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START AUDIO

Interviewer: Can we start with you introducing yourselves and your relationship with this particular environment? Okay? Do you want to go first?

Teresa: This environment.

Interviewer: Could you introduce yourself?

Teresa: I know, I’m just trying to get that- so this environment, i.e. this house and this garden?

Interviewer: This house and this garden, and then we’ll move on to your relationship with water and the wetlands.

Teresa: Right. Okay. So my name is Teresa [Elvis 0:00:57] and I have- do you want my background? A bit of background?

Interviewer: Yes.

Teresa: Yes. I started in the arts, in the arts background as a stonemason and then I moved into psychology, specifically working at the [Flinders 0:01:18] and then I started to work there, ran \_\_\_ foundation and then I had cancer, then I decided to go back to working with my hands and my body.  
  
What really happened, and it happened- I have spent ten years in each section of my life, more or less. And actually before I was diagnosed with cancer I began to realise actually, it’s about time for me to change and I’m really keen to get back to my body, because I really needed to connect again with my body. But not in a foundation and it had been a very head-f thing.  
  
I was working with very hard edged stuff like abuse, asylum, torture, child sex exploitation, women in prison. All those quite hard topics, and even though it included the environment, the environment was very much about planetary and general catastrophe but I did have art as a cross-cutting theme throughout the areas.  
  
So I have always been interested in this art element, but that’s very much because my background is in art and so I was always recognising that, that was important throughout. So I guess it was always about balancing, coming back and balancing.  
  
And then, within two weeks of me having decided, having that discussion about whether, that I needed to really get back to balancing, I had a diagnosis of cancer. For me, that was like “Right, that gives me permission to leave” this really, really important work that I was doing in the foundation but something that was obviously, really draining as well.  
  
Then it was very much coming back to my body and so that’s where I am now and I’m really coming back there. So then after \_\_\_[0:03:38]. Then I retired from my work. I had a very hard year.  
  
First of all I had quite bad cancer and then I had a year of physical treatment and then really a year of mental treatment \_\_\_ really trying to cope with and also reacted very, very badly to the drugs.

Interviewer: And then about a house? What about the house?

Teresa: Oh, that was my little bit of background. Oh, yes, so what happened was I had really bad treatment by the hospital, the local hospital when I got diagnosed. That was really intense and we lived just over there, so we looked over the marshes on the other side. We didn’t look over water.  
  
Then, I had about five years ago, I thought I wanted to buy one of these houses and I was rowing at the time and I knew that- and I had walked around this reservoir and I thought “I definitely want one of these houses” and they never come up. I’d written to all the people here – Linda, I think, thought I was mad – to saying “Oh, can you- ?” And then I wrote every year.

Linda: Not really. Because we’ve done it before.

Teresa: Yes, we had done it before but every year I’d send them a Christmas card saying, you know… Anyway, then I decided to sell one of my flats in London, in Stepney and put the money aside, really, for one of these houses coming up. And they never come up, they come up every 20 years.  
  
Then what happened was I was going rowing and I saw… So I think I saw a board up here, I was going rowing, it had just been put up, I stopped, I had a receipt thing that said “Ring this number, we want to buy the house”. I got there and then someone rang me as I was in the boat and they said “We’re… ”

Linda: That was Ellis.

Teresa: That was Ellis.

Linda: \_\_\_[0:05:52].

Teresa: So I said “I’ll buy it now. I’ll buy it at asking price straightaway, now. I don’t need to see it. I’ll buy it now. Do you want to go through agent?” and he said “Yes”, he still wanted to go through agent.  
  
Anyway, so I bought it. Then he decided he didn’t want to sell really and I pushed and whatever. I said “Are you going to sell your house?”, I said “Well no, we’re going to rent it out, the other house, by this and we’re going to make a greenhouse, we’re going to basically put it down and build a passive house here and turn it into a- ”  
  
And he said “Can I rent your house?” and I said “Look, we’re not really doing well. Why don’t you stay in your house?” So the solicitor said “Okay, but he has to move out and he has to give you the key and then you need to go move back in again just to legally- ”, so I said “Okay, you stay there”.  
  
So we stayed in our house and I kept having architects to make these passive houses and I didn’t really get on with any of them and \_\_\_[0:06:46] it went on and we weren’t really ready to have this upheaval and we liked our house anyway. So we had it and he stayed on living there, very cheap rent and he’s the only \_\_\_ real mess – his house. He’s the only person I know that could live in it without doing \_\_\_”  
  
So that happened, so we became part of Waterside but we never lived here. Then what happened – because I’d known all these people, because of the Christmas cards – I started to know all these ones. So then Steph, who lived here and owns it, she said- she didn’t know at that point that I had cancer.   
  
So she just said “I’m going to Brussels and I know you always wanted to live in Waterside. Do you want to live my house while I’ve gone?” and I said “Yes” and Linda went “What? Are you mad?” because I had just been diagnosed with cancer and had I actually had the op then? No. It was when we went to Egypt. I literally just got diagnosed with cancer.  
  
And I said “Yes. I do want to live” and Linda was going “No, I can’t do this- ”

Linda: Well because it mean the moving-in date- eventually, the moving in date was the weekend before Teresa started chemotherapy. So it was like “This is just not possible, I can’t cope with her surgery and stuff”.

Teresa: Yes. And moving and the whole movement was just full on. Also, we’d had a really terrible time at [Bath 0:08:20] so it was not easy. The treatment went badly and everything and so then I said “I really want to” and Linda kindly said “Okay.  
  
I just knew that I needed this view. I needed to be in this space because I knew I needed to have a meditation hut as well and I’d asked Ellis “Can I put the meditation hut in your garden? In the garden there, if I had it?”  
  
So I needed that, but I needed this view really. I needed to see water. I had cancer as well so water has been really important to me in my life. I mean I don’t know whether that cancer and Waterside makes a difference but it has. Water is really important. If I get stressed, I go into a spa, if I go, I immerge myself in water. I am a water person.  
  
I’m a land person too, I lie on the land and I want to be in water so I’m very physical. I like to go camping and I like to be immerged in water.  
  
So then we moved and we moved in… Well, Linda can tell you how we moved. So that’s my relationship with- it was very definite I wanted to be here for a long time and because of- and then, so I suppose as I got ill it became more clear that I just needed to be in this space, by water.  
  
It’s very contained as well. It’s very special. It’s very precious this. It’s not like at one point I thought “Oh, I should have bought on the other side. Much bigger view, bigger house” but there’s something very intimate about Waterside.  
  
And in fact, we love our neighbours. We’ve always been like this. Wherever we’ve lived in London, we always choose neighbours really carefully. To be in a place which draws particular people.  
  
So I think all the people here have been drawn to either to water or to the birds or to nature and I’m very keen on birds. So that’s part of the whole thing. My relationship with this land… Is that enough?

Interviewer: Yes. No, that’s perfect.

Teresa: What’s interesting is that most of my sisters and most of my family live on water. So, almost everybody, don’t they?

Linda: Gemma and Helen did.

Teresa: Well, Helen is sort of- you know, Dad lived in a lock, Kings College, Mum lived on the sea, it’s very much, you know, like water and light and space and that. Go on.

Linda: Shall I go?

Teresa: Yes.

Linda: So I’m Linda [Brown 0:11:52]. I am a forensic psychologist by background and a director of a national mental health charity now. So surprisingly, I loved living in London from not having been brought up in London and we lived in Stepney before we lived in Walthamstow, which is very built up, very urban and we loved it.  
  
We then moved for lots of reasons where it became less easy to live in Stepney and moved here because we made friends with someone who lives on [Alford 0:12:32] road. So Alford road looks over the Thames Water filter beds on a road that runs perpendicular to this road.  
  
What’s lovely about that road is it has no houses in front of it and it has the flood relief channel. So in front of our house is water. So you’ve got a view and a sense of, for me, it was a sense of movement of that water, which unfortunately, insurance company always thought it was a massive river that was always going to flood us.  
  
So convincing them that actually it’s a controlled water space was very interesting. They couldn’t actually get their heads around it. So I think some people have a problem with water.

Teresa: Yes. So it was never a danger to us.

Linda: It was never and we’ve never been flooded. But anyway. So there are some sort of rails about water. Lots of rails about water with insurance company. And I really like living in that space.

Teresa: But it nearly stopped us getting the house didn’t it?

Linda: Ironically, the water nearly stopped us getting the house because we didn’t have the insurance in place when we needed to exchange and the person we were buying it from really put a lot of pressure on us to exchange so we just exchanged without the mortgage being properly in place.  
  
It was me that made the decision, but I think because I didn’t really understand why I was making the decision.

Interviewer: Wow \_\_\_[0:13:51].

Linda: We could have lost the deposit and £20,000.  
  
