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Interviewer: [If we] could start with you introducing yourself and your role please?

Kevin Burke: I am Kevin Burke. I am a senior transport planner with Hackney Council.

My role is primarily policy and strategy, but I've been involved in a couple of [public realm 0:00:23] projects.

One we’ve just \_\_\_ was with the Canal & River Trust on Regent’s Row, just off Broadway Market.

The second one is the Wetlands to Wetlands scheme. It runs from the West Reservoir, Finsbury Park area, encompassing Woodberry Down’s regeneration area, and runs to Walthamstow Wetlands, which is due to open in mid-2017, I think.

Interviewer: You started to introduce me there to the Wetlands to Wetlands scheme. Can you talk me through it, the journey that you’ve had with it, and why it’s come about?

Kevin Burke: My predecessor is Ben Kennedy, who worked in Hackney for about seven or eight years.

He initially submitted this route as part of the Quietways to TfL. It wasn’t chosen, so we’ve been looking at other ways to try and get it to a reasonable condition, to maybe look for future Quietways funding, or maybe just to do stuff incrementally to get the route completed.

So, this time last year we put a bid in to the GLA’s Mayor of England Big Green Fund. It was a joint bid, led by Hackney, with Waltham Forest and the London Wildlife Trust.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: I think we might have put in a bid for about £180,000, and we maybe got £120,000. Some of that is split between Waltham Forest on their end, on the Walthamstow Wetlands site. The majority is going to a project in [Newington 0:02:25] Close. It will be almost the entrance that would be done through generation development.

Interviewer: What does that involve?

Kevin Burke: The Newington Close one will involve a bit of redundant road space used by Thames Motor Vehicles, pretty rarely, plus the London Wildlife Trust sometimes park there. They're building a new centre next to New River. We’re looking basically at breaking out some of the hard surfacing area, replacing with trees, shrubbery.

Interviewer: What’s the motivation for a project like this? What is the council’s motivation?

Kevin Burke: Well, we’ve just completed a transport strategy, and that’s set out a ten-year set of proposals, policies.

It ties into walking, and cycling, traffic reduction, but also we’ve got a Liveable Neighbourhoods document which looks at flood risk, minimising flood risk. What can we do to replace hard surfaces and put more greenery into the..?

Obviously being near New River, New River \_\_\_[0:03:50], and it’s part of a huge regeneration. I think 5,000 new homes will be there ultimately. It ties in with some of the private sector work done by Berkeley Homes along the West Reservoir.

It’s about connecting two wetland centres that are less than 3km apart, but it’s also in a part of the borough that has a deficiency in access to open space, so it has to open up the open space and create awareness of the wetlands areas. It’s possible for school groups, people walking, to do both centres in one day.

Interviewer: That takes us on, I guess, to what you perceive would be the benefits of this project, and also perhaps how those two projects are perceived [for the council 0:04:56]?

Kevin Burke: Well, I think we have an ambition to be the greenest borough in London and \_\_\_. We’ve got the highest cycling levels in London. We’re obviously proud of that. We want to continue that.

We do want to reduce traffic, particularly traffic from outside of the borough coming into the borough. We have a very low car ownership rate, and it has been falling despite the massive growth in the borough. It’s been falling in real terms as well as percentage terms.

Car ownership in London is not seen as a given anymore. It’s seen as more an inconvenience. The majority, I think 66/70% of households, don’t have access to a car.

We do promote car clubs, drive sharing, ride sharing and stuff, but really what we want to do is, given the competing demands for space in the borough, we want to maximise walking and cycling spaces for people, and it’s been proven to benefit health plus the local economy.

We have pretty ambitious targets to double our cycling. We’re at about 15%, in the last census, journeys to work, which is far more than travel by car. We’re looking to get that maybe to 25, but double our – the seven day trips are about 7%. [We’re looking to 0:06:41] more than double that to 15%.

A project like this also creates leisure cycling opportunities, families at the weekend, because we’ve got the Lee Valley Regional Park on our doorstep. It’s just simply connecting up what’s already there. We’re looking at, “What do we need to do to do this?”

It’s a heavily used commuter route, from basically Walthamstow, [Blackhorse 0:07:10] Road, where there are thousands of new homes being built, over to Finsbury Park, which is another huge regeneration area.

It’s a chance for pedestrians and cyclists to avoid some of the heavily trafficked roads, like Seven Sisters Road, which are known air quality hotspots, [really terrible 0:07:29]. There’s a chance to avoid that, but in a reasonably direct route, which I suppose is what the Quietways [that] TFL [and] the Mayor are trying to push, as well.

Interviewer: We walked along the canal this afternoon, and we’ve spoken and hinted a little bit about the benefits that you get from access to that.

Could you talk to me a little bit more about that, and how you feel that a project like the Wetlands to Wetlands, or the Canals & River Trust projects, brings benefits, in terms of access to water?

Kevin Burke: Well, with the Regent’s Canal we’ve just walked, it’s about 400m, we’ve removed guard railings, we have put more planting in. You’ve seen some of the planter boxes.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: It works on a few levels, because it reduces the pedestrian/cyclist conflict on the towpath. We worked closely with the Canal & River Trust on that.

We don’t ever want to get to a stage – we recognise the towpath is a massive amenity for the borough and across London. We don’t want to ban people from using towpaths.

At the same time, we want to reduce the pedestrian/cyclist conflict of faster cyclists travelling on commuter routes. We want to provide an alternative, a safe alternative for them, whilst still opening up the canal.

