

## Newsletter Spring 2012

### Introduction

It's been a while since our last newsletter so this issue is something of a brief summary of the whole year.

Before the season had even started, we were confronted by one of the worst Thames pollution incidents in recent years, an estimated 100,000 fish were wiped out along the Barnes stretch. TAC members were powerless to do much about it beyond witnessing distressing scenes, reporting and raising media awareness. TAC photos now feature widely in the publicity of this event. One positive that came out of this was the recent formation of the Thames Tunnel Now group. The group will lobby in favour of construction of the Thames 'Super Sewer' project, which could make this scale of fish-loss a thing of the past.

The polluters continued their dirty work all year, culminating in the complete destruction of all life in the River Crane on October 30th. Thames Water have admitted liability and the TAC is at the forefront of the partnership pushing for habitat restoration and restocking.



TAC clean-ups and environment restoration activities have continued throughout the season. We have worked closely with the EA on many projects giving us now a much broader range of knowledge.

Finally, whilst fishing the Thames can often be hard, there have been some stunning captures from members this season, often backed up by excellent write-ups on the forum. Read more below...

**Typical late season Thames Barbel**

### Thames Pollution and the Super Sewer

The summer of 2011 saw one of the worst fish kills for nearly a decade. On the 6<sup>th</sup> June an estimated [100,000 fish were wiped](#) out during legally consented sewage discharges into the Tidal Thames. Following a rain storm in London around 500,000 tonnes of raw sewage entered an already depleted Thames after months of no rain.

The TAC were alerted to the unfolding disaster and were on hand to do as much as we could. Volunteers made a video of that unfolding disaster and it can be found [here](#), the memories of that night will stay with them for some time.



Since June, more than 7 million tonnes of raw sewage have gone into the Western Tideway alone from the four monitored pumping stations. The TAC has pressed Thames Water for transparency of this discharges and the full list can be [found here](#).



The TAC fully support the [Thames Tunnel](#) or Super Sewer as the single solution to clean up the river once and for all.

In October 2011, the TAC gave a presentation to Thames conservation and amenity groups explaining in graphic detail just how severe this long term problem is.

From this meeting, a new and unique coalition of partners was formed, the [Thames Tunnel Now](#). TAC partners notably include the RSPB, Angling Trust, River Thames Society, London

Wildlife Trust and Thames 21, giving a voice to the merits of the tunnel and why it is vitally important for the future of our great river.

## River Crane Pollution

On the 30th October 2011, the River Crane which runs from northwest London into the Thames near Twickenham was hit by a devastating raw sewage spill killing everything its path.



Two dead River Crane Carp

The pollution was a result of a Penstock gate near Heathrow jamming shut during routine overnight maintenance by Thames Water. Despite engineers' best efforts the decision was made to release thousands of tons of pollution directly into the river from a nearby overflow.

The sewage caused a crash in the dissolved oxygen levels and a rise in ammonia levels, killing everything in the river. An estimated 10,000 fish perished from the smallest fish to specimen Barbel, Carp, Roach, Dace and Chub. 17 different species were affected.

Thames Water have pledged to restore the river but it is highly questionable whether it will ever fully recover. The TAC are working with the Friends of the River Crane Environment, Environment Agency and others as part of the Crane Valley Partnership which will oversee the rivers future.

We would like to hear from you about the Crane, share some memories, some pictures; we want to build up an even clearer picture of this once great free fishing spot. Please do post on our [Forum](#) or email: [admin@rivertac.org](mailto:admin@rivertac.org)

This devastating incident has proved once again just how vulnerable our river systems are to man-made pollution.

## Hydropower

The TAC has long campaigned against hydropower schemes going ahead without proper analysis to prove that they will not damage our rivers. In 2008, the EA stated no further Thames hydro schemes would be developed until the environmental impact of Romney had been fully assessed. Romney was delayed several times, someone then took a decision that they could wait no longer, and bids were invited for development of weirs all along the river.

In total, a further eight schemes are planned along the Thames with some already into the pre-application stage including Teddington which has progressed to a full application.

In 2011, work started on the Romney development again, TAC members went along to record what was happening and this resulted in coverage of our point of view by the [BBC](#). We were invited to witness the installation of the turbines as well, but as the date approached a strange silence fell over the project and this went ahead without us. Romney is still not operational. The developers are having problems including connecting a cable to the national grid, the estimated timescale is likely to be months rather than weeks.