And so, really interesting, actually, that’s right. So the whole thing of water flowing in front of our road meant that actually, the insurance company \_\_\_.

Teresa: But we had a huge risk.

Interviewer: Shall I \_\_\_?

Linda: So that was a really lovely space and then when Teresa bought Waterside- obviously, when we had our dog, our first dog, we would go on the marshes and ironically though, I didn’t understand how close the house was before, really, we bought it, to the River Lea. Then the absolute joy of going on to the marshes and realising how close you were to the river and the marina.  
  
I always remember a call from Teresa, you’d gone down there before me with a friend of ours, and said “Oh my God, there’s a marina here”. That it’s just like “Wow”. No idea that you could get a space like this in London.  
  
So I was really happy on Alford road, as Teresa said. Then Teresa bought Waterside. I remember the first time I went into the back garden at Waterside and it’s just mesmerising. It’s just mesmerising. You just walk in and all you do is look out the back. Like Teresa said, poor Ellis’ house is not the most beautiful interior, but you don’t really care.

Teresa: And he’s got nothing.

Linda: And he’s got quite a different view. Actually, I have quite a difference experience of that view which is only four houses up than I do with this view. Because he doesn’t really look directly onto an island so he has a more expansive view of the water so I kind of feel it’s the nicer view in some ways. It’s a more liberating view than our view, although I love looking at the island.  
  
So we had grand plans for Ellis’ house which were always a bit difficult to execute. Then, like Teresa said, I thought we were nuts about trying to move, really, at a critical time for Teresa’s treatment, but absolutely recognised that this will be like a sanctuary for her and she was going to be at home for a lot of the time and to have such a view was amazing.  
  
And in fact, our bed, where Teresa has spent a lot of her time when she was in treatment, faces the water.

Teresa: You can see the water from the bed.

Linda: You can see the water, although we’ve often talked about putting it higher so we can actually see the water more easily. So I was very happy that we moved and it was the best decision and I love living here.  
  
People love coming and staying here and I love people coming. I love the fact that people love coming here and they go “Wow”. People come up and they feel like they’re on holiday, you know, people who live in South London who come up and we’ve had parties where people come and people just stand and look at the water.  
  
So it feels like a really precious space to offer to other people. I mean, our house is chaotic most of the time and I think the reason I can manage the chaos, which is generally Teresa’s chaos, is I look out the window and there is this beautiful expanse of water. So that gives me the headspace. That’s not the chaos of the house.  
  
I mean, it’s true. Totally true. And being able to sit at breakfast before work, looking at the birds and the seagulls and the \_\_\_[0:17:29] and what happens in our garden. So we’ve had a heron land, we’ve had geese land, we’ve had a sparrowhawk land. You know, it’s just a beautiful space.

Interviewer: I wondered if we could move on now to talk about what you think will be the wider community benefits of this site opening up? I mean, obviously, it’s already open and people have access, but the increased visibility of the site. What benefits do you hope for, or anticipate for the site?

Linda: For me it’s quite difficult because it’s my precious space, it’s my view and I’m not sure I want to see lots of people walking around it. I don’t want to see lots of artificial colours, like when there’s walking groups and people are in their bright orange this, that and the other. And I think, you know, we see so much artificial colour and I get that that’s a big group of people.  
  
But ultimately but I know what it does for my mental health and wellbeing and I think it’s just really important that people take a moment to look at what’s around them and actually, for me, I hope it benefits around conservation and people understanding what we’re doing – from an educational point of view – what we’re doing to our world. You know “Please don’t throw rubbish into the water” and things like that.  
  
So I suppose I hope two things. People get a real sense of peace from coming to this space, but also start to understand the damage that they do. A lot of it is cultural, maybe they just don’t understand it. And so that it raises a kind of profile, really.   
  
And also looks after the site. I think, for me, the benefits are that the site will get looked after and that people can get involved in looking after the site. So as I have been saying to [Rachel 0:19:26], I’m really excited to volunteer and I hope that it won’t just be me, as a white middle-class woman who is educated and gets a thrill out of nature, volunteers, but it will be unusual people – people, not unusual people – you wouldn’t normally expect to either volunteer or volunteer to work in nature in this site, really.

Interviewer: Did you want to add anything Teresa?

Teresa: Yes. I mean that’s very similar to what I think. I hope that they will destroy it, that people will destroy it. I think that it’s been run on a shoestring and the likelihood is that they will destroy it.  
  
I love the emptiness and of the zen-like quality of the reservoirs. You just go along them and you see these reservoirs and they’re incredibly empty, incredibly- and it’s very zen and to have loads of people around it, I’m worried that it will destroy it, I’m worried that people will drop litter everywhere, that- you know, I fear that they will destroy it.  
  
But having said that, I’ve spent loads of my foundation work saying about people being alienated from the ground, from the land, how important it is to come back to it, how precious it is. So to have done well, it’s hugely important and I would be really keen that it is done well, but I really don’t like [Rose 0:21:23], the project manager.  
  
She has been incredibly- we tried to get involved right from the beginning. She was so scared of us derailing it. She’s only interested in legacy. She had been incredibly dismissive of us. We’re on the land and she just dismisses the possible potential relationship with Waterside and she just did that really badly.  
  
You know, one could have done this in a different way. One could have actually pushed up the educational groups. It could have been something that rather than just opening it up to huge amounts of people, one could have just started to build it through groups.

Linda: Don’t you think that’s what Rachel’s doing?

Teresa: Rachel is doing that now, but to open it to saying “We want 100,000 people to use this space just because we want to be” and that just seems like it was numbers, it wasn’t getting people to be intimate with the land and the space and responsibility that it all needed. It’s something that, you know, really careful presentation.  
  
People don’t just become – you don’t just take them and they don’t just become conscious and aware. It’s a careful weaving of that. You know. It’s a complex thing and yes, I want it to happen, but I do question the way it’s happening and I question the fact that it’s reliant on volunteers and that it’s also from a social justice point of view, I have problems with that. I think volunteers are really important but I think that you need to have properly employed staff.   
  
One of the issues that we have is that we’re going to be made more vulnerable because of the amount of people who will now see us Watersiders, easy to climb over, blah, blah, and we become made more vulnerable because it’s easier for people now to see it. But, you know, we have made this-  
  
And not just us. My other worry was that, we had a lot of horrible rapes on marshes and they would come here to these houses naked, whatever, being numb, because we would be the first port-of-call. We weren’t ever here but Pat and Steve had it, Ellis had it, where women just turned up completely devastated and I didn’t want to be having people raped in the back of our houses as well as in the front of our house.  
  
You know, I wouldn’t want it to become a much more vulnerable area for women that couldn’t even deal with the attacks that were happening on the marshes to open up a whole other big space with the potential for attacks, run on a shoestring. So I though “Actually, we’re making this really- it’s going to be awful”.  
  
So whereas I completely agree with Linda and I completely agree that getting water into people’s lives and getting these people into this expanse, I have questions about how that’s being done and yes, and I think that’s quite important.  
  
And I think Rachel is great. I think the way she’s doing it is great and I think bringing in artists is really important. So it’s not just a question of numbers and [cyclists 0:24:56] you know, and this sort of thing. I think once you get artists involved, you get much more thoughtful, caring, nurturing, that whole thing. It’s really, really important. Yes, go on?

Linda: No, I just thought of another benefit. What I’d really love is how involved Thames Water might get in educating people about where their clean water comes from. I think people just take it for granted but also don’t realise what is in their water, which sometimes doesn’t contain particularly nice things.  
  
It would be lovely to think that actually people have- because you know, we know in Spain and Portugal, they’re having problems accessing water or water is now going to become this commodity that… Sorry it’s Rachel – not Rachel, Elizabeth.  
  
You know, it’s such a precious commodity in other parts of the world and we take it so for granted that it comes out of our tap and it’s clean and it’s this, that and the other. There’s just some fabulous opportunity to say “This is precious stuff. This is like gold and we need to look after it and we really need to understand what happens when- ”  
  
You know, people say “Oh, you know, the reservoirs are really high, we must have had a lot of water, a lot of rain”. Well, actually it’s because Thames Water are managing that level and then it goes down when they let it out and it goes off somewhere else and they’re doing things to it.  
  
So I think, for me, the benefit is actually, you know, the value of water.

Teresa: I think I completely agree with you. It’s a wonderful opportunity to look at the earth, the elements, climate change, all that. It’s just fantastic. It is.  
  
Another thing is that, what came to me the whole time through my cancer treatment is that I was being poisoned by the water, wasn’t it? And I’d seen it, that people that we know, from the \_\_\_[0:26:55], we know that oestrogen has been put into the water, it’s changing us and I have oestrogen-sensitive cancer and they aren’t taking out these \_\_\_ oestrogen particles out.   
  