So as a council we’re looking at the adjacent spaces to the canals, some of the redundant road space, but that also helps obviously the Canal & River Trust, helping them manage their own towpaths, etc.

Interviewer: Thinking of the work that you're doing, in terms of public realm, and in terms of the wider strategy that the borough has, do you think it affects our relationship with water as local citizens, as users of this space?

Kevin Burke: Yes. Well, I think even a simple measure. You’ve seen how removing the railing creates awareness of the water.

I think people are probably instinctively drawn to water. Some of the best housing, whatever type of development, are waterside based.

Also, we’re trying to remove hard surface, and we’re trying to reduce flood risk. Ponding is a big issue, with the amount of pure hard surface areas we have, and anything we can do to reduce water run-off into the canals or into rivers is obviously…

Given climate change effects, the more awareness we can raise of water, the areas around…

Sometimes there are opportunities. Instead of seeing climate change as a negative, you can say, “Actually, [if the space is next to where 0:10:45] we’ve neglected for decades, we can turn that out to amenities, so we can start valuing it more. We can start valuing our quaysides, riversides, canalsides.”

I think the more clutter you can remove you start seeing possibilities, and people tend to engage with each other more. You're almost literally, [metaphorically 0:11:13], bringing down barriers.

Interviewer: We also spoke a little bit along the route around some of the challenges that you face in terms of public realm and the waterside.

I wondered if you could talk to me a little bit about perhaps some of those barriers that stop people engaging with the water, what they might be. Why they might not come down to the canal. Why they might not choose to go to the reservoirs. Why they might not want to engage in that water space.

Kevin Burke: I think there are probably a few reasons, but one is obviously the more unattractive an area is the less people are willing to use it. Then it becomes almost a self-fulfilling prophecy, in that the less people use it the more dangerous it becomes for people, because stuff is hidden away, it’s not [opened up 0:12:19].

If you make an area appear unsafe the perception is going to be that it’s always going to be unsafe. Then you start neglecting huge tracts of areas in London, or any other city, when they should be one of our most valuable resources.

I think sometimes people have maybe some rational, some irrational fears. If an area is known as a crime hotspot people are naturally afraid to use it, and anything you do that seems to in their eyes make it less safe you will get maybe challenged on those aspects.

Also, there are some I would say outdated views on safety and perception of risk. That sometimes you need to demonstrate, even by doing small sections of a route, evaluating it, listening to residents’ concerns. “Is it better or worse? Should we be doing more of this?”

Sometimes with trials they’re obviously reversible in a lot of cases, but more often than not it tends to prove what we suspected, in that the more attractive you can make an area, the more surveillance you have, more people will use it.

And a sense of ownership. People will start taking care of that space, are more likely to report stuff that isn’t…

It just raises expectation of what a public space should be.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: I think, from a borough officer, a professional working in it, we know these things, but unless you can prove it, and prove it to people, and convince sceptical minds, it’s… A trial is a fantastic way of doing it.

Our aim is multifaceted. We want to reduce traffic. We want to improve perception of space. We want people to use the areas.

We know that the more people who use it the more likely shops will open or people will want to live in that area. Kids will walk to school. They're not ferried around by cars. [There’s a lot of 0:14:36] issues in the borough of obesity.

There’s obviously no silver bullet to any of those things, but if you can do schemes that tick a few of those boxes, or improve – that’s probably the wrong phrase, but if you [want to start improving the lot of 0:14:53] people these types of schemes will certainly help.

Interviewer: You’ve started there talking to me a little bit about the benefits of say something like the Wetlands to Wetlands, but also having access to that water space.

Can you develop that a little bit more for me? If someone told you today about the opening up of the East Reservoir, and the fact that there’s going to be a lovely quiet \_\_\_[0:15:23], what would you say would be the benefits to citizens in your borough?

Kevin Burke: Well, we’ve got certain things mapped. Again, we’ve done the strategy. We know that there’s a deficiency in access to open space, in a pretty densely populated part of the UK, never mind London.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: I think \_\_\_[0:15:50] something like it is one and a half million people live within a few miles [of that]. I'm sure it’s the same at Woodberry Down. So you’ve got some areas \_\_\_ but not too far away.

We’re creating, or we’re looking to create, more enticing entrances into these water spaces, where people can enjoy. Obviously the harder you make it for people to access these spaces the less likely they are to use them.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: Again, [to a certain amount we 0:16:24] may help to create jobs.

We do work with people like London Wildlife Trust, the Lee Valley Regional Park, neighbouring boroughs, so there’s a sense of also helping the cooperation, and you're helping to achieve a few aims or a few objectives.

[There’s a certain amount we will benefit the 0:16:55] economy, but really it’s about the people who will use those routes will be residents [of] North East London, and traditionally one of the more deprived parts of the UK.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: We do know from GP referral statistics obesity is an issue there, childhood and adult obesity. [Also we’re very aware the residents 0:17:29] tend to [be] instinctively pro-car, use their car for short trips. The more attractive we can make it for people to do shorter trips, we hope the more they will walk and they will cycle.

Interviewer: Do you think there are implications for \_\_\_[0:17:52] between different communities as a function of these sites being opened or reopened, and the physical connections between them?

Kevin Burke: Yes, I think so. I think that the more you can open space the more people you will attract, the more people that will use the space.

Even though it’s not related to the project, something like all of a sudden maybe the sailing centre in West Reservoir comes open to more people. They will say, “Oh, hang on. I never knew this was here. I never knew about this wetlands centre. I might join that.” Or, “I might bring my kids next week to look.” People from different communities join along those routes, but also maybe take advantage of the facilities there.

