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START AUDIO

Interviewer: Could we start with you introducing yourself and your role within the project?

Steven Swaby: Yes. My name is Steven Swaby, I’m the curator for the Walthamstow Wetlands Project and I will be developing all of the exhibition materials during the course of 2016.

Interviewer: In terms of the sort of people that you’ll be working closely with, Stephen, which sort of people do you see as being the key stakeholders that you will be engaging with?

Steven Swaby: I think I’m, sort of, slap bang in the middle, really, between the main partners, Thames Water, London Wildlife Trust and also Rose and Waltham Forest as well are the main, key people. Then it’s also making sure that I’m plugged into the site users as well, so just the birders, the anglers and the walkers and other people that are actually going to be using the site.

Interviewer: Okay. Based on your experience of talking to those various stakeholders, could you, sort of, articulate for me what you feel are their respective objectives in those extending the opening of the wetlands?

Steven Swaby: I think there are a number of different things going on, isn’t there? There’s, appreciably, been a little bit of guardedness from the existing users that open access may change the nature of the place and then this, kind of, privileged position that they’ve enjoyed and a very quiet, tranquil spot for many years might be eroded in some way. I think that’s, sort of, something of an unknown at the moment, but if it’s managed properly then I think that can be mitigated quite well.

I think on the other end of the spectrum, you’ve got people that have perhaps never set foot there before and still have the illusion that you can’t go in there or it’s somehow restricted. So to bring that whole new audience in, local people and people perhaps even from further afield in London to introduce the site as a walking amenity but also just the stories behind it, you know, the history of the site and why it is like it is. And also, why it’s become so good for wildlife. You’ve got all these different strands to weave together and tell a really interesting story.

Interviewer: Based on the, sort of, conversations that you’ve had with, say for example, Thames Water, what, in your view, is their objective in gifting this land to be opened up?

Steven Swaby: Well I think it goes almost a bit beyond corporate, social responsibility, although that is part of it. I think there’s a real understanding from the people I’ve spoken to at Thames of the wider importance of it. It’s not just simply the, kind of, benevolence of a water company, there are other reasons for doing this.

I think part of it is also probably the social history of their own staff as well, and their own site-users across the generations, you know, they’ve got a personal history invested in the site. I think they want to see some of that come out as well. You know, they’re custodians of the site in a lot of ways.

Interviewer: Okay. Is there a reason that this is happening now? I mean, they’ve owned the site for decades, why do you feel that this opportunity is now presenting itself?

Steven Swaby: I asked them that myself because I was interested, and I think it just comes down to the fact that times change and people at the top change and the culture of a business and an industry changes a little bit. These wider benefits probably have got more currency these days than they once had.

I think that’s probably one of the [majority 0:03:46] factors, there’s a willingness to open up and share and transform it to a certain degree as well.

Interviewer: Can you talk to me a little bit more about what that means in terms of currency? You say those wider benefits have increased currency.

Steven Swaby: I think it’s connecting with the local community on a number of ways, it’s not just the accessibility but it’s access to nature in an urban environment where people, particularly school children, have very, very few opportunities to do that. It’s presenting a different side to Waltham Forest that people perhaps would be completely unaware of or feel that, somehow, they can’t decode to get into.

So it’s offering the resource to lead people by the hand initially into what may be an unfamiliar world, and show them there are positive benefits for all ages, really.

Interviewer: In terms of LWT, what are their objectives?

Steven Swaby: I think this is the biggest project they’ve taken on today. So it’s very much going to be their flagship reserve. You’ve got the difference between Thames being the, kind of, practical, operational site ­[as the 0:04:58] owners, and then you’ve got London Wildlife Trust as the custodians of the public offer in a lot of ways. Their responsibility is going to be in education and making sure there’s a happy marriage between, you know, the practical, industrial side and the nature reserve and the educational experience of the site.

So it’s a big responsibility and there’s a lot of work to do there. They’ve got a huge amount of enthusiasm, they’re getting some great volunteers. So I think they’re building the right sort of team to achieve that. I think, you know, the first few years after the relaunch will be a learning process for everyone because it will morph into something other than it’s ever been before.

So the limits of what’s possible and what the new opportunities might be would have to be explored for those first few years and they can evolve a programme around that.

Interviewer: In terms of Waltham Forest, what are their objectives for the site?

Steven Swaby: I think, again, it’s making use of your resources in the borough and seeing wider benefits for something that perhaps hasn’t been fully tapped into in the past. It’s possibly part of an ongoing strategy for Waltham Forest where they are trying to increase green space, they are trying to increase the environmental benefits, but also I think foreground the cultural and historic side of the borough too, and maybe begin to create a bit more join up between the historic sites and the landscape sites within the borough.

Interviewer: Yes, that’s interesting. Do you think that agenda- so the combination of access to green space and creating a more cohesive story around the cultural and historical offer of the borough, where do you think that plays into stories of regeneration and what’s going on in that part of London?

Steven Swaby: I personally always take a slightly wider view with this, in terms of looking at what the nature of a city actually is. A city like London, I think, has always been a dynamic space. It’s always been changing. [You have a 0:07:15] successive way because of migrants. That’s just the nature of an urban space, you know, it’s never just fixed in one particular point in time.

So presenting the, kind of, stories from the last few hundred years or so, that have created the Walthamstow site as we know it today, is showing that it’s part of a continuum of change, and new people coming in shouldn’t necessarily feel that therefore, they’re excluded from that story. They are actually part of it. It’s an ongoing story. So it’s trying to bring out elements of that as well.

Interviewer: If we take away from, say, those sort of cultural benefits that you’re talking about there, to something maybe more economic and [directly 0:07:56] social in terms of- what I suppose now planners talk about now is place making.

Steven Swaby: Yes.

Interviewer: How do you feel that the wetlands will feature as part of that particular element of regeneration?

Steven Swaby: I think, like all these kind of places, it’s so important to establish some sense of community ownership, isn’t it? You’ve got to make local people feel that it is for them and of them in some way. It won’t be for everyone, but it has to feel approachable enough and that it’s got strong community links.

So I think there are several ways of doing this, one is obviously through the schools and educations programme, another is through the events and venue hire at the Marine Engine House. That could be a multitude of different purposes that that’s used as an event space for the borough and people from outside of the borough.

I think also, with groups like the arts community as well, you know, having a temporary exhibition space there that local artists can show work in and create installations for. It’s plugging into different user groups that can express the experience of what that site is like and also in the local community and the wider Lea Valley experience, really.