They’re not filtering them out, so we’re getting all this stuff on the pill and then it’s going into the water and they’re not taking it out. So I only drink bottled water now and I only, not because I think it’s better, you know, it’s got nitrates and all kinds of other things in it, but it doesn’t have, well it doesn’t have as much of the oestrogen stuff.  
  
So at the same time, my relationship with water is that I also think that it’s killing us. So it’s quite weird but…

Interviewer: The interesting interaction there between the aesthetic of what you’re saying and the spiritual element of what you’re saying and actually the way you react to the physical taking on of the water.

Teresa: Yes. It is, and so that whole thing, it’s huge and I think that we need to really bring that into the whole discussion. Did you finish your bit? No? Am I breaking you in? Oh.  
  
And this idea that I told you before about water crystal responding to emotions which I think is quite fascinating.

Linda: I think it sounds totally nuts (Laughter).

Teresa: It’s not.

Linda: (Laughter). I have to say, I haven’t read it.

Teresa: It’s really interesting and you know, because everything is connected. We know we’re all in a complex system. You know, the whole theory of chaos and complexity theory and everything.

Linda: Oh, God. Let’s not go into chaos. We’ll be here for days.

Teresa: I know. But everything is part of everything else and of course-

Linda: Water crystals turn pink when I’m happy. [Crosstalk 0:28:46]

Teresa: Of course it’s affected by the waves and our waves, energy-waves, emotions that’s going to affect everything around us. I’m not surprised at all that it affects such fragile crystals. We know that different waves are affecting all the other elements of earth and structure and soil and everything and I’m not surprised that it does affect-

Interviewer: So given what you’ve spoken about and how passionately you’ve spoken about what this space means for the two of you and what you get back from this space, do you think that the opening up of the space will affect the user’s connection with water?

Linda: As in new people in [Crosstalk 0:29:35]?

Interviewer: New people, sorry, I should have said.

Linda: Will it affect their connection with the water? That’s a really interesting question because it depends whether they see it. So do they come just once because it’s a new thing and there’s a café and they can bring their kids there and it’s a place to go, you know, a new space to go in Walthamstow and you know, will they physically get past this beautiful new building and everything that’s zingy that’s happening in there, will people actually walk around the space?  
  
I mean, I wonder, because, you know, I think a lot of people have got out of the habit of walking and this is a site that’s going to require people to walk and you know, if we can’t get there in a car or whatever, then yes. So it will be really interesting to know and it will be really interesting for the site to evaluate that for people because I don’t know will it or won’t it because I live there, I look at it every day and every day, I love it.  
  
But some days, I have to remind myself “My God, we’re so privileged to have this view” because, you know, I could get up, have my breakfast and get straight on my computer and then I’ve failed to see the most beautiful things happening and remind myself and put my computer down.  
  
So it depends whether people will get past the new building and it will depend whether people actually see the space and acknowledge the space and go “My God, this is beautiful”. I think if people can get past the building and maybe go on a walk and get things pointed out to them and come back.  
  
I think the other thing is maybe getting to the kids as well. “Mummy, can we go to the lakes?” You know, I think, if you can get people to come back, which is the great thing about it being free, then I think people might start having a changed relationship with the view and the water. And the educational stuff is really important.  
  
But I don’t know. I’m a bit… Just don’t know what kind of an impact it might have on people.

Teresa: I think water is magnetic and I think people look at it and look for hours at it. And yes, education is important and all the things we’ve talked about with climate change and learning and understand water.   
  
But, you know, an awful lot of fishermen aren’t educated and I- I mean, I’m not sure about these fishermen, I haven’t asked them, but it is something that is a very often working close, not people’s true [Crosstalk 0:32:15].

Linda: But you’ve got to like fishing.

Teresa: What is liking fishing? It is-

Linda: You’re looking at water for hours.

Teresa: I mean it is amazing. They sit and they look at water and it’s like smoking, it’s an excuse to do it. It’s all they do.  
  
There’s a wonderful bit of discussion of a known poet. There’s a poet called Edward Thomas and he wrote. People are always saying he loved fishing but he always just gone out without a hook on the end of the…  
  
So it is the process of sitting there. They would spend hours and hours and hours. Actually, you want to get them to teach people. Fishing is hugely important about being still inside, being stable, de-stressing.  
  
Why do working class people go and learn to fish? Because it balances they stress of the urban thing, it gets them away from the chaos at home. It’s a way that’s acceptable for men to find some silence and spirituality and whatever, they’ll go and sleep out there. I mean this isn’t fish.

Linda: It’s really interesting because some of our mental health services, some of our projects talk about fishing a lot and they use the language of fishing. I was like “Why do we talk about fishing a lot?” and they said “Because actually, a lot of our mental health service users want to go and fish, so we arrange for them to go fishing”. Mainly men.

Teresa: Yes. So it is an acceptable way for men to get peace and so that, in the classes and in the- we need to get them in. They have a lot of wisdom with that. Teaching fishing, blah, blah, blah whatever”.

Linda: Actually, what it does say- me saying, I’m not sure how it might change people’s relationships, it’s the fact that you need people to interact with the space. So it’s not necessarily them walking around the space. Actually they need to be doing something in relation to the space.  
  
So like you’re talking about fisherman have got a reason to be there, like smoking a fag outside because you want a break, they have a reason to be there. So people, we’re a very goal-orientated, focused, driven society now.  
  
Exactly that. People have to have a reason, so they need a reason to say “I’m going to leave the nice cosy building of the café and I’m going to walk to point b, because at point b there is something for me to do”. Do you see what I mean? There’s an interaction with the space.

Teresa: Yes. But you have to be careful.

Linda: People just don’t stroll.

Teresa: Because then they miss out everything on the way to point b.

Linda: No, no, no. But yes, but that’s then how you get them from point a to b.

Teresa: But what if [Crosstalk 0:35:14] just telling you a bit of information on a stick or something and you may never- or…

Linda: No, but there’s masses of ways you could do it. You know, like when we did the bat-walk. That was fantastic.

Teresa: Oh yes, like something interactive.

Linda: We went and we were there – and okay we were there listening to bats – but also, you know, I spent a lot of time, because I couldn’t hear any bats, I spent a lot of time looking at the water and the lights on the water and all that. You know, it’s a creative- you have to engage people creatively.

Teresa: That’s why I’d love to see, in the café, having exhibitions, poetry, maybe always having classical music playing, you know, rather than pop music.

Linda: Yes, but people need silence.

Teresa: No, well silence, you know. But people kind of creating that silence, but if there is going to be music, either silence or very meditative music. I’d love to see mindfulness workshops there, you know, things that really, also, not only about nature, but also about that-

Linda: Peacefulness.

Teresa: Peacefulness of this thing. But the thing about a reservoir, it’s very interesting, because you can’t walk halfway around a reservoir. It is two and a half k, I think, to go around a five.  
  
You know, it’s something make you-

Linda: Yes, unless you have to go back on yourself and people don’t like going back on themselves, do they?

Teresa: No. So it’s once you have started, you have to complete it and that in itself is a very interesting psychological feat, that some people won’t do it because of it. You can’t get across a reservoir.  
  
I’ve been stuck on the reservoir thinking “Shit, I’ve got half an hour and it’s going to take me about an hour to get back”. So that’s quite a bonus to quite a meditative experience. You’re stuck. Having to complete something. So you can’t go any faster.  
  
There’s a very, kind of, a weird thing and I think that a lot of people will actually stay on that side, which-

Linda: Well, because they weren’t not going to be able to complete this one here, are they?

Teresa: Well, they aren’t going to be able to go around because they’re not allowed.

Linda: Yes, that’s what I’m saying.

Teresa: But the others are bigger and they’re never going to walk around there. There will still be just the runners or people fishing and so it’s- like I don’t think anyway, I don’t think they will go-

Linda: That’s interesting. I wonder if we’ll see more joggers.

Teresa: Yes, but it will be really nice. And there is summer, boats and things. But interacting with them, the water. I mean, just the whole thing about pond-dipping, really important. You know, all that stuff of getting to really see what’s in it and helping the conservation thing.

Linda: That’s what I hope doesn’t happen though, is that people think they can swim in it.

Interviewer: No. I was going to come on to that. There are a range of rules on the site. This is not a public park and I’ve asked a number of the different participants in the interviews about how they think that particular behaviour that will be encouraged, because this is a nature reserve, will be secured.

Linda: But it’s about teaching people who have never been on a nature reserve, what does it mean that this is nature reserve. What does it mean that this is a nature reserve? I think it’s a good description because we have to get people to understand this isn’t a park. It’s about the nature.   
  
The nature is what comes first and that’s what always concerned me about the development. This is about the nature, the birds, the flora and the fauna, all of it comes first and we preserve that and we look after that, but I think it’s a bit like what we were talking about. How can you be a patient of whatever treatment?   
  