There are community centres in Woodberry Down. As part of Woodberry Down development there are new shops. So, you're bringing people together.

You’re probably just reducing community severance as well. There is a certain amount of physical barriers, with trapped noise, wide roads. If you're providing an alternative to that people should come together [more 0:19:06].

Interviewer: If we move from that to maybe think about what these two major sites, and the connections between them, and how it sits within the wider strategy, how you think that they might affect the identity of those local areas.

How these sites being opened and rehabilitated, and then the connections between them being established, how that affects any sense of local community identity [about them 0:19:39].

Kevin Burke: Generally speaking, I think the more an area that’s previously neglected becomes in open use, more access created, people have a sense of ownership about it. You’re increasing civic pride, local pride, in their area.

On a strategic level, it helps transport in terms of walking and cycling, but also your parks department. There are park user groups. Given that particularly local councils/local authorities have been losing funding, their funding has been cut, there’s an onus on Smart Cities. So it’s local authority plus residents. Plus it can be a third level \_\_\_[0:20:28].

Even in terms of maintenance, local user groups will take on some of that. That reduces cost to the local authority, and \_\_\_ more how it can be an exemplar for other projects around the borough, around London, around Europe.

That’s vitally important. Ultimately these parks are for local people, visitors, workers. The more they feel like they can own it the more likely they are to take care of it.

It does ease the financial burden on councils, but ultimately that’s what the council are there for. You're there to improve services for your residents. It is part of our brief.

Plus, since last year – I think last year or the year before public health has become part of local authorities, so there’s a lot more cost working with public health professionals. It gives opportunities for matched funding, etc.

Generally, it’s just a more cost-cutting way of tackling several problems in one go, rather than I suppose the traditional silo working.

Interviewer: That holistic approach brings with it, I guess, some partnership, and multiple stakeholders coming together and leveraging off each other, in order to secure..?

Kevin Burke: Yes.

Interviewer: We’re quite familiar with that now for \_\_\_[0:22:08]. Both of these – certainly Wetlands to Wetlands, and also Woodberry and Walthamstow Wetlands, are all three examples of making that happen. Do you think there are implications of that for how citizens perceive \_\_\_?

Kevin Burke: Sorry. Implications..?

Interviewer: How people perceive the space, and how then in turn they might use the space. Is there an indication that because it’s no longer solely owned by the public, or it’s no longer..?

Walthamstow Wetlands is a privately owned space. Similarly, the East Reservoir is privately owned. Do you think there is a knock-on effect around perception or how people are expected to use the site?

Kevin Burke: Yes, I would hope so. I would hope they wouldn’t be seen as elitist. Sometimes you do get that, [if they have a 0:23:05] rowing club or something [that’s seen as], “Oh, that’s not for me” or whatever. But it does open up other possibilities there. There’s also fishing. There are other activities there.

I think so. I think that because those spaces are not seen as just Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, it’s also councils, it’s also London Wildlife Trust, it’s almost like a triple whammy. \_\_\_[0:23:34] [more people] \_\_\_ area, but definitely promoting it. From my point of view, we look at \_\_\_, we’re looking at…

It’s not just this route. It also links down to the Olympic Park, and it links up to Enfield, Walthamstow, Haringey. It just raises awareness of those areas, and I think it creates an expectation then that more people will use it. Again that’s the [advantages of it 0:24:12].

I think traditionally spaces have been hidden away, and I think that no single agency ever has enough funding, or resources, or even the expertise staff. Sometimes what seems really obvious is beyond the capability of one agency to deliver.

I think if this was left purely to Thames Water, or the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, it might [not 0:24:43] necessarily go [far], or it certainly would take longer to happen. I think you need the buy-in from the different stakeholders [to make that happen].

Interviewer: Are there any dis-benefits do you think in these projects coming together, or the opening up of these water spaces?

Kevin Burke: Not in terms of the high-level objectives. Certainly the more people you have on-board sometimes it can…

It’s great for funding and all that, but it can take longer, particularly if someone influential in one of the organisations has a different view, even if it’s on a relatively minor part of the project. By the time that gets resolved you’ve lost a bit of momentum.

That certainly is the case in many projects. Unfortunately, that’s certainly the case. Even within organisations people have different views and things like that.

In terms of the actual space, maybe someone in the park authority might say, “Oh, well, this was previously untouched land.” You could argue there are implications for wildlife where there’s more people using it, certainly.

I think like with everything else in life it’s [about 0:26:01] balancing management [of estates]. We live in an [imperfect] world. There’s a certain amount of give and take on sites. There are risk assessments, all these things, but ultimately it is a balancing act, and there can be tough calls to make.

Interviewer: What do you think the risks are of..? You’ve said there about the potential impact on wildlife. Are there risks to opening up these spaces?

Kevin Burke: I can’t really think of any over-riding negative. You do hear lighting.

There’s no lighting in Lee Valley Regional Park, because that has impact on bats. Because there’s no lighting then people might perceive it a bit riskier using those spaces at night. Certainly there have been attacks in various parts along the towpath, canals.

The flipside to that argument, you would say, “Well, the more people that are using it the more surveillance.” Again, you're almost shining a light on these areas in terms of safety in numbers.