You know, the theme of water is an obvious choice. You give that to some artists and see what they come back with on that and how that fits into the story of the site.

Interviewer: We’ve started to talk there, and certainly you’ve spoken quite persuasively there about the links through to identity. I wondered if you could talk to me about what you feel the extending of opening and, I guess, the relaunch of the site means in terms of the identity of the area.

Steven Swaby: I think it’s finally getting rid of this mis-label tag of it being completely verboten, you know, and you’re not allowed to go there and there’s no access. It’s an industrial site that has no benefit for anyone. I think so many people are surprised when you show them the variety of the biodiversity onsite because it’s invisible from the road. You know, you have to actually get into the site and spend a little while there to start realising just how much is going on.

I think one of the really useful roles the London Wildlife Trust is going to be providing is to guide people around. It can be quite intimidating if you don’t feel that you know what you’re looking at. So to have an expert guide on how they can do it in an approachable and friendly manner, and just start bringing out elements of that biodiversity of, you know, just natural history in general in an urban site, I think, is- it’s really under-represented in so many parts of urban London. So that’s a really powerful tool, I think, for the site.

Interviewer: Yes. What does that mean? So to have this incredibly rich and large space and biodiversity, water, green infrastructure, what does that mean to the identity of Walthamstow?

Steven Swaby: It possibly begins to shift it a little bit, doesn’t it, I think? Even I was surprised, going back over there again after many years, earlier last year, was just how tranquil it is. That huge contrast between stepping off the main street and walking just a little way onto the site past the Engine House. You’re in this transformed landscape and the immediate well-being of that is you automatically feel calmer as you tend to do when you’re near water or in a green space. There’s a natural gradient effect of your experience.

I think even if it works on a subconscious level with people, at least there is something that is beginning to happen there that takes people out of, you know, the Pall Mall of daily life, which is pretty insane in an urban environment. You’re constantly bombarded. So this is a chance for people to draw breath and do something in a slightly more leisurely way.

Interviewer: And quite unusual in an incredibly densely populated and very urban part of a mega city.

Steven Swaby: Yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: You’ve started talking there about well-being, I wondered if you could talk to me a little bit more about what you view will be the benefits to those users in the wider community, and then as you’re talking about that, I wondered if we could reflect on how you intend to enable those benefits.

Steven Swaby: Yes. Well I think a good point to make first of all is that all of what’s happening in the exhibitions should only ever really be seen as a launch pad and a backup. The main purpose of the site is to actually get people out there and get them walking and experiencing the wetlands. We don’t want them to spend all day just sitting in a café. It’s experiencing the site is what’s most important.

So the work I’m doing is, kind of, facilitating that. It’s giving people a baseline knowledge, and also stuff for them to come back to and dig down in something with a bit more detail if they want to. But ultimately, it should just be seen as a launch pad. Self-guided tours or organised guided walks and education programmes from London Wildlife Trust are really the things that are going to drive it in terms of that offer.

I think, you know, for the practical side of it, just physical exercise and well-being of being in green spaces, there’s been so many studies documenting the benefits of that and the deleterious effects you experience in urban environments when that’s absent.

I draw from personal experience, growing up in East London where the nearest thing to green space we had in the East End was, you know, Greenway sewer bank and the brownfields sites that are now Beckton Housing Estate and Newham General Hospital. In the early ‘70s there they were, you know, spoil heaps. That was your, kind of, playground really, there was no green space beyond a couple of churchyards.

Interviewer: So the benefits for, as we said, a very densely populated part of London now is having that access to that space?

Steven Swaby: Yes. I think, you know, even if it sparks interest in the natural world in one in ten, twenty people, then at least you’ve got one person that may take it further. That was certainly the case for me growing up in East London because I was lucky enough to meet some like-minded people quite early on. They will you to travel into a larger world and then you start pursuing that interest, you know, which has been a lifelong interest for me ever since, natural history.

Interviewer: What do you think that brings to the offer of the site? Or the offer of the area? Where it doesn’t really exist at the moment?

Steven Swaby: It certainly makes a practical distinction between this not being a public park. You know, it’s far more than just an amenity space. It’s, I think, maybe introducing people to the idea of why nature matters, you know, why we should care about it. Particularly when you have so little of it on your doorstep in an urban environment.

Again, it goes back to ownership. This is worth preserving, this is work having respect for and feeling proud of, you know, because it’s very, very rare in London’s environment. It’s something for the local community as well, or it can be perceived that way.

Interviewer: Yes. That, sort of, brings me on to actually, you’ve used the word ‘ownership’ a couple of times, how you think that ownership will be generated, or how do you feel that ownership might be activated or in any way encouraged?

Steven Swaby: First and foremost, it’s got to be through the community groups and the programmes of events and education. I think that’s really important things that there’s activities. You can’t rely on just an exhibition to do that, because not everybody is going to even read all of the text in an exhibition, let alone repeatedly visit it. You know, that’s a supporting mechanism. It’s not the be-all and end-all.

So it really is- it’s the life of the site once it relaunches is the crucial thing to not only establish that, but keep it going. You’ve always got to think about your forward programme of how you win over a community, but you keep them with you on the journey and then they come to feel that this site is about them and for them in some way.

You obviously can’t please everyone all the time, you know, it’s such a hugely diverse audience in a borough like Waltham Forest. It’s almost an impossible task. But you have a lot of different things you can try, and you can bring in lots of different people and use that physical space, particularly the Engine House and the event space in there, to try and bring in different community groups or, you know, different demographics in society that aren’t necessarily usually included.

So it’s ambitious, you know, but there’s an awful lot you could use that site as a hub for, I think. And try things out and not be afraid to fail as well, you know, it’s trying things and experimenting with it, using the site as you go forwards after 2016, 2017.

Interviewer: Do you think that there are implications or- I suppose the question is, are there implications and if there are, what are they, of this being a privately-owned site that has been gifted to increase access?

Steven Swaby: Yes. I mean, there’s the problem of balance, isn’t there? Certain areas are naturally going to be out of limits for security reasons, which is perfectly understandable. So there are certain parts of the site that will never really have public access, nor should we encourage people to try and go and explore them.

I think there’s also a challenge in getting that balance right between getting more people in there, but not creating so much disturbance that you fundamentally change the nature of what makes it special in the first place.

Interviewer: Yes.