You’ve also got to understand how to be someone on a nature reserve and of course, you know, when we talk about excluding groups and hard to reach groups, they will never have been on a nature reserve. So that is an educational element.  
  
Not everyone is going to want to engage in an education element of this. They’re still going to see signs and they’re still going to drop litter. They’re going to see water and they equate water with swimming pools and swimming. A hot day – can you imagine – there’s going to be a couple of hot days in London and someone will be out there.  
  
We’ve had boys jumping over the fence and in they go and it’s, you know. We’ve seen couples out there, it’s a very romantic space and take a glass of wine and that worries me that people won’t understand.   
  
Also the dangers of this water, because it is a managed site. Thames Water manage it. The water level goes up and down as they pull the plug from time to time. We see it.  
  
And I guess that goes back to Teresa’s first point about security, use of volunteers and how safe is this site going to be for people? But then we have the whole thing about personal responsibility. I don’t want a police state, we need people to take personal responsibility.

Teresa: But you are opening up something that’s potentially dangerous. So you have to be responsible for-

Linda: Water is hugely dangerous. I mean, you know, with the last storm we had, the water whipping across here was phenomenal. I hadn’t seen it as rough as it was.   
  
I mean, the cormorants loved it but, you know, someone falling in there, it would be a disaster and I think it’s only going to take one person to have an accident and this is going to be a very controversial site. It will go very quickly from a beautiful new nature reserve to a death-trap. That would be really sad.

Teresa: And they’ll say “Oh, it’s because there it was wrong with volunteers, not enough money, blah and it was all done on a shoestring and-

Linda: Yes. You know, there’d be lots of recriminations. But ultimately, the River Lea is accessible to anyone. Anyone can – and we had tragedies of peoples jumping into the River Lea.

Teresa: And dying very quickly because it’s so poisonous. So, you know, that-

Linda: Yes. And drowning.

Teresa: Yes, drowning. But also, you know because I used to row on the Lea and my God, if you go in, everyone’s you got to strip, shower after because it’s got so much effluence go into it and also the Weil’s disease.

Linda: But actually, people can publically walk along the River Lea, same as here, but this is a different space.

Interviewer: Yes.

Teresa: And it’s a private space.

Interviewer: We are engaging in lots of topics, it’s brilliant. So let me just hold one at a time. So can we, first of all talk about- we’ve spoke about the benefits of being here, we’ve spoken about some of the risks, but could we talk about (Laughter).

Linda: (Laughter). Can we talk about dogs? You said it’s not fair. Is the whole population going to be excluded from the..?

Interviewer: Well, I wanted to talk about exclusion. I wanted to talk about the barriers to this site. So are there different types of barriers to people feeling comfortable in this site, wanting to be here, even getting here, are there barriers?

Linda: I mean, it’s not the most accessible site in terms of walking to it from Walthamstow for example.

Teresa: Are there barriers? Yes, I mean this site has been open to anybody from the beginning, it just depends on how many people know about it.

Interviewer: So that’s one of the barriers; the visibility of it?

Linda: Yes, yes.

Teresa: Well, I’m not sure if it’s any- even if you know about it, people still don’t go up here.

Linda: But also I think just the entrance. The first time we went to try and find it, it says “Fisheries” or whatever it says. And I remember we went stonking past it and thought “Where is the entrance to the reservoir” and then the entrance to the reservoir on the other side of Forest Road, in order to get through that gate, we were told you have to put your hand around and press a little button and then you can get access.  
  
So, you know, I think the visibility of it has always been completely naff because there’s no signs that tell you that you can go on it as a member of the public. And then actually, you’ve got to really know – even when you know about the site – some of the ways of getting into it.  
  
It doesn’t have any history of engaging people apart from fishermen, birders and people in the know.

Teresa: The real accessibility, in my mind, will be the entrance \_\_\_[0:44:05].

Linda: I think a lot of people use that. Because in the summer there are a parade of people with buggies going down and I think if they see that entrance, then I think they will-

Teresa: What, are they allowed to have babies in there? Children?

Linda: They will eventually. No.

Interviewer: Not at the moment. But they will when it’s opened, yes.

Linda: I think you could exclude babies.

Teresa: But yes. This is going to be the big one. And that’s what we’ve been telling everybody how this is problematic for cars and everything, okay, they’ve now decided they’re going to have a car park down by the fisheries. And there, a lot of people are going to get-

Linda: Yes. And that’s a really good point. When we were making the point to Rachel about what happens if people get locked in. So if they access it from here, they’re likely to exit from here and so they get locked in, unless there are numbers that they can call, they will wander up here, quite rightly, because they are want to get out, rather than walking all the way back across the site.  
  
I think that’s a concern of mine. I mean, you know, because a, I don’t want people locked in there because when I think it’s probably not a safe space to locked in and b, I don’t want to be constantly having people going “Excuse me, I can’t get out”, which is going to happen.  
  
There will be times when it happens. I can absolutely manage that, but, you know-

Interviewer: So that’s signage and the communication and the contact hall needs to be there.

Linda: Absolutely. And also, you know, Rachel’s talked before about, you know, we’re going to have to have volunteers on these gates. Particularly when it’s getting to closing time and having volunteers that patrol the site.  
  
So I think from this side, that people will know about it because there’s a lot of people going up and down here, cyclists and people. The other side, I think from a public transport point of view, I suppose Tottenham Hale Tube is not far, and there are busses.

Teresa: And you’re going to open the other- you know, there’s going to be a real interest, hopefully, at the other reservoirs which are much less used except by the fishermen, although they are much bigger to get around.

Interviewer: Do you think there are likely to be tensions or flashpoints, shall we say, between different users?

Teresa: Well, unless you bring in the fishermen, there already has been- you know, they already don’t. They’re used to things going to destroy the place.

Linda: There might be, between me as someone who loves nature, wants to look at the birds, and parents who have got kids that are running around and throwing things in the water and running after the bids. Kids that might be throwing stones at a bird, do you know what I mean? So yes, there could be tension between me and people. (Laughter).  
  
“Do you have to wear orange? I don’t need this artificial colour in my mind”. So you know, yes, I think there could be some tensions about it.  
  
Also with the cycle track, cyclists go along cycle tracks and other areas at that speed and don’t slow down. And you know, when you’ve got kids that are toddling around or you’re just ambling along yourself and someone comes up behind you and tells you “Get out of the way”, then I think that’s a tension. I mean, it won’t be a tension with dogs.

Teresa: The tension is dogs not being allowed on the reservoirs.

Interviewer: We started talking about – you hinted on it a couple of times actually, both of you – about this being a privately owned site and we’ve got growth in what they hilarious call POPS – so Privately Owned Private Spaces now. And this is one of the biggest examples of a privately owned public space being opened up.  
  
Do you have any thoughts on how that affects our experience of it or how it can possibly be used, enjoyed, involved in?

Linda: I love the fact that it’s privately owned public space because it means that, you know, we have access to more spaces that maybe we should be having access to anyway. I mean, yes, it’s owned by Thames Water, who, I think, they’re owned by an Australian company.  
  
And I hate the fact that a company not British is – not British because I’m patriotic – but this is my water, I live here and it’s owned by, maybe an Australian company. But I like the fact that we should be forcing privately owned space that’s more accessible to the public.  
  
It’s like, you know, I don’t like being necessarily told I can’t walk in certain areas. You know, I love Scotland. You can walk anywhere in Scotland. I love the fact they’ve opened up the entire coast of Britain to walk around.  
  
You know, I don’t like privately owned beaches. I think that’s not acceptable.

Teresa: Yes. I mean, we probably don’t believe in private ownership. So \_\_\_[0:49:16], you know, of-

Linda: And Thames Water used to be a public company for a start. So that, when it was a public company, was actually owned by everybody. So for this space to be opened up is actually kind of ironic in some ways because it’s almost giving it back to the people.

Teresa: Commons. You know, I’m not very keen on the concept of commons. But, the other thing is that it is a private space and therefore if there’s responsibilities from the private, you know-

Linda: So what would happen for Thames Water, for their reputation? I mean they must have considered all about things like reputational risk. Say, you open it up and someone then drowns in one of the reservoirs and God forbid it’s a child, you know, the first thing that will happen is there’ll be lots of media and it will be “This is a Thames Water site.

Teresa: Yes, but they’re leasing it, aren’t they?

Linda: Well they’re leasing it, but that level of detail in terms of headlines and things like that. So in some ways, it’s a massive courageous step, although there must be benefits for Thames Water over this?

Interviewer: Can we talk about that then?

Linda: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes, talk about the benefits to Thames Water or their motivation.

Teresa: I need a pee.

Interviewer: Do you want me to pause?

Teresa: Yes.

Interviewer: Pause, pause, pause.  
  
So we were just about to talk about what are the motivations, or the objectives do you think are, for Thames Water, in opening up this site?

