect to show them what fish are in the river.”

Mrs Brasset (childminder)

“I don’t know why people are creating a hoo-ha. At least something is being done and it relates to the river!”

Mrs Gould (local resident)

What would you like to see in the River Centre?

Please complete and return the enclosed form.

Next steps for the River Centre...

- The Environment Trust has been stepping up its environmental education activities over the year. A programme of adult courses was launched successfully this spring and a larger programme will be run this autumn. The number of projects and activities with the borough's schools continues to grow. Plans are also being put in place for a new environmental NVQ course for young people and adults.
- Funding events for the development stage of the River Centre project are continuing with the support of our patron Sir David Attenborough. Funding plans for the fit-out of the building are being put in place for submission following planning.
- The Trust is working on a full update to the Business Plan. The current version and various update reports are available at www.rivercentre.org.uk
- The Trust is working with the developer to agree the River Centre specification for a Detailed Planning Application.
- Detailed design and construction will follow in 2010, subject to planning permission.

Highlights of upcoming courses

Autumn 2009:

- Sustainable Home Refurbishment
- Autumn Tree Walks at Richmond Terrace Gardens
- Drawing the buildings of Richmond
- Exploring the Thames at 'draw off'

Spring 2010:

- Traditional river boat building

Contact us for further information on this programme

What else is the Environment Trust doing?

At our AGM in June 2009 the Trust secured the support of over 80% of members to expand its objects to include the protection and conservation of the physical and natural environment and, importantly, to deliver education about these issues. This paves the way for us to continue developing our role as the borough's green champion, harnessing the skills needed to run the River Centre's diverse programme of activities.

The **Schools Environment Forum** held in May 2009 at Pembroke Lodge received very positive feedback from the teachers and governors of the 38 local schools attending. Delegates were treated to a workshop by Garden Organic, the UK's leading organic growing charity, had an opportunity to meet environmental organisations willing to work with their schools, and heard some inspiring presentations packed full of practical ideas for running environmental projects in schools.

The Trust also supports the Sustainability Days partnership project between Richmond Environment Network and the council, a cross-curricular day of



Supported by:



A walk-through 3-D animation of the Riverside development can be viewed at www.rivercentre.org.uk

workshops and presentations helping pupils learn about green issues.



"...thank you so much to you and your team for delivering such an invaluable event to our year 8 students yesterday. I am confident the girls learnt so much, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves too."
(Assal Ruse, Assistant Headteacher, Waldegrave School for Girls)

'Between The Locks' is the Trust's newest project, in which we are working with children from Christ's School to record the stories of people who have made their living from the river, generously supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Hampton Fuel Allotments Charity.

More information on our current projects, and a copy of our annual report detailing our work over the past year, can be found on our website www.environmenttrust.co.uk

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