On balance I think it’s overwhelmingly positive, but there’s certainly – I'm not trained in managing risk to [newts, or frogs 0:27:39], or whatever, so certainly someone else might give me an opinion, “Actually, you have to take that on-board.” But [in our sites] there are no sites of specific scientific…

There’s almost a positive framework for what you can and can’t do anyway, and again, where there are areas of concern, you definitely do take things on-board.

Again, you’re looking really at high-level objectives, as opposed to showstoppers. There are showstoppers in every single scheme. That could be just an agency’s opposition, a residents’ opposition.

You might spend a lot of your time justifying why you're doing something. Which sometimes is fair enough. Sometimes it can go overboard, and we can [get 0:28:38] people getting frustrated that schemes are being held up.

Staff leaving is another issue, particularly with local authority cuts. Particularly in Hackney, I think we’ve got, because of this stuff \_\_\_[0:28:58] because of some of the really good stuff we’ve done, there’s an expectation that we continue, continue, but we’re doing it less and less resources.

We are looking to try to do smarter ways of working, as I mentioned, maintenance agreements and local community coming on-board, but that still requires management and time to set up.

Interviewer: That’s quite interesting, in terms of we walked past some of those little mini-parks that the Canals & Rivers Trust are encouraging people to maintain themselves, and certainly in both these sites, these big water sites, there’s a real heavy focus on volunteers.

Kevin Burke: More so on the Newington Close, because that’s right on London Wildlife Trust’s doorstep. [They still maintain they’re run with 0:30:00] volunteers.

The Clapton Common area we’re looking at, because it’s part of the council’s parks function, it’s probably more or less us, to be honest.

Interviewer: In terms of an expectation, one of the things we’re trying to do in the project is understand how people might value water, as a function of being in and around it. Is there an expectation of a behavioural change that you're hoping to secure?

Kevin Burke: More so in that because we’re prioritising – in certain circumstances we’re just restricting car use on certain routes. So, because it’s a slower mode of transport, we would like to think that because you're travelling more slowly you will have a wider appreciate of actually your surroundings.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: Certainly if the Clapton Pond is dirty people are more likely to report it when they're actually, “I walk past this every day. What’s this doing here? I will pick up the phone and say, ‘There’s a trolley in the…’” (Laughter) Whatever it might be. Or, “The shrubbery is looking a bit dated”, or vandalised, [whatever it is 0:31:15].

So, I would hope so. We do know that there are mental health benefits to open space and people being near water. Again, it’s just an added benefit of schemes. It might not necessarily be the primary motive for doing a scheme, but certainly, like anything we do, there are wider benefits.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: Sometimes you just can’t monetarise [it 0:31:47]. That’s why sometimes it’s difficult getting funding for it, because sometimes you feel like you're speaking in vague terms, but-

Interviewer: But actually we know that these benefits exist?

Kevin Burke: Absolutely, and again, because [we’re in 0:32:03] climate change we know we’re facing uncertain weather patterns. There’s more likely going to be periods of heavier rainfall, localised flooding. It’s getting people to understand that.

Some of the stuff we do, on even residential streets, we put bike hangers, and we’re looking at – obviously it’s great people are cycling, and we’re taking some car space, but also we’re looking maybe underneath that, looking \_\_\_[0:32:41] to minimise run-off. Any little thing we can do to raise awareness of that is obviously beneficial.

Interviewer: [I guess my question is] what are the processes of raising awareness, other than..? You’re making those physical changes, but are people aware, are the users, are the citizens/local people aware of your motivations for that?

Kevin Burke: Yes. For the Wetlands to Wetlands scheme, where it went to a public vote, the money was obtained, or the funding, because it was the Big Green Fund, the emphasis was on green infrastructure, whether that’s simple tree planting or whether it’s the conversion of a hard standing space.

People are more likely to – they will go, “Oh, well, they’ve got the money from this source. It has to be spent in this way.” So there’s an appreciation of that.

In terms of the two schemes that are out to public consultation at the moment, there’s the one at Clapton Common and Newington Close by Woodberry Down, we’ve got these [typed 0:33:55] documents, the consultation documents. There is a map, which I can understand.

I'm not an engineer, but sometimes it’s self-explanatory, sometimes it’s not, so we’ve got a written description of why we’re doing it.

We do try and spell out the issues, [the 0:34:14] justification, with I suppose the caveat that what we’re proposing isn’t necessarily a done deal.

The flipside of that is while we’re asking for opinions it’s not necessarily a referendum. If there are really strong cases for doing something, and if we’ve got the support of the majority of people…

We’re looking at trying to resolve something that’s clearly a problem, whether it’s [rat running 0:34:43], whether it’s water run-off or whatever. If we feel that we have a strong enough case for it, we will try and justify that.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: At public forums we do try and go more or less straight to the community where people are, and are available for comment.

Interviewer: Where do these projects sit within new plans in terms of green-blue infrastructure in London? Because there’s been evolution in that story, hasn’t there, in recent times?

Kevin Burke: Yes. Again, I suppose any work we do, even on a localised level, whether that’s town planning, \_\_\_[0:35:29], or the transport strategy, they have to sit within the Mayor’s transport strategy. We can’t write policy that’s completely contrary to what’s in the overall London stuff.

The blue and green ribbon strategy, when we’re writing the bids we have to show how it contributes to the aims and objectives of that.

As I say, some of the justifications we do sometimes are on simple road safety, [the greenery 0:36:08], \_\_\_, or a deficiency in access to open space. So they have to be policy compliant or they have to meet some of those high-level objectives.

