

# TWICKENHAM RIVER CENTRE

## BRIEFING DOCUMENT

An eco-building on Twickenham Riverside where people of all ages can learn about the environment, the river and sustainability, learn to build a boat, fish or row, and watch the world from a great café. **This is the River Centre, proposed by the Environment Trust for Richmond upon Thames, which we need your help to build!**



### BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF THE SITE

Twickenham Baths were closed in 1980. Since then there have been several attempts to redevelop the site. These schemes have failed on the grounds of bulk, height, density, unsuitable use and traffic generation. The local community has played an important role in opposing the developments, while recognising the need for some residential and commercial uses on the site to fund the community asset.

The pool site is a sensitive location, beside the river, close to the town centre. The planning policy framework in relation to riverside development has been considerably strengthened in the past 12 years, and now emphasises the importance of respecting the character of the distinctive reach of the river and the need to have a sympathetically scaled and sited development that encourages river-related activity.

The most recent planning application was in 2002 and it met with strong objections from local people to its height, density and limited community provision. Subsequently the Council

set up the 'Twickenham Challenge', a proposal to hand over part of the site to a community organisation selected as a result of a local competition.

The Environment Trust for Richmond upon Thames, leading a consortium of river users and river-related businesses, has now been selected as the Council's preferred partner to oversee the community element of the re-development of the site and build a new River Centre there.

Recognising that the need to wait for the Trust to raise funds for a complete building could delay the scheme to an unacceptable degree, the Council has decided to offer the Trust a 'shell' within the development, so that only the fitting-out costs need to be raised. The principles of the River Centre concept – set out below – will be retained and the partners are committed to providing a distinctive and sustainable focus building of high architectural quality for the Twickenham waterfront as part of a mixed-use development.

### THE RIVER CENTRE

The Environment Trust's proposal is for a **community building** open to people of all ages and all backgrounds, which is **physically and inherently linked to the river environment**. It will be managed by a company limited by guarantee, with a board representative of the local organisations specialising in environmental work and education, river-based businesses and charities promoting recreational use of the river, and an established commercial café.



## THE BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

- Opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to gain hands-on experience of the river environment and ecology on the foreshore, or afloat.
- Information on the principles and practice of sustainability made available to people of all ages through display and education in a good-quality sustainable building.
- Opportunity to see and participate in boat building, repair and maintenance in a boathouse.
- Facilities for boat hire, with a pontoon on the river, openly accessible to the public.
- A link to Twickenham's heritage as a port through the animation of its waterfront and local historic interpretation integral to the building.
- Security of the street scene through the presence of a waterman, the environmental organisations based there, and the Centre's users.
- A community café open to the public.
- Participation in the Community Toilet Scheme.



## THE KEY FUNCTIONS

- A home for biodiversity education, especially related to the river, provided by organisations such as Thames Explorer Trust, River Thames Boat Project, Richmond's Biodiversity Action Plan and London Wildlife, and sustainability education provided by Richmond's Local Agenda 21 Network, Eco-Action and other agencies.
- A demonstration eco-building for sustainability education.
- Promotion of understanding of the functions of the tidal river through river safety training by RNLI, and exhibits by the Environment Agency and a link through displays to local water-based activities and clubs.
- A home for BTCV, the Environment Trust, RCVS Volunteers Centre and Richmond Environment Network with its educational outreach work through the Schools' Environment Forum and a centre for training of volunteers.
- A home for HANDS (Help a Neighbour in Distress), a charity providing support and opportunities for social interaction to elderly and housebound people.
- A centre for the promotion of the Thames Landscape Strategy Hampton to Kew and its projects, such as the Environment Agency's Floodscape and Water Framework Directive.
- Multi-purpose spaces for the activities of all of the above, and for other local organisations and events such as Twickenham Festival, Twickenham Rowing Club, and for Asian water funerals.
- Permanent display linking to river-based sites in the upper Thames such as Henley River & Rowing Museum and the lower Thames, such as Ahoy Centre Deptford Creek, Docklands Museum.
- A winter boathouse for the Queen's Shallop Jubilant.
- Boathouse facilities for teaching the construction of the Great River Race Jolly Boat, and for small-scale repairs.
- Waterfront pontoon for hire of small electric boats, for short-term mooring for visiting boats and for Eel Pie Island Slipways' Asian water funerals.



## PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The Environment Trust with its partners BTCV, Richmond Environment Network and Thames Landscape Strategy will develop the project.

## FUNDING

- The site is being given by the Council at a peppercorn rate.
- The building proposed by the Environment Trust for the Twickenham Challenge will cost £2.3 million.
- The developer will be required to provide the shell.
- The Environment Trust must find one third of the construction value to fit it out: £700,000
- Funding will be sought from a number of charitable trusts, the National Lottery, local donors and commercial interests looking for sponsorship opportunities. Trusts with appropriate funding programmes include the following:
  - Bridge House Trust – project development costs
  - Big Lottery – Community Buildings fund
  - DTI Low Carbon Buildings Programme
  - Sita Community Building Challenge Fund January 2007
  - Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

## THE ENVIRONMENT TRUST FOR RICHMOND UPON THAMES

The Environment Trust, founded in 1984, is a registered charity with the mission to protect, restore and find new uses for buildings and landscapes of historic interest and character in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, and to enthuse the public about the natural environment through education and volunteering opportunities. It has a successful track record and a comprehensive network of contacts among the voluntary and statutory sectors. It commands support from the public and community organisations and has demonstrated its ability to work in partnership with public bodies.

The Twickenham River Centre embodies many of the Trust's interests:

- The Thames, its history, ecology and recreational uses;
- The local heritage of Twickenham;
- Education for all age groups and social backgrounds;
- Provision of support for other organisations and individuals working in the same or similar fields;
- Achievement of a high-quality sustainable building in a historic setting.





[www.environmenttrust.co.uk](http://www.environmenttrust.co.uk)



**ENVIRONMENT TRUST FOR RICHMOND UPON THAMES**

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