Steven Swaby: You know, that’s a really important thing to get right, and it has to be quite strictly controlled. Again, I think in using the knowledge of the long-term site users, which they have been doing, you can then start building in pockets of where you want less impact and you enable quiet spaces for the wildlife and for more dedicated users. It’s, kind of, proper management of the landscape, really, isn’t it? And using it for a variety of different users in different ways.

Interviewer: That takes us onto, actually, talking about proper management of the site. Could you talk to me about the, sort of, activities that the stakeholders want to be encouraged? Both activities and behaviours that are being encouraged on-site?

Steven Swaby: Yes, I think respect is an important thing that they’re both keen to bring out. That’s in terms of the respect for the production of people’s drinking water, you know, how that actually gets into your tap and the fact that there is a very intensive process that enables us to function, living in an urban environment. Respect observing for the hazards of water, this has been a controlled site for a long time for very good reasons, you know, there is a hazard there for people.

Also, I think general respect for wildlife and the environment as well, that this is a place to protect and nurture rather than just to drop litter everywhere and trash. You know, you only have to look over the road at that other small, green space near the \_\_\_[0:20:01]. It’s a quiet spot but it is absolutely swamped with litter at the moment, because it’s not really managed at this moment in time. I think the Trust have got planned to move into that to manage it.

Interviewer: Have they?

Steven Swaby: Yes.

Interviewer: It’s quite interesting, I was asking one of the fishermen about why nobody else in his family comes with him to do the fishing, because he said his wife is a fisherman, but she doesn’t like the site because of the litter.

Steven Swaby: Right, so there’s a perception thing there.

Interviewer: Yes. I thought that was quite interesting. He was very honest. He said, you know, “It’s being done by other fishermen.” So you have a need to, sort of, re-educate or make it easier for existing users to keep it tidy and encourage that sort of behaviour.

Steven Swaby: So it’s almost getting them involved in stewardship in a lot of ways, on a small level, but in important level. Together, they will make a difference if they police that themselves.

Interviewer: Yes.

Steven Swaby: Yes, and you’re right, you know, it’s a perception thing. If you go to somewhere like a reservoir landscape which, on a winter’s day, can be a pretty friendless place, they’re bleak and pretty grim, and you’re surrounded by litter then the message that is sending out is completely counter to the one that the partners want to get across.

Interviewer: Yes, which is one of feeling safe.

Steven Swaby: Exactly, feeling safe.

Interviewer: Actually, that’s interesting because a number of times, you’ve used the word ‘approachable’. You’re not the only one to have used that, in terms of people that are involved in trying to increase engagement and access. I think the idea that this space can be quite hostile or seemingly quite foreign to people-

Steven Swaby: Is daunting for people, I think, yes.

Interviewer: Yes, has come across.

Steven Swaby: Because, particularly at the moment, it is still- for a lot of people, it’s terror incognito, you know, they walk into a place that’s completely unfamiliar. Even the natural layout of it, you’ve suddenly got this very, very wide open vista. It’s not like a normal, urban environment. You’re suddenly encountering, you know, big skies and stuff.

All the things that I like about it, to some people, actually would be initially intimidating on first contact. You’re like, “Christ, where am I? I’m lost already.” You know.

Interviewer: No, that’s interesting.

Steven Swaby: So there’s a perception thing to overcome.

Interviewer: Of course, that perception will vary in terms of whether you’ve been on-site before and your own, sort of, personal, cultural values in terms of how nature should be experienced.

Steven Swaby: Yes.

Interviewer: I was also interested in your point around the distinguishing point of this is not a public park. Could you talk to me a bit more about why that is the case and what that means in terms of the sort of behaviours that are going to be encouraged and the behaviours that would be discouraged?

Steven Swaby: It’s this unique identity it has as an operational site, and as a nature reserve. So it’s already got two very distinct identities that try to sit alongside each other. So it’s making people aware that there are certain restrictions in place for very good reasons.

One is to protect the wildlife, particularly in the breeding season, you know, certain places will be off-limits for breeding birds or for wildflowers and so forth. And also from a practical level, that you have to protect the purity of the water supply.

So things like the no-dogs rule, you know, it’s an important thing, and it’s a very controversial thing that will probably upset some local people because they automatically feel excluded. But, having seen the benefits of where this is done elsewhere, and it is widely done on nature reserves across the UK, there are very, very good reasons for it.

People have to accept that, you know, there are other places you can walk your dog, this isn’t a park where you should be doing that. There are good reasons for not doing it there.

Interviewer: How will those behaviours be encouraged? Or how will those behaviours be frankly policed?

Steven Swaby: Well, that’s another big challenge as well. I think it’s particularly going to be problematic with opening up the extra access entrances to the site. You’ve then got up to five different point of entry onto the reserve. They’re going to need a good number of volunteers to be able to just deal with that at point of access. Again, just that whole building up and speaking to people in the community and explaining the reasons why to try to get them on-side.

I may have mentioned to you when we met last about my friend on \_\_\_[0:25:02] flats in London who was trying to protect the local skylark population, and the dog walkers were trashing their habitat. So they set up designated meetings with the local dog walkers to explain why it wasn’t a good idea. That you should be proud of these birds, there’s very few in London, and get people on-side.

Not everybody is going to play ball, but the majority of people did actually start co-operating and were actually starting to take an interest in how these birds were doing every spring. So it’s trying to win people over, it’s the hearts and minds then, isn’t it? Rather than saying to them, “You will not do this.”

That’s been the tradition on the site, having signs that say, “Do not,” “Do not,” “Do not.” So it’s far more labour-intensive, and it’s a more long-term process, but I think that’s the only way you can win people over is to just talk to them about it.

Interviewer: What sort of responsibilities do you think- or is there both an anticipation and perhaps an expectation of the sorts of responsibilities that people have on-site? How will local people new to the site- what will they be expected to do on-site and how will they be expected to use \_\_\_[0:26:17]?

Steven Swaby: I think this is all still quite a work-in-progress to a degree. It’s things like the wider-site interpretation thing that I’m looking at at the moment is to what degree we want to encourage people to get a little bit lost and explore hidden corners. That’s obviously going to be difficult to do to any great degree because it’s such a managed site.

But it’s a contrast between allowing people to self-guide and then also offering the more controlled guided tours and a very, very managed route around- you tend to find that probably quite a large percentage of people will be quite happy to go to the café and do a short walk around, perhaps to Copper Mill, stay on that side of the reservoirs. That’s, sort of, a family morning out and they’ve ticked a few boxes. They’ve had a good visit, but they won’t want to go deeper and explore the reservoirs on the other side of the road, which is far more bleak and there’s a lot of a longer walk round those as well.