We’re aware of them particularly when we make the funding submissions. Or I suppose on an annual basis we have to submit what’s called a Local Implementation Plan to TfL, stating where we meet the Mayor’s objectives.

Interviewer: My understanding is that historically some of the blue-green planning has been very ad-hoc.

Kevin Burke: Yes.

Interviewer: Whereas now there is some form of effort to understand, to identify where the need is for that, or there is an advanced or more urgent need for access to that. Is that true?

Kevin Burke: I think so. I think it depends on the council, your local authority you work for as well.

Being where we are now at the moment, we actually have a good relationship with the Canal & River Trust. We have awareness the River Lee flows through part of the borough. We’ve got some really good parks where there are water courses.

[For somewhere like 0:37:28] Victoria Park, which isn’t in Hackney, but [it has a boating lake]. So there is an appreciation of actually [the] river courses here.

Certainly river pollution has come more and more on the agenda.

Again, I think it depends on where you work. It depends on the circumstances. You could work in a local authority where flooding is an issue, so all of a sudden that has to be shot up the agenda.

I can’t say for every local authority, certainly, but where we are, because we’re in a highly urbanised area, where each square metre we have to maximise for the best possible use, and certainly the canal network is a big part of that.

A lot of our housing areas are in Hoxton, Haggerston. Not so much [around 0:38:24] \_\_\_, but certainly on water courses traditionally it’s because railways were built to run alongside, so we have the London over-ground there we passed a few times. So we’re certainly aware of that space \_\_\_.

Interviewer: That’s quite central to your identity as a borough?

Kevin Burke: Yes. Particularly the ambition is to be the greenest borough, and most liveable borough in London, and naturally enough forms a massive part of that.

Interviewer: Can you talk about it in the wider regeneration story? Or maybe the borough, but also how it sits within the River Lee and the Lee Valley more generally, being a real focus for regeneration over the last 15 years or so.

Kevin Burke: Well, \_\_\_[0:39:15] like a lot of the housing developments traditionally \_\_\_ [where they turn its] back to the water, even the \_\_\_ water courses [in the] dirty polluted areas. Whereas now it’s seen as a massive asset. Sometimes, almost, in real estate terms, it’s [probably good 0:39:38].

[Hackney] \_\_\_ [hope to be] part of wider [regeneration] schemes, [so that’s] Woodberry Down, where we get [some] amount of affordable housing.

Or where we’ve just walked along \_\_\_[0:39:54] you can see where some of the post-war housing has been taken down and replaced with housing that faces the river.

The River Lee is again – Hackney Marshes [is a big part of 0:40:12] \_\_\_ Hackney [and] East London. It runs along the River Lee. It’s known for football, and obviously it flows into the Olympic Park, Olympic Village.

A lot of that is just outside the borough, but we certainly have an interest in that area, in terms of needing housing.

Some of the function has gone to [London Legacy Development Corporation 0:40:38], not necessarily Hackney or Newham, but yes, it’s certainly seen as an area where more housing \_\_\_.

I think long-term there’s more leisure and freight \_\_\_[0:41:02] moving. I was in Utrecht earlier this year, to see how they use the canals to move beer bottles from the breweries. Waste is a huge one. There’s a huge waste centre in Enfield, and obviously the River Lee or the canal [channel 0:41:23] might have a role to play in [Crosstalk].

Interviewer: Interesting.

Kevin Burke: Yes.

Interviewer: That’s really interesting.

Kevin Burke: I think the boroughs work in – particularly North London boroughs try and work in partnership. There’s a North London waste strategy. I know certainly there’s talk about using the canal.

I think part of the problem is the River Lee is tidal, so it might not necessarily be feasible all times, but certainly there’s nothing stopping some of these bars \_\_\_[0:41:51] to move – if something is coming from Hackney Wick Brewery to here, why not use the canal?

Interviewer: Yes. It’s interesting, isn’t it? For the canals that were so central to freight. It was their whole purpose.

Kevin Burke: Yes, and they became neglected, certainly in the post-war period, with the industrialisation, but now it’s certainly coming back.

\_\_\_[0:42:15] [inversion] where housing is kind of – it is seen as more desirable to live in the city now [than almost] outside. [Living in the city] is seen as more sustainable, certainly in terms of dealing with accommodation growth. And we all need water, so I think there’s certainly a greater appreciation for how you make the best use of it. We can’t lock ourselves away from it.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: Again, it’s hard to monetarise, but it strikes me as having a view of water is certainly beneficial for mental health.

Interviewer: Yes. We’ve spoken a little bit about identity. We’ve spoken about benefits. We’ve spoken about some of the challenges and risks of opening up the [sites 0:43:17].

I wondered if you thought – well, indeed we spoke about it when we were walking down. Potential tensions and conflicts of use in the Wetlands to Wetlands, [particularly on the 0:43:32] canal side. Where you see those potential conflicts occurring.

Kevin Burke: Yes. I think the conflicts are maybe less about the actual [water]. It’s more about the gentrification of Inner London. \_\_\_[0:43:51] Hackney \_\_\_ certainly [older] residents are being priced out of…

Almost every time there’s a new over-ground station or housing development along the canal, particularly residents in older estates, that didn’t really have access to the canal because it was sealed off, because of the health and safety risks associated with it.

Certainly they're seeing the canal being opened up, and they're saying, “Well, why didn’t this happen when we were growing up?” Or, “Is it suddenly just because [of new 0:44:28]..?”