The proposed development at Teddington started to move forward with a couple of public meetings, the first being on 16th June, a date when perhaps few anglers would want to attend as it was the opening a day of the season. But attend we did, and we made it quite clear to those present that this scheme should not go ahead without the proper environmental impact assessment. It was good to see our concerns getting across to some of the non-angling public as well.

In December, the developer submitted their planning documents to Richmond Council for scrutiny and approval. They mobilised their supporters and received many letters of support, though few of any particular substance. Robust objections from Angling Trust, TAC and concerned individuals tore in to the many environmental shortcomings of the plans and the TAC also took the debate to a number of angling forums as well as our own. These objections have levelled the playing field somewhat, with the numbers of letters from objectors now closely matching those from supporters. We also had meeting with Zac Goldsmith, the local MP for Richmond Park and North Kingston, to make our concerns known. You can view the application (11/3908/FUL) online [here](#), please register your objection if you have not already done so.

In late February the Environment Agency responded to the application with a set of criteria that must be met before the scheme can be considered, the letter can be found [here](#). This response highlights the very many failings with the application and has now fully justified both the TAC's and Angling Trust objections. The EA impoundment licence application has since been withdrawn by the developer.

The TAC are continuing to pressurise the authorities on these developments, obtaining assurances that environmental monitoring will be done properly and be paid for by the developers, no rod licence money will be used.

## Illegally moored Thames boaters

This has been a long running campaign to free up the lost free fishing areas on the lower Thames. Hundreds of yards of bank is currently lost to fishing upstream of Teddington lock alone. Richmond Council has proposed a new byelaw to deal with the issue and the consultation can be found on their [website](#). Please do comment if this affects you, let us have your views through the [members forum](#).

## Eel Monitoring

The TAC will be monitoring the new Eel Trap at Molesey under the guidance of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL). More information on the ZSL project can be found [here](#) and updates will be reported through the TAC website and forum.

## James Page

Founder and Chairman James Page stepped down from his position in October 2011. Jim founded the TAC in January 2010.

His contribution in creating the organisation from an idea to concept and then reality can never be underestimated, without his personal drive and sacrifice we would not be here today.

We are sure everyone will join in thanking Jim for what he achieved as it may never be repeated, a one off, like Jim himself.

## The Angling Trust

The Thames Anglers' Conservancy is a consultative member of the [Angling Trust](#) and representative at the Thames Regional Forum. The Trust's role in our sport should not be underestimated as it brings a unified voice representing anglers needs. To find our more and how to join, please visit the [website](#).



## The Fishing

This season we have seen another patchy year for some and spectacular for others with some very notable captures. Low flows over the summer months meant that the fish were harder to find than ever, the abundance of natural food left the fish with little work to do in order to feed. Weed growth on some of the Lower reaches was particularly bad with Canadian pond weed the main culprit. Whilst this is excellent habitat and cover for the new fry, everything else was hiding as well.



**Willie Pettigrew with a 13lb 10oz zander**

There were though many exceptions with three Thames records being broken, two by TAC members. In August, Paul Sullivan caught the biggest recorded Ruffe at 6oz, September saw the first authenticated Thames Carp over 40lb fall to Duncan Green and in December the long standing Pike record rose to a magnificent 34.04. A full list of all current [Thames Records](#) is on our website.

Despite the tough conditions, members have caught many Barbel and Chub, with Perch, Pike and Zander showing as the temperatures dropped. The silver fishing in the summer was on good form with the occasional surprise Trout turning up.

As the season closed the river really came on top form with some stunning captures in the last couple of weeks. Members catches included perch over 4lb, multiple double-figure Barbel with one fish topping 16lb, numerous Pike, Bream and Chub of over 7lb.

**Reminder: The river Close Season runs from 15<sup>th</sup> March to the 15<sup>th</sup> June inclusive.**

## TAC on Facebook



If you're a user of 'social media' then please do visit our [Facebook](#) page and 'like' us. News and information is posted on a regular basis, so help spread the word.

## TAC and the Environment Agency

The Environment Agency remains one of our closest partners on the Thames and with the Fisheries team have done lots of great work.

In the past 12 months we have taken on the remit of looking after the highly important spawning channel at Penton Hook Island. The joint work has been to maintain and improve the habitat and keep the channel clear.