So you’ll get a range of different users that will want to go around the different levels, I think, and explore. And spend varying amounts of time, so there’ll be a whole range of visitor activities in accordance to interest level and whether you’ve got kids with you or not or you’re a lone adult and so forth.

Interviewer: We’ve spoken about volunteers, but is there a sense that the local community has a responsibility?

Steven Swaby: I think that should definitely be ingrained. Rachael is probably a good person to speak to about that, isn’t she? A lot of the work she’s doing with the ‘Friends of’ group, I think, is trying to engender that with the people. It would be an ongoing process that doesn’t end when it relaunches, you know. It’s going to be part of the life of the site once it opens.

It is getting people to appreciate that and winning them over, they have to do that, or they should be doing that.

Interviewer: Right, okay. It’s an interesting site as much as it very, very heavily relies on a large scale of teams. Do you think that reliance on what will hopefully be local community members creates a different type of relationship with the site? Or a different experience with the site?

Steven Swaby: Yes. I really do think it will send out a very positive message. If you’ve got the right training and the right people that can present it in a friendly but professional way, and knowledgeable way, then that creates a sense of respect for the site in its own right.

The fact that it’s not this, kind of, top-down official tour from Thames Water or an organised society. There’s a very strong element of local community actually becoming properly involved and facilitating, that’s the word I was looking for. They’re helping to facilitate other people’s experiences.

Interviewer: Okay.

Steven Swaby: Again, that’s so important to get the right people to do that. You need good communicators and strong personalities.

Interviewer: So we’ve spoken about the benefits of opening up the site, do you feel there are any dis-benefits?

Steven Swaby: Disadvantages? I think it all depends on the volume of people that get through, which is an unknown, at the moment. If that creates certain stress-points on areas that haven’t been anticipated, it’s a bit of an unknown at this stage because there’s not been any real design [day 0:30:00] work done, to my knowledge, on maximum visitor capacity on the whole site.

Even things like Copper Mill Tower and the viewing platform, we had a discussion about that recently, about managing visitor flow to that. That automatically limits the amount of interpretation I can put, say, on the staircase, because you don’t want people stopping on the way up to the top reading, you know, you put them on a fast track so there are no pinch points.

So there are a lot of small issues like that, but combined, they could be potentially a bit of a challenge. I think the landscape architects have been pretty good in anticipating some of this stuff but some of it, you won’t know until it opens, you really won’t.

So I guess from the existing site users, their main concern is pressure points on the sensitive areas which would need to be controlled.

Interviewer: Are there any disadvantages of the site being open more broadly? Is there any, sort of, social or cultural implication of it being open that might be perceived as a disadvantage?

Steven Swaby: I guess it’s only if something is seen as being wildly inappropriate, if it’s hosting something at the Engine House that is seen to be completely off-message for the partners and for Waltham Forest, you know. But they’re hardly likely to be hosting Nazi rallies or anything thereof.

Interviewer: You’d hope not.

Steven Swaby: Or anyway, yes. Then again, money is money, isn’t it? (Laughter).

Interviewer: We hope not.

Steven Swaby: But yes, I think it’s stuff that is within keeping of the way that, for want of a better word, the brand of the place is perceived as, you know, that it fits in with that.

Interviewer: Particularly given your background and your experience of this project, do you see this as part of a broader trend within CSR? This, sort of, taking what are really public, cultural assets and making them available because of the private ownership?

Steven Swaby: I think there is definitely an ongoing trend there, yes. It’s not as rapid in some areas as it could be, but I think there is- definitely going to see change. Equally, with industrial sites as well, now we’re in a post-industrial landscape, you look at places up north like the Gravel Workings in Staffordshire, the Northern Coal Mines, all of those things that were perceived as scars on the landscape, so many of those now, with a little bit of careful management and time, have been turned into fabulous sites for wildlife.

A lot of them are becoming nature reserves and Heritage Centres in their own right. So there is definitely a positive side to this in the landscape of, kind of, just enjoying and celebrating the transformation. I think the big message there from my point of view is that nature would always find a way to heal the landscape if it’s given a chance.

Interviewer: So we spoke about the pinch points. What we haven’t spoken about is potential conflicts or tensions. I wondered if we could talk about that on a range of levels. So perhaps starting firstly with tensions between stakeholder objectives, what are your thoughts on that one?

Steven Swaby: Yes, it’s always a challenge when you’ve got a project of this nature with quite big, distinct entities all working together. It’s quite a complex structure, you know, and people do have slightly different perceptions of what it is they’re getting out of something.

I think any partnership has a risk of that, and every successful partnership probably always needs to have a very clear exit strategy from the beginning so they know that there are, kind of, short-term objectives that are achievable over, say, a three, four-year period. You start quite small and measurable, and if that works then you can scale up longer period. If you automatically tie yourself into a 25-year partnership, nobody knows what that looks like at the end, you know. There are huge risks inherent in that.

So I think it’s taking things on a more small-scale shorter term way, staging it, I think. It’s also trying to, at all time, have clear communication between the stakeholders and the different user groups which, you know, does require a lot of effort on the part of many people to do that. But it’s so important to keep everybody in the loop, \_\_\_[0:34:50] feel included, to feel they know what’s going on.

I found, you know, so far on the project, most of my time has been taken up with meetings and talking to people rather than actually doing any writing. It’s been so important to establish relationships and to keep the communication going once they’ve been established, so people feel they know why you’re there and what you’re doing and how you’re helping them. That’s a personal point of view. When you get to the institutional level, it becomes, you know, a lot more of a complex animal.

But I think, looking at it on the ground level again, thinking about conflicts with the existing user groups, there are obvious things that have been there from the beginning. The anglers are obviously worried about extra footfall on those footpaths, even down to practical issues like when they’re casting off, it’s going to affect just how they can actually indulge in their pastime with minimal interruption. You know, simple, practical issues like that. For the birders, it’s, kind of, disturbance of not just breeding birds, but migrants and wintering birds as well, and sensitive [sots 0:35:57].

There’s a whole number of potential things that need to be listened to and them managed and not just dismissing the existing users for, “Oh, they’re just complaining for the sake of it because they don’t want change.” As you said earlier, these people are \_\_\_[0:36:17], they’ve got something personal invested in the site and they don’t want to see it spoilt.