I think certainly there’s probably more money available. Particularly developers are more interested in people living in the city. They see this brownfield land next to the canals. They can make a fortune on it. Certainly you can see that argument. There’s \_\_\_[0:44:46] people have been priced out of-

Interviewer: What sort of land? Sorry.

Kevin Burke: Just brownfield land along canals, replacing dilapidated housing.

There’s no doubt about it, even for people working \_\_\_[0:45:03] [professional are] priced out of London, certainly.

I think in terms of the water itself, it’s not so much the water [space]. It’s like any improvement is now seen as benefiting a particular section of the community. Whereas that’s certainly is not the intention, definitely from a council officer.

There was a case where – where we are at the moment there’s a push on \_\_\_[0:45:31] Haggerston Riviera. Which is certainly not something being pushed by myself as a council officer, but I can see why that would certainly annoy people, who have known it as a grimy place \_\_\_ 1970s and 1980s \_\_\_[0:45:51] the kind of hipster invasions.

I think sometimes as well with some of the young people, with social media it’s easier to organise a street party, or to organise events, legal or illegal.

Certainly a few years ago, a couple of years ago, one of the barriers actually stopping us from doing the project earlier was there was a carnival.

It was basically almost like a Facebook party, or Facebook invites to people to come along Regent’s Canal, near enough where we were. Come along with their own boats, dinghies, \_\_\_[0:46:44] young people coming over \_\_\_ people’s homes, drinking on the boats, \_\_\_.

People were suspicious of us then trying to do [public realm] They were saying, “Oh, you're just doing it for…” It certainly wasn’t the case.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: It was consideration for people, and crime, and crime prevention officers. “If we were remove that railing, is that not opening up access for people to come along and put a dinghy in the water, for their own..?”

You could argue it is, but I think when you look at the overwhelming positive benefits \_\_\_[0:47:27]. Plus there’s more monitoring now of these kinds of parties [online] by officers as well.

Interviewer: Okay.

Kevin Burke: Yes, the tensions are like, “Who is using the water? Who is benefiting by this? Why are you doing it?”

Interviewer: That’s interesting.

Kevin Burke: Certainly some older residents see any improvement as benefiting a certain demographic, rather than…

Interviewer: Yes. Let me just double check I'm asking the right questions. I get caught up in the conversation, because it’s much more interesting than checking my questions.

[Background noise 0:48:18 - 0:48:31].

Kevin Burke: I would say, with particularly the likes of Canal & River Trust, they take groups of kids \_\_\_. They do get them heavily involved in the volunteering, looking after spaces, removing graffiti. They're quite good at mobilising volunteers, working with local schools to create \_\_\_[0:48:53] [parks] \_\_\_. So it’s not just the council, it’s wider groups.

Sometimes, if we can, we try and fund. Development contributions are sometimes quite difficult to allocate, because they're set aside for a specific purpose, but certainly where we can help out, whether that’s in terms of advertising it, or…

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: Especially with the likes of Twitter, where we’ve a council account, [a lot of the time 0:49:25] we can notify people much quicker.

Interviewer: Yes.

[Background noise 0:49:30 - 0:49:40].

Kevin Burke: I think [as well about sometimes] reducing the tensions, I certainly try. Some of our officers actually go to the people, go to residents’ groups, try and explain why we think it’s a good idea. We’re not looking after a certain group. We’re also trying to [get] more walking, cycling, reduce accidents, improve air quality.

Interviewer: That is one of the questions actually, I guess, in terms of consultation, and how you go about communicating the message, or also giving people the opportunity to shape projects.

Kevin Burke: Yes.

Interviewer: What opportunities, for example, they have, do you feel, in terms of Wetlands to Wetlands? Or was there ever an opportunity \_\_\_[0:50:33]?

Kevin Burke: With the wetlands funding there are always timeframes, and [obviously] they're quite tight, so you have to…

And bear in mind it’s very unlikely you're only going to be involved in one project when you're working, particularly over the last few years, where staff have fallen. So you're constantly stretched, resources are stretched.

What I would say, it’s almost proportionate, the level of consultation you do. It just has to be, because sometimes there’s a sense of consultation fatigue.

[I've been out for 0:51:14] transport strategy. [I've been out for] \_\_\_. [They’re like], “God, what’s he coming out with now? Yes, well, just get on with it already.” Certainly on online blogs it’s like, “Oh, they’ve been talking about this for years. Will they just go and do it?”

Then where you feel people are most directly affected it’s hand dropping the notices into – it might be \_\_\_[0:51:39] half my radius of where the…

You do mark it out on the map. We will say, “Right, this is where the scheme is. These are the areas where [we think we are] most effective.” Then you certainly go to community groups, the things you’ve seen me at. You might give presentations.

It’s completely proportionate. The time you have to take the project, the way the funding has to be spent. Bear in mind most of the funding, if it does come to the council, it’s heavily caveated, and you're working with other groups. It might be the Lee Valley Regional Park. It might be London Wildlife Trust.

Sometimes the initial consultation is obviously between those key stakeholders, before you go to the wider public as well.

That’s out of necessity. Because something like Newington Close, you need to know when Thames Water – “[What are their requirements 0:52:37]? How often do they visit the site? If they need to fix burst pipes, how do they get in? If London Wildlife are ferrying kids from various [parts, how often can we] close the road? [What width 0:52:55] is the hard standing?”

Interviewer: You need to be [prepared]?

Kevin Burke: Yes. It would just be ludicrous to go to public consultation without getting those nuts and bolts almost sorted [and agreed on].