Teresa: PR.

Linda: So motivation. Getting help to manage it. To manage the wildlife? You know, it gets funded, it’s getting… But are they interested in managing wildlife?

Teresa: I think it’s mainly PR pressure.

Linda: They’ve got the hides on it. They’ve got the hides on it already, the \_\_\_[0:51:34].

Teresa: Yes. Maybe \_\_\_. (Laughter).

Linda: Maybe someone’s got something against [Crosstalk] Thames water.

Teresa: Pressurised into doing it.

Interviewer: That would be exciting wouldn’t it?

Linda: What is the motivation for Thames Water to open it?

Teresa: Yes, because they weren’t keen. I know they weren’t keen. So someone must have… Maybe they are getting a tax break or something?

Interviewer: A lot of people have said to me and I’ve interviewed various \_\_\_[0:52:02] about it and for them, they do a lot of these reserves. This of course is extraordinary. So then they say it’s just an extension of what they do already. They also say- I mean, it’s being run and done by their corporate social responsibility department.

Teresa: The PR thing. Yes.

Interviewer: So PR.

Teresa: So its corporate responsibility is PR. It’s a bit cynical.

Interviewer: Yes. They have also various responsibilities in terms of their commitments to OFWAT.

Teresa: What’s OFWAT?

Interviewer: It is the regulatory body that keeps an eye on the…

Linda: Water regulator.

Interviewer: Yes, water regulator.

Teresa: What, about how- ?

Interviewer: About access. Access to nature. So they have various obligations.

Teresa: So it is pressure.

Interviewer: There is regulatory pressure from that side. What is also interesting is that next year, the water markets are being opened up so you can choose.

Teresa: Where?

Linda: What?

Interviewer: Which utility.

Teresa: Oh, really?

Linda: That’s interesting.

Interviewer: So if you build a very positive relationship with your customers.

Teresa: So it’s PR then. So can we choose to have water which has got that stuff taken out of that, that filtered- ?

Interviewer: No, no. It’ll be the same as the energy companies. So it’s not like- the electricity is only-

Teresa: \_\_\_[0:53:21].

Interviewer: Yes. Well that’s an exception. But yes, you might have. But generally there is only one-

Teresa: No, this is a plan to pressurise them to filter their water.

Interviewer: It is a changing landscape for them.

Linda: Yes, that’s interesting. I haven’t really thought what their motivations might be.

Interviewer: We’ve spoken about the activities encouraged and discouraged on site and how that’s going to happen. You’ve spoken very eloquently and passionately about the role of volunteers on site, both wanting to be part of that, but also some of the risks, perhaps, or being that.  
  
I wondered if you could talk to me a little bit more about how both sites are entirely reliant on volunteers and what that means really, in terms of perhaps being a [hydro-citizen 0:54:13]?

Teresa: What is a hydro-citizen?

Interviewer: A citizen who is engaged with and interacting with water. It is a made up word.

Teresa: (Laughter).

Linda: It would be interesting to see whether volunteers see themselves as are they engaging with the water, are they engaging with the education, are they engaging with the nature, are they engaging with the birds – which are also engaged with the water.  
  
So when I think about volunteering, I would like to volunteer so that people are safe around the water actually. And as much as I- when it comes to director of authority and people start talking about health and safety in terms of our workforce, I’m like “Oh my God, I don’t want to talk about this”.   
  
But here I do not want someone going in the water. I don’t want anyone dying as a result of being on this site and I want people to really enjoy it, but in a safe way.  
  
So bizarrely, the relationship, I see myself when I want to volunteer – and I do feel quite excited about being a volunteer – is actually I want people to be safe around this space because I think it’s a dangerous site. And like I said, in the summer we’ve seen kids going on the water, they’ve been rescued and people have no idea of the dangers of water.  
  
But also the joy of this space, you know, it’s joyful. It’s a really joyful space. It can be joyful in the rain, it can be joyful in the sun it can be- what was the question?

Teresa: (Laughter).

Interviewer: So the role of volunteers and it being a very volunteer-led project.

Linda: What I do hope is that it’s not going to be all people like me, white, middle-class women, men, you know. It would be a real shame for London. You know, this is a really diverse area of London. It’s beautifully diverse.  
  
We moved here, partly as well, because of the diversity, and I would hate that it’s just people like me.

Teresa: Well it might be people like you-

Linda: To start with.

Teresa: Yes. Because that’s where people like you have got that point of understanding about nature.

Linda: Well, that’s okay. But I think I won’t necessarily attract other people to come here. As nice a person as I might be, not-

Teresa: But that’s why we really need to be really education- really still getting the school groups and everything.

Linda: Absolutely, because I think kids will bring their parents. If kids really love a space, they will nag their parents to come to that space and I think that kids will make such a big difference and, you know, having kids that come and volunteers – how about that – their parents will have to come.

Teresa: I met – really interestingly – a friend of ours who is in Norway who works in a museum, studies and this is very similar, about how to get the local environment to have ownership over their history and this is about having ownership with the environment.  
  
And I think volunteering- you know, I believe in three day week, I believe in not \_\_\_[0:57:40] and I think that partly we should have volunteers about our social responsibility. Our life should be giving our time and-

Linda: Like \_\_\_[0:57:51].

Teresa: You know, giving our time and our energy and everything to [cup-hold] our society and so volunteering is part of that, but I’m afraid volunteering here is about cheapness and about running the whole thing on a shoestring and about trying to put in as little as possible to get as much kudos for the councillors as possible and that’s, I’m afraid, what’s happened.  
  
I’ve been running a grant-making foundation, I know exactly how much [Barnes 0:58:19] cost, so I know exactly how much they put out for here. I know how little it’s being run on. I think that’s incredibly dangerous, incredibly badly thought out and incredibly risky.  
  
Whereas they would be- they and I’m sorry but that’s the case, but having said that, I think we can take it back, make it better by flooding in the creative, the artist, the using of life, a bit like what we were talking about before, using this as a shared outreach, shared collaborative things that, using the wetlands, answered many, many group’s concerns.  
  
So the wetlands. It shares objectives with a lot of other people and it’s getting all those – do you see what I mean – it’s getting all those objectives together.

Interviewer: So that links very closely to my next question which is around pathways to shaping this space which is linked in to it being a privately owned site. So people come here, they want to develop some form of sense of ownership. What are their routes to do that? What are their pathways to actually- ?

Linda: Not through the council. I mean Teresa’s talked about roads. You know, I mean we got off to a really bad start, they got off to a really bad start with people who literally live in this space. So there was no encouragement that we were going to be owners or stakeholders in this.  
  
So one route not – you know, in my experiences – one route not to get people involved with this is through the council. Because Teresa’s already mentioned Rose and I mentioned Rose and also the council is their elected people and they have specific agendas and you know, they want to go and they want to cut ribbons, they want to go in their badges and their smart cars and their medals and all this kind of shit. That is not the route in to get people to own this.  
  
This is not a political football. This is not a political site. And they sometimes treat- you know, she treated us so badly and yet she’s representing the local authority in this and it’s just like, you know, one route I don’t want to see is people coming through the councillors, pitching up, opening it and buggering off and having nothing to do with it and just to glorify in it.  
  
So that, for me, is not a route. I mean there are other classic routes like the schools and the churches and the- not the dog clubs I’m afraid. But you know, ownership is going to be about how you’re going to get people to repeatedly come back.

Teresa: I think you need to drop the whole idea of ownership.

Interviewer: You need to drop it?

Teresa: Drop it.

Interviewer: Okay.

Teresa: It’s all about sharing. It’s all about collaborative working together and it’s not about ownership. That would be my thing. It’s not about stakeholders, it’s not about- this is about a shared push and it’s trying to make this as shared and as collaborative as possible.  
  
So in fact, there is no such thing \_\_\_[1:01:45]. There is no such thing as something that has boundaries like that and that it is something that is integrated in all of our lives and all of our work. Do you see what I mean? It’s something that can be integrated- that becomes part of the Black Horse community.  
  
It’s not that there are separate owners for this thing. It’s very much that integrates with a much wider working practise. Do you see what I mean? So it becomes-

Linda: But also I think people should be able to- I mean, I’ve talked about you want to encourage people to come back. But actually, it’s fine if people just come once. You know, so they don’t necessarily need to feel like they have an ownership over it, but that they can just enjoy it on the day that they get there and go again or they can be a one-off visitor from another part of London.

Teresa: Yes. But I mean, no, I don’t mean that it stops what we mean, but when we say “Ownership” we mean that we have invested interest in it. But you can have invested interest without this idea, this capitalist concept of owning.  
  
We have invested because it’s part- but we can all have shared invested interest with shared interest. Do you see what I mean? Shared because we need it to be-

Linda: And respect.