Interviewer: If we reflected on how you, particularly in terms of your role, in drawing out stories and curating that story, or narrating that story, whether you feel there’s something particular about it being a water site that you will be bringing forth? Or feel you should bring forth?

Steven Swaby: Definitely. I think, for a start, water is the organising principle for how we start to approach telling the stories of the site and the narrative, and whether you’re looking at it in a historical perspective or an industrial perspective or a natural history perspective, that is the thing that underpins it all and brings it all together. The fact that it is a water site is essential to the whole story.

I think it’s also part of the attraction to the site too, isn’t it? You don’t get that, kind of, open-water vista anywhere else in the borough. It’s a really unusual site. The other reservoirs further north from the Lea Valley, you know, like the Girling and the King George, they’re far more difficult to see and access because you’ve got those huge bunded walls around them. They’re really, really like fortresses, aren’t they? When they’re isolated.

You’d never get that sense of vista that you get when you’re on the ground in Walthamstow. So it really, really defines the nature of the landscape in that part of the borough.

Interviewer: Do you think it might affect- or is there an aspiration, perhaps, that it will affect our relationship with water?

Steven Swaby: I think that’s something that would be really nice to see, even just in terms of having a more well-versed understanding in where our water comes from on a practical level, on a quotidian level.

But I think there are other really important underlying things, aren’t there? There’s the well-being and the quietly, almost spiritual benefits of just being by water, which is a very human response. If it occurs on a subconscious level, I think it has a calming effect. There’s just a number of things that go on that you’re perhaps not even consciously aware of when you’re by water, which I find really interesting.

I think for people in terms of the wildlife, as well, there’s understanding the importance of water as a habitat and the amount of different life in those different strata that you get that are drawn to water and that need it to complete their life-cycles.

Interviewer: That’s very interesting. Do you think it might affect our- or help a relationship that is more sustainable with water, is there an aspiration that we will engage in a more sustainable [crosstalk 0:39:26]?

Steven Swaby: It would be nice \_\_\_, wasn’t it? I think I probably sometimes underestimate this, but there’s a big fear factor with people on water, as well, isn’t there, a lot of the time? Which I personally don’t feel, because I love being by water. So I have to, kind of, step outside myself.

Yes, it’s that- I guess, a process of facilitation, again, to give people a different perception of it or introduce them to the idea of it being something other than a vaguely sinister threat.

Interviewer: For a lot of people particularly, I’m always amazed when they can’t swim.

Steven Swaby: Yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: Therefore, it is a real hazard, a genuine hazard.

Steven Swaby: Yes. It’s definitely not a new perception, I recently saw some of those public safety films from the early ‘70s which are absolutely terrifying. There’s a couple of those about kids going near water that are really graphic and terrifying. You know, they really hammer that message home. “There’s no way you should go anywhere near places like this ever.” So that’s, kind of, a traditional, official view of places like Walthamstow, so that’s what you’re trying to change, yes.

Interviewer: That’s what you’re trying to overcome. It is a very \_\_\_[0:40:35] relationship with water, to shift it from one of fear and risk to one of enjoyment.

Steven Swaby: Yes, and appreciation. Respect is still in it, definitely. There’s a certain amount of caution from a practical level you have to make sure is embedded. But yes, just to shift people’s perception that it’s far more than just that.

Interviewer: \_\_\_[0:41:06]. I’ve spoken about disadvantages, but I wonder if it would be different question if I asked about what are the risks to space being open? So although we’ve said there is a [new 0:41:28] job to overcome a predominant impression of risk, but are there risks in opening up a site like this?

Steven Swaby: Yes, again, it’s the control over the amount of people that go through the site, and people that may not necessarily respect it. There’s a risk of areas being trashed. We’ve already got issues about what we can include, particularly in the Copper Mill building, in terms of historic objects for display, because of the security aspect of that. It’s quite a remote building, people are very, very reluctant to loan anything because it could get stolen. So that’s just one of many.

But I think another risk, also, looking at it the other way is that they don’t get the footfall they’re anticipating. That it doesn’t grab people in the way they’re anticipating. You get, perhaps, a slightly larger core group of regular supporters and regular visitors, but the general public just don’t feel it’s for them. No matter how much you try, you’re never going to get that huge increase in people that you want.

So therefore, from a business model point of view, how the Engine House washes its face and how they fund it and the volunteer programme in the years ahead, it’s pretty critical on that.

Interviewer: Which brings me very nicely on, actually, in terms of what you perceive to be the barriers to people engaging on this site? What might stop someone wanting to take part?

Steven Swaby: First of all is overcoming that old bug bear about, “There’s no or limited access,” you know, getting rid of that once and for all. The new signage and the promotion will hopefully go a long way to do that. But also, I think some people just genuinely aren’t comfortable in outdoor spaces like that and it’s very, very hard to win them over, particularly in something that is a relatively austere landscape like that.

People are out their comfort zone, and they’re not necessarily going to go there of their own free will. Even down to natural history, you know, some people just aren’t that switched on by it and aren’t particularly engaged. They don’t see it as being something for them.

Interviewer: I suppose that’s particularly interesting given that it is a nature reserve, not a public park.

Steven Swaby: Exactly, yes. So again, there’s a perception there like, “Well, there’s nothing there of interest to me,” which is why things like the temporary exhibitions and the events hire and all those kind of things, the activities that go on at the site and are promoted and advertised, could hook in different interest groups. You know, the arts community and so forth.

There are lots of different people you could try to access, different religious groups. That needs to be done with sensitivity and real understanding for what those groups and their local representatives would be looking for and what they’d feel comfortable with. It’s very ambitious. I’m not qualified to speak about any of that, so I’m not going to. But someone out there is, you know.

Certainly all the work that the Wildlife Trust have done in the lead-up to this, the activity programme, huge document, impressive piece of work, they spent a lot of time talking to school teachers and community leaders. So they’ve got a good handle on the kinds of things they need to do. But the scale of it is very big, you know, it’s very ambitious.

Interviewer: So they’re the, sort of, barriers. You’ve actually already addressed my next question there, I guess, in terms of how you might overcome that. It partly is through promotion, signage, it’s partly through the outreach programme and it’s partly through very targeted events-lead work that has a sensitivity to why people might be fearful of the space.

Steven Swaby: And I think also, not trying to do too much at once. Don’t try and run before you can walk. There should be a, kind of, staged programme, which I think the Trust have got their eyes on, of just trying a number of things out in the first few years and building them onto the core programme that they’re comfortable with doing. It will be a learning process for everyone, I think.