Interviewer: You can’t go with a blank canvas, [can you 0:53:13]?

Kevin Burke: No, and what you tend to find is you confuse people anyway [by] giving people too many options. You try and give the objective, and you spell out, I suppose, the more key aspects of it.

It’s almost like too much information overload, and sometimes it can come to a thing where you're trying to fit something onto a double-sided sheet or something, that will go into someone’s letterbox, as opposed to…

Interviewer: A whole mountain of..?

Kevin Burke: A whole mountain of stuff. And definitely there is that \_\_\_[0:53:47], “Just get on with it already.”

So, with something like the Newington Close, it’s almost like people can see. It’s fairly obvious. People are well on-board with that.

With Clapton Common, people are worried about losing car parking spaces, and they're not necessarily on-board with the overall scheme, so that can be trickier. You might have to spend more time up there, meeting those people, saying, “This is…” Almost justifying why you're doing it. “I've taken your views on-board, but we think this is a bigger issue.”

Interviewer: Which makes..?

Kevin Burke: Yes. What I would say, normally the statutory guidelines, so generally speaking for a short scheme like this, we might go for a month or three weeks.

I think councils have their own guidelines. [With 0:54:37] certain documents it can be twelve. [With the] transport strategy we went for twelve weeks. Planning documents have an eight-week timeframe or whatever. It’s completely proportionate.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: I would say that Hackney is one of the better councils [I've worked in 0:54:52], in terms of actually going out to the public and-

Interviewer: That’s been your experience?

Kevin Burke: Yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Kevin Burke: I don’t know. It might be the ethos of the council or it might be that people are more engaged here. Again, it’s time. I’ve got older, but more people are definitely more capable with IT, with social media. Sometimes it can be constant. People can Tweet any time of the day, they can submit any time of the day. So it might just be a reaction to that.

Certainly I suppose some councils or local authorities, or regional authorities, might say, “We need to get this money spent. Maybe do the minimum possible”, and you can see why people think it’s a fait accompli before it’s ever… “Why are you consulting us? Because it’s going to happen anyway.”

Interviewer: Yes, exactly. That’s a tick-box exercise?

Kevin Burke: Exactly, but like everything there’s balance it. It’s completely proportionate.

I can’t speak for other councils, but definitely I would say Hackney are one of the better ones, and going to other groups/stakeholders to publicise consultation and getting support from them.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit about certainly Walthamstow Wetlands, but actually all of the projects, the two main wetland projects, the requirement to work with neighbouring councils? And whether you think having to do that, because of the wetlands, has changed the relationship or forged new relationships at all?

Kevin Burke: That’s a bit of a unique one, because I actually used to work in the neighbouring borough anyway, so [it already happens 0:56:48].

Generally speaking, if we were making a funding submission, in this case to the GLA – the Greater London Authority – more often than not you need letters of support from the neighbouring borough anyway, especially if they're impactive, they’re more to benefit.

In London, generally speaking, there are sub-regional partnerships anyway, where you meet on a quarterly basis. Certainly with transport we’re planning…

So you tend to know the officers involved. Or if it’s not them they will tend to put you in the right \_\_\_[0:57:28]. It’s like everything else in life. The more you know people…

Yes, and sometimes it can be a case where if you know someone is more amenable to what you're trying to do you will certainly go to them, rather than a risk averse individual. Some London boroughs have a reputation for being more risk averse than others.

Some of that changes. That always changes with an influx of staff, political administrations. Generally speaking, Labour councils tend to be easier, tend to see the bigger picture. Not in all cases. Certainly some Tory boroughs can be equally good.

Yes, so there are a lot of factors. Given that we’re in Inner London, most boroughs tend to be Labour controlled, so politically they should be on the same wavelength, \_\_\_[0:58:25] alignment.

We have similar characteristics, in terms of lower car ownership, people walking/cycling, wanting to live nearer where they work, where they play, etc. So, there are similar characteristics like that.

In this one we’re working with an Outer London borough, in Waltham Forest, but given in the last few years a lot of people have moved out from Inner London, [of 0:58:51] Hackney to [an outer] borough anyway, they're suddenly demanding more of the same of what they were used to when they used to rent in Inner London.

There’s almost a higher expectation [on] Outer London to provide what Inner London maybe have had for the last 10/15 years, the progressive policies.

The dynamic changes, and certainly with stuff like the Mini Holland, it’s attracted some of the brighter staff to go to those boroughs \_\_\_[0:59:22]. So they're bringing experience from whether it’s Camden, or Hackney, or wherever, to those areas as well.

Interviewer: I've heard people talk about certainly Walthamstow Wetlands, because of the scale of it, acting as a little bit of a planning black hole. It acted very much as [an edge 0:59:46].

Kevin Burke: Yes.

Interviewer: I wondered what your thought was in terms of how its perceived now, and whether it’s changed at all now that it’s being opened up.

Kevin Burke: Well, I worked in Waltham Forest at the time when the bid went in to the Heritage Lottery Funding, and the Lee Valley Regional Park, for better or worse, has always been seen as a barrier between, I suppose, Inner London and Outer London. There are very few crossings.

There’s the Lea Bridge Road. If you're looking at Waltham Forest, Haringey, Hackney, at the southern tip you can – get across is the wrong word, but there are very few routes, but there are opportunities to do walking and cycling. There are definitely opportunities with towpaths, with \_\_\_[1:00:45].

