

SECOND MEETING OF THE RTS COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUP

This meeting was held on 14 November 2023. The third meeting is scheduled for 17 January 2024.

At this meeting, two written questions had been pre-submitted by the LRA, and others were raised verbally by other community groups. All the answers from the RTS team were verbal. Hence the following is not an exact record of what was said. Only a subset of those questions asked is recorded below.

Question 1 from the LRA

A small local club, which is charity, has been seeking access to one of the lakes that will form part of the Spelthorne Channel. This access would be beneficial to the club's disabled members. The current owner of the lake, which is a commercial company, has asked the club for an annual fee of £10,000 for such access.

How will the RTS enforce public access to such lakes, without incurring what (appear to be) unreasonably high annual fees?

Answer

It is too early to say which lakes etc within the new flood channels will have public access. If the lake is owned by a third party, access will be controlled by the owner.

[But see later question as below.]

Question 2 from the LRA

Over the past month a few official notices have been appearing near the riverside in the Laleham area. Some examples are attached. These notices appear in locations which have no obvious direct connection with the RTS.

The notices include references to the Compulsory Purchase Act and to the Land Compensation Act. But they give no indication of why the RTS might want to purchase land, perhaps including private properties, and perhaps doing so by invoking legislation.

As you might imagine, this is causing some concern to Laleham residents in locations close to those identified on the maps.

Can you please explain:

- *Why the RTS might need to acquire land, and possibly private properties, in the relevant locations?*
- *Is it really possible that this might be done on a compulsory basis?*

Answer

The RTS team need to identify the owners of all land within the scheme area (ie not just land required for the new flood channels). This is necessary in case future claims are made against RTS. Whilst there is a record of most land ownership, there are a few small areas where this is not the case. The firm of Dalcour Maclaren has been engaged to do the research.

The references to the Compulsory Purchase Act etc do not imply any intention to purchase by compulsion. Rather, they need to appear in the wording to make the notices official.

Question from [unknown]

What is the current state of funding and overall schedule?

Answer

The scheme is fully funded as of today.

Statutory Consultation will begin in early 2024

Construction is expected to begin in 2026.

Construction is expected to complete in 2030.

Question from [unknown]

The Thames Conservancy Act 1932 gives the right of navigation along the Thames. Will the new channels be regarded as part of the Thames (given that they will carry Thames water) and therefore be available for public navigation?

Answer

The RTS team will consider if each element of the new channels can provide safe access. If yes, then there will be a right of navigation.

[This appears to suggest that Littleton Lake North might be freely available for use (eg by canoeists) regardless of the views of the lake's commercial owners.

Question from [unknown]

Under flood conditions will the Thames downstream of the new channels really **not** be significantly higher when the new channels are in use. The RTS flood modelling documents claims such.

Answer

This led to lengthy discussion, reflecting concerns of residents who live downstream. The RTS's modelling expert was pushed quite hard on this.

Significant and complex modelling has been carried out covering from above the RTS down to Teddington lock. The modelling has considered various combinations of water flow volume down the Thames, tide state in the North Sea, Thames Barrier raised and lowered, and the new RTS flood channels in/out of use.

Mike Garrett

LRA representative on the RTS Community Stakeholder Working Group