Interviewer: Do you think there’s a challenge for LWT as a delivery partner rather than it being a site that they own?

Steven Swaby: Definitely, yes. They’re in a very, very prominent, visible, active role. It’s not simply just doing behind the scenes management of habitat and letting the place look after itself. It’s going to be a dynamic, really hands-on site that needs very, very careful ongoing management on a daily basis. A lot of effort going into programming, all kinds of things that the responsibility of running a visitor attraction, really, will entail.

Interviewer: Do you think there are social justice implications of this site being opened up, given its location?

Steven Swaby: What do you mean by social justice? Can you explain?

Interviewer: So, do you think where perhaps there wouldn’t have been- people in the area might not have access to green space, they might not perceive going walking in or having access to a nature reserve as something for them. They \_\_\_[0:47:00] perceive it as a middle class encounter and a typically middle class experience. Do you think there is some sort of levelling agent that the opening or the relaunch of the wetlands enables?

Steven Swaby: Yes, and again, if it’s pitched in the right way to people and done correctly through the brand- there has to be a message that is put out again and again and again to people, you know, that it’s not exclusive, because it could very easily slip into its comfort zone where it becomes by the very nature of the people that are going to be more interested and the more visible and regular supporters, it suddenly becomes a middle class playground again.

That’s always a challenge, I think, for an urban site like that. It’s a difficult one to get right.

Interviewer: And also quite difficult, I think, probably from an LWT perspective, when you consider their membership.

Steven Swaby: Yes, absolutely. It is beyond their remit and their comfort zone which is why partnerships will probably be really important in the future, bringing in other people that are better positioned to deliver those kind of things. That’s obviously then looking at what Waltham Forest wants to do too. You know, what their agenda is for the future community engagement.

Interviewer: So your point there, I’ll just repeat that because of the noise, but you said that that’s the ambition there for Waltham Forest, that there will be more community engagement?

Steven Swaby: Yes, and then they need the right people to do that. I think it’s accepting the limitations for someone like the London Wildlife Trust when they’re beyond their comfort zone. They can do a lot but there are certain things that they couldn’t and probably shouldn’t do, and they’d probably agree with me on that, too. They don’t want to get too far beyond what their core reasons for being there actually are.

Interviewer: Yes, which is around education and conservation.

Steven Swaby: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Let me just double check that we’ve covered everything. Challenges, tensions, benefits, challenges. I don’t know if you’ll be able to answer this question, actually, because the consultation was all done before you came on board.

Steven Swaby: Yes.

Interviewer: But having looked at the work of the consultation, what are your general thoughts on the process and what came out of it?

Steven Swaby: I’m still finding out things now, actually, as I go along, about certain meetings that were had and conversations. It was like, “Oh, so this has been discussed already? Okay, good. What was the result then?” Because although there are a huge number of documents attached to the project from that period, not everything has been recorded. So, anecdotally, you start picking up additional things too.

The process seemed to be done pretty well from what I’ve seen, and Chris Blandford’s report is a fantastic piece of resource. It was a very, very rigorously done piece of work. He didn’t get all of the bird stuff right, but only a nerd like me would know that, so it doesn’t affect the big picture.

I think also, you know, with all the stuff that the Trust did with community engagement for the activity plan, you know, it’s a huge document as well and they really put a lot of time and effort into it, which I was impressed with. I’ve seen it done in far more superficial ways in the past and it just doesn’t stand up to any kind of scrutiny.

That kind of showed that they were really serious, and I think that’s probably why- or it certainly helped them against people like the RSPB, you know, that they are showing that proper engagement with community and looking at it on its unique local basis, rather than as any kind of generic approach as you would do with national nature reserves.

Interviewer: Yes, that’s very interesting. Having read both those documents and spoken in meetings to people, what were the, sort of, messages that were coming out of that consultation? What was the overriding feeling about- people’s feeling about it being opened up and how they use it currently?

Steven Swaby: I think really positive and excited, overall. You know, there is the ability to open up a space that has traditionally been perceived as completely no access. You know, as we said earlier, that’s not ever really been the case, only for the last 20 years or so, 30 years, but people still see it and still talk about it in terms of, “Oh, you can’t get in there, can you?”

So it’s, kind of, changing the whole perception of the nature of the site and allowing people to explore it and feel that they can actually explore it without being turfed off by a security guard.

Interviewer: Yes.

Steven Swaby: I think from, you know, my perspective in terms of what I’m responsible for, the development, the exhibition, it was very clear they wanted to also bring out the prominence of the industrial heritage, and that didn’t get lost in the contemporary and natural history storyline. So they were looking for a way to combine those main things together in a way that harmonious and would have, kind of, equal weighting. So that’s hopefully what I’m doing.

Interviewer: Interesting to hear if you were, sort of, to think about the key themes that you want to be drawing out, clearly, as you said, there’s the industrial heritage. What other themes or key messages will be coming out of this particular narrative?

Steven Swaby: A risk, to start with, is trying to tell too big a story. If you start plugging it into the wider Lea Valley, although you want context, if you start overreaching yourself (and there are so many stories to tell) you totally lose the plot and it becomes impenetrable to the casual observer, visitor. So you need to focus in on the specific site itself, number one.

And then look at the water story and what that has done to the site, going way back before the reservoirs, you know. It’s looking at, you know, there’s been a mill on the site since at least 1066, so you’ve got 1,000 years of history of it being a used, managed site.

And I think, really importantly, looking at that water story in terms of its links to the growth of London as well. The reservoirs were an important, vital facilitator for London to be able to expand in the latter part of the 19th and early 20th century. So it’s trying to explain the close relationship between water and the growth of London as well, I suppose, which is quite a big theme but telling it through that individual site story.

You know, like all these things, the further you dig, there’s so much more interesting information, but you have to be practical in how much you can show in a small exhibition space.

So I’m going through that process of refining in the next couple of months, and looking at also what content could possibly go on other platforms. You know, the website is something that has barely been tapped into as a resource. You could do a huge amount of good stuff with that, and also with the guided tour. You know, just layering information in different ways and different platforms, rather than just relying on graphic panels, which very few people even bother reading.

So there must be many different ways that you can tell those stories.

[Break in conversation 0:54:50-0:55:18]

Interviewer: As you’re, sort of, collecting voices now and thinking about how they’re represented, does it give you, perhaps, an insight into the stakeholders that are most influential and will be shaping this narrative? Then perhaps which stakeholders are missing from the narrative at the moment.