Teresa: With respect for. It’s shared and I think we need to get away from thinking that this is bounded entity that some people have more self-interest. It’s an integrated part of all us living in this area – do you see what I mean? – And how that’s different from ownership.

Interviewer: Which bring me on to, I wondered if you could take that concept around an integrated space, a shared interest and think about it in terms of the role of the site as a catalyst for connectivity?

Teresa: I’m well in to that. I think that, that it can be a catalyst of a part of that. It could be one of those hot points of connectivity. But I think we’ve talked about-

Linda: But then that also depends on the capacity to make those connections and you know, so there is going to be a very limited “Paid professional” in inverted commas, workforce. And then it’s the capacity of those individuals to then manage the volunteers and managing volunteers is difficult than managing paid staff.  
  
So the capacity to make those connections is unknown, isn’t it, to a certain extent?

Teresa: One of the things I would do is have a [steering 1:04:32] then, which has members, not of the usual people, but of the unusual people.

Linda: But that’s just kind of friends of, you know, friends of friends. But it was the usual. But that wasn’t necessarily a group of people that, in fact, it was a very \_\_\_ group of people. But that’s the usual suspects.

Teresa: Yes but I think you have to be really creative and think where are those interconnection points of it. But of course you get into a thing that you have to carefully select them so they don’t have their own- it’s not a meeting of different agendas, which can tear it apart.  
  
So it has to be people that it fits. I think that the café is going to be really important. Not as a café but as an exhibition space. We were talking about getting- were we talking about [Michael Bourne 1:05:40], getting Michael Bourne.   
  
So I think art is going to be really important because it speaks across all kinds of different areas. So I think getting that and having concerts in there and-

Linda: But the capacity to manage this is, Teresa, is going to be- that’s what-

Teresa: No. Because you don’t manage it. They manage it.

Linda: Who?

Teresa: You know, the person who, you know, you’re getting those-

Linda: Who is “They”?

Teresa: Natural Voices in Walthamstow or whatever.

Linda: Yes. No, no. But you’re still going to need the people who are the professional workforce on the site to manage those people coming on to the site and putting on stuff.

Teresa: Well yes. But what you’re going to do is get them, as much as possible, you get other people to bring in and manage it. You always get other people to do the infrastructure.

Linda: Yes. For sure. But we know, you know, from just putting on an exhibition or putting on an event, the amount of work that takes-

Teresa: Just-

Linda: Just let me finish- in facilitating that, is going to be the responsibility of the wetlands management. So I think, for me, there’s the sad thing and you know, maybe they can raise the funds in the future, is that, you know, they are going to be up to their eyeballs in so much staff and like I said, managing volunteers is a thing in and of itself.  
  
So I think it’s going to be a kind of slowly building up to do those kind of things.

Teresa: That would be a pity. I would put that in right at the beginning. I would be trying to get the money to do that because I think that’s crucial for the linking and the meeting. It’s not an addition.

Linda: Are they’re having a fundraiser?

Teresa: It’s really important to make that central.

Linda: Because a lot of these kind of places, or places like this, will have an event manager. Someone whose job it is to have that kind of external focus. “We want to do this exhibition. We want to do this piece of art. We want to do that”. That is someone’s job to do that.

Teresa: And it’s really important and I would go out and get the funding for that because what you saw at Mile End park, I don’t know if you know Mile End park. Mile End park, well, they did it as a millennium park and they build these two buildings, one for art and one for the environment and never used. Because they got the capital grant but nobody ever had to do that.

Linda: [Crosstalk 1:08:03] [animated].

Teresa: Animated. And that is actually what you want, is an events manager.

Interviewer: They have one at Woodberry down and I wonder if that person will do – for when it opens – they will do 50/50.

Teresa: I think that’s crucial and then it’s not a question of just mothers and babies being- you have to be really creative and think “How can they offer it to the- ” going back to Black Horse, because it’s just there, the Black Horse Workshops, to do, to bring and do something. How can they offer it to different groups around here  
  
You really want them to come in and use it and then you’re immediately getting the whole groups and their whole- all the people around them, hooking them in to this space. So I think the Walthamstow Massive, the music thing, would just be-  
  
If I was doing the events managing, I would look at my calendar and I would say “Right, I’ve got – bimonthly – I’ve got 24. I can offer 24 day slots and I’m going to offer one to each of these groups” and by the end of it, I would have just created, completely, within a year, I would have brought in such diverse communities in to sharing that space and learning about it.  
  
I would do it as wide as possible. It would be the WI, it would be a knitted- obviously that would be- and you would do it in such a way that they would be bringing something, not just taking something. So like that knitting with the bird thing, you know, that whole thing as a symbol of something that comes back and really builds on what you’re trying to achieve [Crosstalk 1:09:55]

Linda: So actually that role, that kind of facilitator of events person is actually \_\_\_. Because you know, Rachel is the engagement officer but she’s part-time and then you are going to have very specific roles, aren’t you, around the education officer and conservation and all that, you know.  
  
Whereas actually, the public, outward-facing bit of the site is kind of really critical.

Teresa: You could easily get funding for it. I could easily get for it. I could easily see, I know who to apply for. I could get funding tomorrow.

Interviewer: Well, you’ll be drawn in. You mentioned the word “Symbol” then, and all the way running through both of your conversations and your discussions, there have been elements of what I might call “Identity” and I wondered if you could reflect on the identity of the site at the moment – what you value most about it?  
  
Then, whether or not you think the increased access to the site will affect the identity of the site, the identity of the wider area? Will people perceive this part of London?

Linda: I mean the identity for me at the moment is that there is no-one on it and it’s very peaceful (Laughter).

Teresa: Me too. It’s a Zen paradise.

Linda: You know, it’s lovely to see a few fishermen but that’s about it. Well, I mean it’s interesting because I think “Oh, you know, we’ve got Barnes over in West London” that I know is a very specific site and it’s very different. You know, well-funded, quite glitzy – not glitzy, but you know what I mean – it’s all been done with quite a bit of money behind it.  
  
And then lo and behold, the east-end side is being run on a shoestring and all this kind of stuff so perceptually, I feel it’s another example of West London having lots of money.  
  
Will it change the- I mean, for me, yes it’s going to change the site, I’m going to see more people in brighter clothes, which I’m not particularly thrilled about, but ultimately, I’m not a selfish person. I want people to enjoy it, I want people to live in London and have access to these kind of spaces and I know how important it is for my health and well-being.   
  
So will it change the- ? Yes, maybe, you know to have a facility that you are going to open up to people is a lovely thing to do. Will it change the identity of it? I don’t know.  
  
For this immediate reservoir, I don’t think much will change. I think it will- the islands will continue to look a bit cormorant laden, shoddy, trees falling down, the old flash of blue kingfisher, and the fishermen. I’m not entirely sure how much difference I’m going to see immediately outside my back window.

Teresa: I don’t think we’re going to but I think identity is made by other people and I think that already the estate agents are using it, so yes, it is changing the identity of this area at Walthamstow. They’re already saying-

Linda: Yes, the [South Village 1:13:08].

Teresa: Yes, we’re already talking about the fact that it’s put up the prices in this area because of the wetlands so it is becoming a- something that-

Linda: Well these houses can say they back on to a nature reserve.

Teresa: Yes, so basically it is putting up the prices. But they are using it to put up prices. That’s what the estate agents are doing so that is going to change the identity.  
  
But Walthamstow is already an interesting place and I don’t know how we are going to be able to hang on to that because if it becomes gentrified, then more people can’t afford to live here. That’s going to be another problem that will add to the lack of affordability for people.  
  
That will affect the identity of it and that’s why it’s really, really important to get the ownership of the people who, you know, the makers and the creatives and the people that are, at the moment, identifying this area. You know, it’s when you get off the tube and it says “Home for people who make and create”.   
  
You’ve got the William Morris gallery. I think it’s going to be really important to get the William Morris gallery hooked absolutely into this so it becomes a branch of theirs. And they’ve got outreach. People they are paying for outreach, use some of their time. Give them, say “We want you to take over-”

Linda: But who uses the William Morris gallery, so do hard-to-reach groups.

Teresa: Oh yes. They’ve got big education outreach. So get that outreach person to say “Can we have a day of your time?”. Do that. “Use this as something that you’ve done” you’ve thought of all these things “Use that- ”

Interviewer: Oh, no I’m [Crosstalk 1:14:46] any way responsible for this.

Teresa: But do you know what I mean? Use that. Use your outreach. “Look, here we are. Have this as an appendage of the William Morris Gallery and we will use your events person. See this? We’re going to give you five free events here”  
  
You know, well basically, all you’re doing is packaging. “You can’t afford an events person” so package the site off to find other events people, do you know what I mean? And they will come in with all the responsibility and the funding behind them to do their events.

Interviewer: And experience.

Teresa: And experience. That’s what I mean by that shared, sharing that whole thing.

