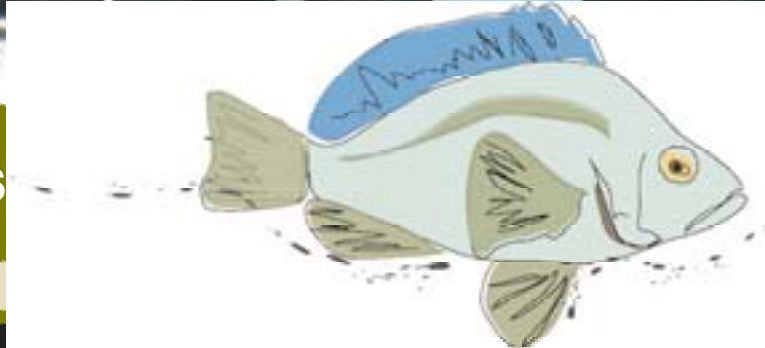




Tidal Thames



Aims of the Tidal Thames Action Plan

- To conserve and enhance the wildlife habitats, species diversity and local distinctiveness of the Tidal Thames within Lambeth.
- To promote public awareness and greater appreciation of the nature conservation importance of the Tidal Thames within both Lambeth and Greater London as a whole.
- To provide greater protection of the Tidal Thames within Lambeth, as a consequence of raising its profile not only with the general public but also with developers and through the statutory planning process.

A) Why is the Tidal Thames so important for biodiversity?

The Tidal Thames is a “partially enclosed area of water and tidal shore which receives saline water from the North Sea and fresh water from the River Thames together with its numerous tributaries and land run-off”.

The Thames is a transport route, a drain, a view, a development site, a visitor attraction, and a biodiversity resource and wildlife corridor. Numerous habitats and species are present along its entire length, and are closely linked to London’s identity, history and development.

The Tidal Thames is also a classic example of a ‘recovering ecosystem’ of great importance not only to London, Kent and Essex but also the North Sea and upstream catchments.

The Plan links into the London Tidal Thames Habitat Action Plan, which is a component of a Tidal Thames Habitat Action Plan, prepared across London, Essex and Kent.

B) What is the situation regarding the Tidal Thames within Lambeth?

About 3.2 kilometres of the Tidal Thames runs through Lambeth, along its northern/north western boundary - this equates to about 4.5% of the total length of the Tidal Thames, and about 4 hectares to the mid-river political boundary with Wandsworth, Westminster and Southwark.

However, though relatively short in length, the section of the Thames through Lambeth is one of the best known because of the many tourist attractions along the Albert Embankment and South Bank. The section of the Thames in Lambeth was once fed by a tributary called the River Effra, but recent developments have obscured its route and it is now a buried or ‘lost’ river of London.

The Tidal Thames within Lambeth is a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation (Reference M31), and is the only one in the Borough with this high status. The designation covers the tidal foreshore, submerged riverbed and all vertical walls, flood defences, wharves and jetties within the Borough boundary.

Lambeth straddles two important ecological 'zones' of the Tidal Thames. Upstream of Vauxhall Bridge is the 'Freshwater Zone', where plant and animal species reflect habitats typical of more natural bank management and fresh water dominance. Downstream of Vauxhall Bridge the Thames is in the 'Brackish Zone', which is under considerable stress from changing proportions of fresh and saltwater, and vertical and hard flood defence walls dominate.

There has been a general trend of recovery and improvement within the Tidal Thames since the 1960s, as a result of improvements in water quality and habitat. Today, the Thames in London supports a diverse flora and rich populations of invertebrates, fish and aquatic birds. Since 1957, 119 species of fish have been recorded.

C) Why do we need an Action Plan for Lambeth's Tidal Thames?

The Tidal Thames has a long history of development-led encroachment. Despite stronger planning legislation, foreshore habitat loss is still occurring as a result of riverside redevelopment.

Water quality standards in the Thames have been improved considerably over the last 100 years, but London is still heavily dependent on its Victorian sewage network. During periods of heavy rain, combined sewer overflows discharge diluted sewage into the Tidal Thames: under conditions of low river flow and heavy rain this can lead to fish kills.

During the summer the Tidal Thames experiences low freshwater flows as a result of upstream abstraction for drinking water. This means saline tidal waters penetrate further upstream into the upper river, bringing with it marine animals but also estuarine silt, which can change the habitat and lead to a reduction in invertebrate diversity.

A number of tidal barrages and weirs have been introduced to the Thames for navigation or to promote regeneration. Barrages alter the ecology of the river, restricting species movement, destroying the low tide feeding habitat upstream of the structure, and increasing siltation. The close proximity of the Wandle Barrage to the Lambeth Thames foreshore has raised these concerns.

Certain exotic or problem plants and animals, like Japanese Knotweed, Floating Pennywort and Chinese Mitten Crab have become established along the Tidal Thames. Further research is required to determine the effect of these species on local biodiversity.

Dredging involves removing deposits of sands, gravels and muds to maintain navigation through the Thames. Removal and alteration of these deposits can result in the loss of species, while the redistribution of sediment results in changes to normal river flows.



South Bank SE1: view looking west, showing exposed shingle, sand and mud habitat in foreground, and examples of river wall and sea defence structure and composition. Lambeth Council 2005





South Bank SE1: view looking east, showing exposed sand and shingle habitat in foreground, and examples of river wall and sea defence structure and composition. Lambeth Council 2005

D) What is the legal status of Lambeth's Tidal Thames?

The Tidal Thames and its Lambeth foreshore are identified in the Lambeth Unitary Development Plan, which recognises the Thames foreshore and flood defence walls for many functions, including nature conservation and biodiversity. The Thames' status as a Site of Metropolitan Importance (M31) is also recognised in the Lambeth UDP.

The Thames within Lambeth is not covered by any statutory nature conservation designation. However, many protected species pass through or use the Thames where it is within Lambeth, like the kingfisher and some bats, and thus the Tidal Thames is protected with respect to being a habitat used by such species.

E) What will the Tidal Thames Action Plan do?

Objective 1. We will ensure that all relevant strategic plans or initiatives recognise and reinforce the biodiversity importance of the River Thames within Lambeth. The Lambeth Tidal Thames Habitat Action Plan, its objectives and actions, will be integrated into all relevant Lambeth strategies, policies and processes by 2008.

Objective 2. We will secure appropriate management for existing and new habitats and species within the Tidal Thames in Lambeth. A 'good practice'-based guidance and management will be distributed to all relevant stakeholders by 2008.

Objective 3: We will increase public understanding and appreciation of the habitats and species, and the nature conservation importance, of the Tidal Thames in Lambeth by 2008.

F) Who is involved in the Tidal Thames Action Plan?

1. Partnerships

The Lead Partner for the Lambeth Tidal Thames Action Plan is Lambeth Council's Parks and Greenspaces Business Unit (Lambeth Parks). Other Co-Lead Partners include Lambeth Planning. Other Partners include Environment Agency, South Bank Employer's Group, Thames Estuary Partnership, Greater London Authority, Thames 21 and Thames Water.

2. Contact for information

For more information on the Lambeth Tidal Thames Action Plan, including copies of this plan in paper or electronic format, please contact:

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3. Further information and advice

Further advice on the Tidal Thames and its habitats, and their management and protection for nature conservation and biodiversity, can be found on the following websites.

- Environment Agency (<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/regions/thames/>)
- Greater London Authority (<http://www.london.gov.uk/londonissues/>)
- Thames Estuary Partnership (<http://www.thamesweb.com/>)
- Thames 21 (<http://www.thames21.org.uk/>)