Steven Swaby: Yes, definitely right now, the biggest gap for me is the voices of people from Thames. Mainly because the people they had lined up, for various reasons, have not been available at all. Hopefully when I see Becky on Friday, we’re going to try and move that on a little bit. But there are a couple of really key people that would have filled that gap perfectly and they’ve just not been accessible.

I really want the, kind of, social history side of Thames, not the corporate face, the people side of it represented. That’s a really important point, actually, people across the board, even in terms of the historic story. One of the things I’ve put in the content report is that I wanted to bring out individuals that have helped shape the reservoir landscape.

I’m desperately trying to find a couple of women that might have actually contributed to the site at the moment, because it’s just all Victorian men at the moment with big moustaches and beards, you know.

There are a couple of real characters there that tell that story in a really engaging way. It just shows you different people’s endeavour and quirks and eccentricities and people’s stories which are far more interesting on that personal level than just the big arc of history, you know.

Interviewer: Of course, they are the valuable hooks that captivate people’s imagination.

Steven Swaby: Yes. And exactly the same with, you know, the work you are doing with the interviews. I think it’s so important to get individual voices and characters and personalities that tell a story, which people are going to be far more responsive to, because people love listening to a story.

That oral component is, I think, so much more effective about getting across an experience and a time and a place than it is trying to put it in text, because you’ll get far fewer people engaged with that than they will if they listen to somebody’s voice. It’s just a simple fact, you know.

Interviewer: Yes, it’s textbook versus story, isn’t it?

Steven Swaby: Exactly, and it’s such a powerful tool to get people engaged. You have that oral component, storytelling.

Interviewer: If I was to ask you \_\_\_[0:57:50] what you feel on a personal level that the site- what you get from the site, what would you say?

Steven Swaby: I think in a nice way, it’s almost like things have come full circle. You know, I left East London many years ago, really, but because I grew up locally, for me, the benefits of having somewhere like that have just been immeasurably important in the way they’ve dictated the path of my life, the people I’ve met, the places I’ve gone around the world.

You know, it was a really unexpected launch pad to have a little bit of green space to escape in as a kid in East London. Suddenly, coming back all these years later and doing a project that opens that up to more people is really nice. That was why I was interested from the very beginning in taking it on, is that I’ve got, I guess, a level of personal investment in it. I am interested in the subject matter, but beyond that, I’m from that part of London.

Interviewer: When you’re onsite, what would you say are, sort of, I guess the [cultural 0:58:54] benefits that you get from being there?

Steven Swaby: Well definitely, very, very specifically, there was one visit I did last summer, I had an appalling tube journey getting there and then the minute I got onsite, I just calmed down. It’s something as simple as that, you know. Just like, deep breath, “I’ll go for a nice walk now, just soak it up.” That transformed my day, just doing that. So even something like that is a win.

Interviewer: I think one of my final questions was- two actually, one is around governance, and you may or may not be able to answer this. It’s how you feel local users, be they from the community or not, what opportunity do you think they’ll have to shape the ongoing story of this site?

Steven Swaby: Yes. I think big-picture-wise, I’m probably not the best person to comment on that. Specifically, I think definitely building something like an oral history archive and people’s thoughts and responses towards the place, that’s an ongoing resource that could be tapped into and could be grown over a long period of time. There’s the Waltham Forest oral history archive that’s already online, a site has been set up.

Something either adding to that, or a companion site to that as part of the website, or that’s actually held at the Engine House would be a really nice living archive that you build. That’s something that is, you know, relatively easily done if it’s planned for.

Interviewer: Is that something that you’ll recommend or have recommended to you?

Steven Swaby: I think by the time I leave the project which is, sort of, September time, I think, that will be one of my recommendations as well as I’ve already suggested things about temporary exhibitions, programmes. But yes, that’s definitely an important thing to capture that information.

We’ll obviously only be able to do a certain pass over the existing site users before opening. Other people will come forwards, you know, old Thames employees, fishermen, other people, once they see it up and running and they get a sense of, “Oh, this is about us,” hopefully, if it works right, they will feel more obliged to come forwards and contribute. So it’s capturing those people as well.

This taps into something you were saying to me when we met last about getting those docklands histories from people, you know, down at \_\_\_[1:01:30] and stuff, because that stuff gets so rapidly lost if it’s not captured, before you know it, that time and place has gone and those memories just dissolve in time. So it’s actually capturing these things before it’s too late.

Interviewer: It would be very interesting, wouldn’t it- you know, Rachael tells a story- I think she’s told many people, but it is a powerful one, one of the young lads that she took on the school trips, a young Muslim boy who had never seen a \_\_\_[1:02:02].

Steven Swaby: Yes, that’s right.

Interviewer: You know, capturing his expression [crosstalk].

Steven Swaby: Yes, absolutely. Completely new perspectives that you \_\_\_ but never see because they’re individual perspectives from a completely different time and place. That sort of stuff would be lovely to build up a- I think because you’re going to have so many people from different backgrounds that will come, and it’s capturing that contrast between what people have known in their lives and what they’re experiencing now living in London and being exposed to a place like that.

Stuff that we probably consider, you know, really mundane or don’t think twice about, could be transformed from somebody else’s perspective. So yes, it’s getting a measure of that too, isn’t it? That’s a great story though, I remember her telling me that, yes.

Interviewer: That \_\_\_[1:02:52]. Yes. Have you been given a sense of additional new users that they want to benefit from this site that you will perhaps be targeting through your role as curator?

Steven Swaby: Yes. I think there’s, kind of, a shortlist of main user groups, which I’ve included in the content report as well, because I want it to reflect that, that would already have been shown in the activity plan and things like that, you know, to say, “Okay, we’re not trying to re-invent the wheel, these are the established target people.” There will be other groups too but I think there was something like a main seven groups.

From my point of view, I will be pitching stuff at an accessibility level that’s around, sort of, 12, 14 years of age. So all the text is going to be written to accommodate at that level, which is pretty standard practice for museums and attractions these days. So you don’t necessarily imply a previous knowledge, you, kind of act as hopefully a friendly voice, a guide that has got the knowledge but is accessible.

Specifically for family groups and with children, I think, you know, the mainstay are school groups, providing more layered content for adults or people that want to dig a little bit deeper and get more information. So this is part of the process that I’ll be working out with Real Studios in the next few months, is how we layer that content within the proposed exhibits and the budget. Certainly with the touchscreen stuff, that’s a bit easier to do but we need to look at it in other ways too.