Linda: I do think it is going to put us a bit more- like, I mean, the think about the estate agents absolutely, is putting us on the map. Because people talk about Barnes.

Teresa: Yes. When we think about Barnes, we think of that, don’t we?

Linda: David Attenborough – I must just name-drop him again – knew about the cormorant island here and the heron \_\_\_[1:15:41].

Interviewer: Oh did he? When did you see him last?

Linda: Well when we had that dinner.

Teresa: Dinner? That was a long time ago. Were we living here?

Linda: That was a long time. Doesn’t have to tell everyone.

Teresa: So yes. So I think we will change it. But, having said that, we need to direct that, the way it changes the identity and that’s why I feel we need to take ownership. Don’t leave it as a void for other people-

Linda: You didn’t like that word “Ownership” earlier.

Teresa: What?

Linda: You didn’t like that-

Teresa: No, no. But, I’m using it. Don’t let it become disavowed of a few mother and baby meetings and whatever. You need to get in with these and you need to get them.

Linda: (Laughter). You’ve said that a few times.

Teresa: What?

Linda: You’ve said the thing about mother and babies a few times. I don’t know if there is a word that’s like “Racist” that applies to mothers and babies.

Teresa: What you want is to get this shared thing of getting it integrated where other- I’m always, as a funder, always saying “Share funds, share funds”, you know. So you’ve got an events manager there, you know, share the events manager.

Interviewer: Which is interesting that you say that because the whole project has come to pass because they are sharing part political, part social, part business projects. They wouldn’t have got their HLF funding without Waltham forest being the responsible body.  
  
If the London Wildlife Trust hadn’t pushed and pushed and pushed for it, you know. They really have-

Teresa: It is pretty collaborative in a way.

Interviewer: They may not have a shared vision, but they have shared objectives, I would say, in terms of what – or rather the other way around, sorry.

Linda: Yes, what do each get out of it? It’s different. [Crosstalk 1:17:39].

Teresa: They all see it as something-

Interviewer: It’s different. Yes. Well they needed to come together in other to get that thing. So these models of ownership that are coming about to give us access to nature.

Teresa: \_\_\_ share and sharedship. Rather than ownership, sharedship.

Interviewer: Sharedship.

Linda: What? Sharedship? I don’t like that word sharedship. Something to share my chips. Sorry.

Teresa: So just collaborative models. Yes, well I think I would get in and do more and say “Let’s see this, really, as a make-a-space or a this-space or a collaborative-this or whatever” and open it up to little- a bit like what the geezers are down in Bow, but you know, very interesting micro- you know, all kinds of things could happen here which would be fascinating.

Linda: Again, but you’d have to manage it.

Teresa: No. That’s what I’m saying. Get them to manage it. They come in and they have to tick a few boxes and they have to stay within the rules, but they actually provide all the-

Interviewer: I think there is an issue, as you say, around capacity. I think there is also an issue around the point that you’ve both made, around this being an operational site.

Linda: Yes. It’s a nature reserve. To a certain extent, I’m not sure I entirely agree. I don’t want lots of activities happening where someone is building a something-or-other. This is a nature reserve.  
  
So it’s really important that people come and experience it as a nature reserve.

Teresa: But their manufacturing, it can be all about that. That’s what I’m saying, they’re going to do something that is incredibly useful for this [Crosstalk 1:19:21] stimulation that growth.

Linda: Yes. But you know, it’s still a nature reserve and I think that’s an important bit that has to be held on to.

Interviewer: In terms of its identity?

Teresa: Yes.

Linda: Yes. In terms of it. Absolutely. In terms of identity, this is a nature reserve, it’s about conservation, it’s about respecting our wildlife, its biodiversity, where water comes from, you know, the preciousness of nature and that’s what floats my boat.

Teresa: Actually it’s really important because that’s the identity we should be saying, that actually the identity we want is, at Walthamstow, is putting this nature at the heart of their community and this is the people who are choosing to put it at the heart of a community and that’s everyone in Walthamstow. Therefore, you need to go and get everyone in Walthamstow to buy into that.  
  
Buy in to the fact that they, themselves, each one of them, has made this choice of putting nature, water – well, nature really not water. I don’t know about being a hydro-citizen. I mean, that’s what you asked us about being, what is it, how does it make- ?

Interviewer: Yes. Your connection with and relation with water.

Linda: Yes. I kind of think that’s really exciting because, you know, we are saying – and like I said in other parts of the world – water is as precious, if not more, is the most precious commodity.   
  
One country could threaten to turn its oil off to another country. You threaten to turn the water off to another country and they’ve got pipelines going across countries, you know, your entire community is done over.

Teresa: Yes. They say all the wars from now on are going to be water-wars and that’s really-

Linda: Exactly. And what’s really imperative is we absolutely- and you know, the Germans went to bomb, you know, they used this to guide themselves into London and if they bombed this.   
  
And that’s, you know they’ve got all sorts of precautions about, you know, they could be a site of a terrorist attack. You get London’s water and you fuck London up – sorry, excuse me.

Teresa: Yes. It’s really a precious thing.

Linda: You’ve done London over.

Teresa: So water, there is a lot of things. It is something that is risky on all kinds of levels and that’s why my illness is risky. Because that’s why, you know-

Interviewer: So it goes full-circle to where we started.

Teresa: No but it’s why. It’s something that affects everybody because if you poison the water, you’re poisoning us all and we know that is affecting because we know fishes are becoming hermaphrodites. We know that we are 70% water.   
  
We are water creatures. So water is huge in every element. And we need to be part and we need to respect water and that-

Linda: But it’s really an interesting thing because this whole thing about identity is, you know, this site could be everything to anyone, but it does have to hold on to, you know, even I forgot “Oh yes, it’s a nature reserve”. Actually that’s what makes it exciting for me and its connection to water.  
  
That’s what I want to hold on to. That’s why I want to volunteer on it. I want to go and make things on it. I want to go and get people to understand it’s volunteering, it’s-

Teresa: Yes. I may want it to be a real place of spirituality and vision and presence and being a part of [Crosstalk 1:22:42] yourself and getting hooked into the nature and environment and Linda wants to do it from a safety thing.

Linda: I want to be a health and safety (Laughter).

Teresa: Yes. But I’ve been a lifeboat man. I’ve been two years in a lifeboat so water- you know, of rescuing people from water. Water is really-

Linda: You should be the health and safety person.

Teresa: I am a \_\_\_[1:23:08], you know-

Interviewer: You are a hydro-citizen.

Teresa: Yes. I am a hydro- And I wanted, from very early on, to be – and we both dive and we are very- So yes, I am a water- water is very, you know, the whole element of water is very big. It has always been off in my life, so it’s quite interesting, isn’t it?

Teresa: And so we can see it but.

Linda: It’s pretty, would you say, precious?

Teresa: Yes, I mean, we made a lot to live here to be a part of-

Linda: As precious as you.

Teresa: So yes, it’s all-in-all-

Interviewer: I think I had one final question. And that was around…

Linda: “What do you think about dogs not being allowed on the site?” No, sorry, carry one.

Interviewer: The dogs issue is a problem?

Linda: We have an issue.

Teresa: Can’t we have it with leads? He said-

Interviewer: Or maybe just one dog?

Teresa: Well there is one dog on it. There is a dog already.

Interviewer: Whose dog is that? A site dog?

Teresa: Yes. It’s a site dog. You’d like to be that dog, wouldn’t you?

Linda: I know. It’s rubbish. You’re an excluded group. [Crosstalk 1:24:18]. We can fit you in a pram.

Teresa: Actually, I think the whole idea of dogs not being allowed needs to actually be questions.

Linda: No, I don’t. I don’t really think so.

Teresa: I do. Because you get dogs on nature reserves.

Linda: No, but people are so not responsible. We see dogs off their lead, just walking in front of the house trees. People will lets dogs off here and they will terrorise the birds.  
  
You only need one person with one dog and I absolutely agree dogs shouldn’t be on it but I think it’s-

Teresa: But it will exclude a lot of people.

Linda: Anyway, your final question.

Interviewer: Sorry. My final question was, you started off – and you have hinted about this a little bit – but the public consultation on it. And you were involved in the-

Teresa: It was absolutely rubbish. The public consultation was rubbish and it was rubbish. I think it was purposefully like, a lot of consultations are rubbish.

Linda: \_\_\_[1:25:11] is rubbish at consultations, generally.

Teresa: They kept people out. We asked to be included at every stage. We would find everybody else but us had been included.

Linda: I’m not even sure that’s right. Actually they included lots of people.

Teresa: Well yes and it’s been absolutely rubbish and in fact, I at one point thought, obviously I know Heritage Grant- you know, I know them all personally. As a grant-maker, we all know each other very, very well and I did think of going \_\_\_[1:25:44] consultation was very important to them. I really thought about going to them and saying “The consultation has been zero”.  
  