In January [volunteers from the TAC joined forces with the EA](#) in a day of removing debris from the channel and cutting back unwanted overhang. The EA kindly supplied much of the equipment to make the event such a success.

### TAC in the Hogsmill River

In September and October, we were again invited to assist with the tidal and non-tidal fish surveys. The non-tidal survey proved an eye opener with many of the species that have been hard to catch, still there in the river. A full report is [here](#) on the website.

Other events included a day on the [Hogsmill River](#) clearing debris as part of a habitat improvement project.

At Penton Hook we acted as consultant for the new fishing platforms and these were installed in late summer. The [opening day](#) saw TAC members along with patrons Martin Salter and Duncan Charman enjoy a day testing out the new platforms.

If you would like to get involved, please keep checking the [member's forum](#) for future events.

### A few of the other events in the last year are below:

[Angling Projects Fish Fun Day](#)

[An evening with Mike Wilson](#)

[With the EA on the Bonesgate River](#)

[Rubbish clearance of a Tidal backwater](#)

[New life for Thames Tributaries](#)

## Forum

The members forum is available to anyone and is filled with fishing reports, pictures, get-togethers and much more. All of the conservation issues are debated and now contains a wealth of factual information and opinion. Clean ups, habitat works and all events are posted up so please get involved.

If you have not registered yet it is strictly **Real Names** and open to TAC members only. If you have previously registered but have problems logging in or lost your details, please email us at [membership@rivertac.org](mailto:membership@rivertac.org)

## River Guardians

In 2011, we launched our River Guardian scheme inviting members to report back incidents of close season fishing, poaching, areas of rubbish, pollution and more. The information provided is passed to the Environment Agency, giving vital intelligence and helping to build up a clear picture of any 'hot spots'. With severe drought affecting much of the Southeast it is more important than ever to be monitoring your local river and acting if you see a problem.

The scheme is informal, so as little or as much as you can do is appreciated and run through the members forum.

**It is very important that you call the EA first, then let the TAC know.** Make a note of the incident reference number so it can be followed up, and do mention the TAC.

**The EA Hotline number is 0800 80 70 60**

**The types of incidents that should be reported include:**

- damage or danger to the natural environment
- pollution to water or land
- poaching or illegal fishing
- fish in distress or dead fish
- watercourse blocked by vehicle or fallen tree causing risk of flooding
- illegal dumping of hazardous waste or large amounts of industrial waste
- incidents at waste sites we regulate such as landfill, transfer station etc.
- Illegal abstraction from watercourses
- unusual drop in river level or flow
- collapsed or badly damaged river or canal banks

## TAC AGM

The 2012 TAC AGM will be held at the Bagster House Club at Walton on the 27th March.

The AGM will commence at 19:30 until 20:45.

As part of the AGM we will be voting in new officers for 2012/13 along with a new TAC Constitution.

We are delighted that TAC Honorary President Keith Arthur will be joining us and doing a question and answer session from 21:00 – 22:30 about all things Thames.

Venue:

Bagster House CIU Club  
Walton Lane (B376)  
Shepperton (just off Walton Bridge)  
TW17 8LP

Walton Lane is a one-way street and can only be entered from the Bridge end.

Venue Phone Number: 01932 660057

A map is [HERE](#)

Proposed officers for 2012/13 are as follows:

Chairman: Vacant - Proposed David Harvey

Secretary : David Harvey, stepping down - Proposed Ed Randall

Membership: Steve Holmes

Treasurer: Richard Crimp

Applications for these positions other than the above can be made in writing prior to the AGM, please contact [admin@rivertac.org](mailto:admin@rivertac.org) with name and proposer.

## Help for 2012/13

We are looking for some additional non-committee based help in the coming months. All positions are voluntary.

Conservation Officer

Clean up coordinator

Web Designer (Wordpress)

If you can offer assistance, please contact [admin@rivertac.org](mailto:admin@rivertac.org) for more information.

## Donations

The TAC is an independent, free-to-join organisation and as such relies solely on voluntary donations to ensure we can continue the work of protecting anglers' interests on the Free Thames. If you would like to make a donation this can be done securely through our website, by bank transfer or by cheque. All donations will be very well received and thank you for your support. For information please contact [admin@rivertac.org](mailto:admin@rivertac.org).