Interviewer: \_\_\_[1:04:46].

Steven Swaby: Yes, again, it’s also keeping in mind that you can’t always be all things to all people. You know, so you’re not going to please the people that are obsessed about the industrial heritage of steam engines and, you know, pull engines and thigs like that. There’ll be a little bit of stuff there, but we can’t do a comprehensive history of that. So there’ll be elements of it.

What we can do, particularly on the website as well, is show them the links to where they can explore that in more detail, if they want to do, like Kew Bridge Museum, you know, saying, “This is a great place to visit if you want to learn more about these and actually see them in action.”

Interviewer: That’s quite interesting in terms of the opportunities that the site brings in terms of connectivity.

Steven Swaby: Absolutely, linking up with, you know, the heritage sites and other nature reserves as well. Woodberry is not too far down the road, it’s a very similar set of circumstances. Though the scale is very different, the principles are pretty much the same.

Woodberry’s interesting, isn’t it, because it’s completely surrounded by housing developments, so it very much looks like a little oasis. This, sort of, small little wetland in a completely urban environment. So it’s nice to cross-reference to those things too.

But where possible, I’ll offer links and support to other attractions and institutions. I talked with [Corinne 1:06:17] the curator at Vestry House as well about this. Part of the reason we wanted to do the [temporary] exhibition at Vestry House is to begin, kind of, a cross-connection between those institutions, those organisations and show there are ways in for the community through both of them.

Interviewer: That’s really interesting.

Steven Swaby: Not just to work in isolation all the time, because it’s all too easy to do. You end up duplicating effort, and also not capitalising on what it is that you can probably support each other.

Interviewer: Yes.

Steven Swaby: Again, it all goes back to, fundamentally, it’s communication again. It’s actually talking to these people and developing working relationships, which is very labour and time-intensive to do properly. My role is kind of, I think, probably just starting some of that off, but it’ll be up to the Trust and whoever else takes on the responsibilities once it’s opened.

Interviewer: It’s very interesting actually, that particularly for the connection to non-wild spaces, and how Vestry House, for example, might be more user-friendly for some people, introduction to [crosstalk 1:07:37].

Steven Swaby: Yes, it’s baby steps into something like that.

Interviewer: So you might see visuals versus oral histories, or you might see just actual plain facts about access that just reassure that might internally work with some of the barriers to traditional-

Steven Swaby: Yes, hopefully that’s partly what that little exhibition will do. There’s an element of reassurance there, yes.

Looking at it the other way round as well, there’s also a chance to encourage people to visit other attractions and historic sites in the borough if they’re travelling in from outside of Waltham Forest as well. You know, this is more of a long-term plan. I put this to Rose. I said, “Really, you could develop a proper cultural heritage trail for the whole borough that links up, you know, Vestry and William Morris Gallery and other places too, that you actually develop something that can be followed and gives promotion, and equal weighting to all these different sites and the wetlands.”

It could be a day out, you know. But that’s quite an ambitious thing that is definitely beyond the scope of what I’m being paid to do.

Interviewer: It’s a lifetime’s work.

Steven Swaby: Yes. But there’s a lot of potential there which the borough could capitalise on.

Interviewer: Which is interesting for a borough that, rightly and sometimes wrongly, is perceived as perhaps not a space that you would see to go out for the day.

Steven Swaby: Yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: That is has issues of deprivation, that some of it is quite run-down and \_\_\_[1:09:28] if you’re visiting London [crosstalk] Walthamstow

Steven Swaby: Yes, “Why would you ever want to go there?” Exactly. So there’s, yes, a kind of perception change needed there, but also making sure that you’ve got the offer there for people that makes it worthwhile, rather than just talking the talk.

But yes, it’s that whole traditional image that- you know, a huge part of East London, \_\_\_[1:09:54], where I grew up in East Ham in [Plasto], you know, they have bits of London that [I always said], “They never, ever were in Time Out because there was nothing there worth seeing.” People would still say to me just a couple of years ago, “Where is that again?” They live in London, they have no idea where Plasto is, and why would you? Why would you want to go there?

You know, so yes, there’s a perception change needed, but you have to have something worthwhile for people to come and see in the first place.

Interviewer: So from that perspective then, do you think that the wetlands takes its role-call in the, sort of, list of things that are happening in terms of the \_\_\_[1:10:27] gentrification of East London?

Steven Swaby: Yes. That’s potentially a difficult one, that, isn’t it? It could quite controversially be seen as that, that it’s speaking to an entirely exclusive middle class and monied audience, and it’s trying to attract a certain demographic and squeeze out the people that have been practically on the shores of the reservoir for years. And there will undoubtedly be a tension there.

The only way to get that right is- to go back to what we were saying earlier about, you know, community engagement and making sure that stuff is provided for people in the local community to engage with in a meaningful way. Easier said than done, you know, there’s a lot of work needed to get that right. It’s a wider problem, isn’t it? Because you see this happening over so much of the outer fringes of London where property prices are going through the roof, people are being squeezed out, and it’s fundamentally distorting the nature of certain parts of London.

You know, when I think of Hackney in the ‘80s and I look at it now, it’s nuts.

Interviewer: Yes, unrecognisable.

Steven Swaby: Yes.

Interviewer: I think that’s- you know, from a regeneration perspective, it’s clear that there is a, sort of, roll out from people that were in Hackney that can no longer afford Hackney are coming to Walthamstow.

Steven Swaby: Yes.

Interviewer: And so it goes.

Steven Swaby: Yes, people get pushed further to the margins because they simply can’t afford to live where they used to anymore. I think the same thing’s happening in places like Brixton, you know, any number of parts of London that have been gentrified.

Interviewer: So that is a risk.

Steven Swaby: It’s interesting, when you look at what’s happening at Woodberry, developers are on a major PR offensive there, aren’t they? To try and show that they are also building affordable housing for local people. There are local jobs being brought in. How much of that is true and how much of it is spin, I don’t know, but all of their billboards, there’s very much a charm offensive, isn’t there?

So they’re clearly, acutely aware of that problem and they’re trying to present a positive image that they’re not like the rest of the bad guy developers. But I don’t know how true that is.

Interviewer: Was there anything else that you wanted to say about the role or the themes on the site at all?

Steven Swaby: Not really. We could talk more about the concept but that’s, kind of, a different conversation really, isn’t it? We can do that another time, maybe. But yes, nothing that I can think of for now. That was a pretty comprehensive set of questions.

END AUDIO

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