So don’t think that, you know, one of your reasons to get it was \_\_\_. So, you know-

Linda: Not with anyway.

Teresa: No, but lots of groups said they had no idea about it and the planning was kept absolutely under wraps and, you know, we were the only people who-

Linda: Was that when Ellis went and spoke at the council?

Teresa: Ellis spoke and Lizzy went and we said “Look, we’re not against it, we’re pro-it, but there has been no consultation and we are stakeholders. We are actually on the land. We’re on the land”, that from the word “Go” when they put it up, they would include our houses and we said “We haven’t even been consulted”.  
  
Then Rose comes along and says “Oh, actually, the line is that side” and it’s like “Don’t be so idiotic, woman”. All this area is on it. It’s like “You are not consulting people who live on this land, we don’t even know about it”.   
  
Anyway, that’s when they said they told Rose in the thing, “You have to consult with them”. Still nothing. Made no difference. It’s that idiotic.

Linda: What I find illogical, which is why I really struggle with is, is why would you, you know- for people who obviously choose to live here to look at the water, clearly love the site, why would you think that we would be opposed to it.   
  
Because I kind of think the only motivation for not engaging with us must be that somehow they think we’re going to oppose it, therefore if they don’t consult with us, they’re not going to hear our view and therefore they don’t have to take it into account.  
  
But it’s kind of like, well why would you take that position and actually be that rude? I can’t even say that they’ve been particularly nice about not consulting. They’ just had one meeting and then chose- it’s almost worse, have one meeting and then completely ignore you afterwards. It’s just unhelpful really.   
  
And I think there have been legitimate concerns. We had another whole series of rapes on the marshes over the summer and the police did respond much better this time, but there are concerns about safety and security and lighting and getting people on and off the site. For us, consulting about our security with houses that back on to a site that is ultimately dark at night.

Teresa: They should have gone out of their way to try to allay some of these concerns, which is what they did with the water board. Because they went out of their way. Fishermen-

Linda: But look, why did they go out of their way? Because they own the site. And who else uses the site? The fishermen.

Teresa: Yes. But they should have done it for us because we could have been their allies and we said that to them from the-

Linda: And clearly we’re still cross about it. Even though Rachel’s come on board. She’s great. She’s really engaged that, she takes away the concerns and, you know, I trust Rachel to do that. But we’re still cross about it.

Teresa: But we still haven’t, well, they still haven’t come up with the one thing that we’ve asked them, is “How are you going to protect our security? Because we’ve got a human right not to be made more vulnerable by your decisions”. You know “You need to protect us in that and it’s not very difficult to do that. All you have to do is come up with some bloody plans and then we’d be really happy”.  
  
And you know, they don’t do that and they don’t say how-

Interviewer: That’s just weird.

Teresa: I mean we are much more involved and Rachel has been great, but we are still worrying about the safety of us and that’s not good. That’s not good to-

Linda: It’s not like it’s quite a selfish position. You know “Actually I’m worried about my own security as a result of this site, but actually, I’d like no to worry about that, I’d just want to embrace it as a concept and as something exciting that’s happening” rather than constantly going on about Rose and our security.

Teresa: Yes. They haven’t respected our basic concern, and therefore we are still struggling over that and we want to get over that and then be much more involved with it. But the respect is so minimal.

Linda: And also, we will get affected by the people using the copper mill and going up and down to look at the view and us saying “Well, where are they going to park?” and that brings more people down here. They’ve just redone this road with new speed humps which actually, have increased the speed of cars because they’re not as good as the old speed humps.  
  
But I don’t feel I could pick up the phone to Rose and say “Look, from a council point of view, this is what’s happened, what do you think?” and Rose to say “Oh, thank you so much for that feedback, that’s a really interesting thing. I need to go away”. There’s nobody that we can do that with.

Teresa: And there are different things. So like the Greenway that’s going through, is not cut with the wetland- you know, there are all these different things that are happening at the same time and nobody seems to have connected them.

Interviewer: They are working together and David Mooney who is the LWT manager – development manager – for this site and also Woodberry, is the one that has been working Hackney to drive the Greenway through.

Teresa: What, this Greenway? The thing that’s going down here?

Interviewer: Yes.

Teresa: Because they didn’t seem to fit or have any- we got this information through, didn’t we? And it had absolutely nothing, no connection with what was going on here and it was like “This is crazy”.

Linda: And it was interesting, they also put a red line down our road. It’s like “Well actually, that’s not part of the Greenway. It can’t be”. So when they do consultation, they’re really sloppy about some of the detail and the detail is what people will look for.

Teresa: \_\_\_[1:31:28] a garden?

Linda: Yes. When it’s going to affect your space and where you live, you look at the detail of it and in consultations, more often than not, they’ve been really sloppy with that. And I don’t understand why, you know, when Rose goes – I’m not just picking on Rose – when a councillor goes home, or someone from the local authority goes home at night, they go into their house, it’s important – their space is important – why do they not think it would be the same for anybody?  
  
So if something happens outside my house, I want to know. So just personalise it a little bit, have a little think about how that might feel and then you might actually change the way that you’re interacting with people.   
  
It’s a shame because I think actually \_\_\_[1:32:11] is pretty shit at consultation, generally. They don’t- I don’t know if \_\_\_.  
  
Mini-Holland is another great example of consultation that basically, didn’t really, appease anybody. It didn’t appease the cyclists or the motorists or the \_\_\_[1:32:32] road shops and restaurants. You know, people were really, really unhappy with it. Even cyclists were going like “Well, I think some of this is a bit daft, we’re not Holland”. And as I would say, some of what they are suggesting-  
  
So actually as a council and a local authority, I just don’t think they are good at consultation but it doesn’t mean to say they shouldn’t do it better. And I want to get past talking about Rose, quite frankly.

Interviewer: So you can be ambassadors because you clearly are invested in it.

Linda: But we used that word. Exactly, that word was raised. You know, we can be your best ambassadors, we can support you to look after this site, to help keep it safe and she basically just went…

Teresa: You know, white middle-class, I’m the only one with the- I’m opening it up to the people who aren’t white middle-class and it’s like…

Linda: Well, you know, just so it’s open for everybody, so…

Interviewer: So, one final memory of this site. One fun, magical, something that really strikes you in your mind that this space provides or you’ve experienced here.

Linda: The joy of the birds. You know, if you can stop for long enough and you just look at what the birds do, they’re hilarious. I mean, they’re absolutely hilarious.  
  
The way the birds interact with each other, with the fish, you know. It’s just beautiful and, you know, some of it is just very funny. It’s funny, there’s a lot of humour on this site.   
  
There’s a lot of things that make you smile, that actually make me laugh out loud and you know, I want people to share that. I know I can sit and I can read a bit, look up and I can just interact with it all the time, but I want people to come on the site and they want to look at it and they see the humour and the joy of this site, would just be magical.  
  
And you know, I know it’s going to close at five, but it would be nice that maybe there’s some longer opening hours if they can manage it so that people see the magic of the dusk.

Teresa: Well that’s what I said to Rose. You know, reward – not Rose, Rachel – reward your volunteers by allowing them to camp or whatever, to do this. Reward them in in that way and-

Linda: What’s your memory of the site, love?

Teresa: I think looking at the water. Having something so elemental. To have access to an element like that. And you can just watch this water and it will look still unmoving at the same time. It is amazing.

Linda: And also what’s under the water because the fish jump. The first jump really high.

Teresa: Yes, but I’m really talking about water and having that relationship with one of the core elements of just a mass of that. It’s really, I think it feeds you very deeply and you can watch it.  
  
It’s like fire. It’s like watching fire. Watching water is the same. It’s very, very healing, very healing to watch water. It absorbs your stresses and you know it absorbs stresses. We know that. So why we don’t think that doesn’t affect the crystal of water, I don’t know.  
  
It does absorb stress. We know that it absorbs stress because there some- we know that it does absorb.

Linda: I have to read this book.

Teresa: And so I am sure it does.

Linda: What, the water is going to wink at me?

Teresa: No. It draws out the stress. We know from all kinds of things that water does.

Linda: I like being in water, that’s true.

Teresa: Yes, and everything. We are responding. It’s like the sky and the moon and everything, from a woman’s point of view, \_\_\_[1:36:34] from a woman’s point of view. Which I think water and women have a very strong link particularly. Because of our periods, because of the moon, because of tides, because we are very influenced by water.  
  
Okay, it’s not tidal here, but I think that we are very… I think water is particularly useful. But having said that, you know, you don’t get many women fishing – fisherwomen. Are people looking at the- ?

Linda: Well because women can go and express themselves different, they don’t necessarily need to go and-

Interviewer: Thank you.

Linda: I’m sorry, we’ve gone on and on and on.

END AUDIO

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