I know from my time [there] that, even though you have this massive area on your doorstep, it was traditionally closed off to the wider \_\_\_ of one and a half million people within half a mile or a mile of the…

So, people have always known this, whether the funding was there, or the inclination to actually go and do something about it.

Again, certainly there are challenges in terms of wildlife, lighting, and all that, but I think the funding that Waltham Forest got from that Heritage certainly opened up more possibilities.

Certainly London, and other places, when you're doing a scheme money attracts money, or investment. Funding attracts funding.

It’s very rarely you get any sort of [funding 1:01:41] proposal off the ground unless there’s some committed by councils as well, or from a third party, or more often than not from a few. That’s true of European funding as well. It’s very rare one body will get it on their own.

From that point of view, definitely you \_\_\_[1:01:58] because you have to.

Interviewer: It will continue to be an operational site, and it’s owned by Thames Water. Does that come with very specific challenges and implications for how people will use it?

Kevin Burke: I would have to be honest. From my point of view, as an officer, I'm looking at almost not so much the wetlands site, but certainly there are some old internal roads and stuff that have traditionally been closed off to it, because [they tend to be 1:02:37] very private. You can say that about the marina as well.

Suddenly those spaces come more into play, and from my perspective in transport, trying to get people out of cars, that aspect is…

Obviously I do appreciate some of the sites are privatised. Thames Water would probably say that ultimately that’s the water supply of London, and there have to be certain safeguards around protecting that.

I can understand that viewpoint, but where we’re trying to get to is almost a management of it, as opposed to just closing those areas off like they have been for decades.

Interviewer: Yes.

Kevin Burke: I can see why [they are 1:03:27] still privatised, but if you can open up the areas around it…

Interviewer: [Oh, gosh], \_\_\_ I'm pretty sure.

[Background noise 1:03:40 - 1:03:51].

Kevin Burke: Hello. Can I get another \_\_\_ please?

Female: Yes, of course. Anything for you?

Interviewer: In fine thank you.

Female: Are you sure?

[Background noise 1:03:56 - 1:04:06].

Kevin Burke: What was amazing about particularly the Woodberry Down wetlands \_\_\_ was when they started opening up for – when we went up there London Wildlife Trust brought us into the site and said, “This has been hidden away for decades, and actually when you're here this is amazing. Even though you're in London, a heavily urbanised area, all of a sudden this is opened up. This is fantastic.”

I'm quite confident that when we see improved entrances, once the people gain a greater appreciation of the areas, and what’s possible, once we work together with a few people and a few organisations and stuff…

Interviewer: Do you think there’s a risk that local people won’t be engaged? That it will attract…

It goes back to one of your initial points around is there a risk that actually as a nature reserve it’s perceived as a middle class activity, and therefore won’t attract people from the local estate, when it is predominantly Waltham Forest Estate?

Kevin Burke: It’s possible that the wetlands themselves could be seen as that, but ultimately, from my perspective as transport planner, we are opening up the areas around it as well.

It’s not just the wetlands, it’s the wider part of the wetlands. Where we’re looking at connecting housing estates. We’re looking at connecting Tube stations. There’s a massive regeneration corridor between Walthamstow, Blackhorse Road, and Finsbury Park, and further south to the canal here, where we are - [Hoxton 1:05:55], Haggerston, \_\_\_.

So, we’re opening up as a – not a transport corridor, that would be the wrong way of phrasing it, but certainly commuter routes or leisure routes as well.

We know we’ve got high cycling levels for commuters, but actually our leisure routes are quite low. That’s one of the areas we’re looking to target families on the weekends, going as a group. They might visit the wetlands, but to get to the wetlands they need to…

A lot of the stuff we’re proposing is very much an incremental process. It has to be that way, because we just simply don’t have the funding to go and do a 3km route without any backing from TfL. So we have to do stuff piecemeal, but ultimately even the piecemeal stuff should open up for the immediate people in post-war housing.

It will certainly open up areas where they previously have said, “Oh, it’s a bit dodgy there. There’s no lighting. The trees are overgrown. I can’t see where I'm going.”

This will certainly open up even simple things, like going to the local shops, going to the local community centre. Suddenly that’s opened up for them, and if they were going at all, if they were being ferried by car, going the long way around, it’s actually, “I will just walk through this estate here. It’s perfectly safe. I'm not going to run into speeding traffic.”

Interviewer: Yes. I think one of the differences for me between the different case studies is this sense of space.

When we talk to our colleagues in \_\_\_[1:07:40], this very tiny little town in West Wales, that’s facing out to the sea, with all of the challenges that that’s facing, and the flood defence, and the risk of flooding on a major scale, their interaction with water is fear-based, around flooding on a major scale, and actually whether or not their houses are insurable, things like that.

Kevin Burke: Yes. The same with my home city at the moment.

Interviewer: Oh, is it?

Kevin Burke: Yes, in Cork, in Ireland, yes. I've seen sometimes you get the flood defences are pretty horrific, utilitarian, high walls, high concrete walls, no visual permeability.

Interviewer: Just ugly as hell?

Kevin Burke: Yes.

Interviewer: So their interaction, and therefore their relationship with water, is interpreted through that lens.

Kevin Burke: Yes.

Interviewer: Whereas here in London it is a very different set of lens that water is interpreted through. From a commercial development perspective, it comes with big pound signs, or a residential development comes with big pound signs. That’s the reason why Berkeley Homes are there, and that’s because of the reservoirs.

Equally, it becoming a place of amenity, a place of enjoyment, a place of value, is also central to it, but that doesn’t seem so self-evident to all [parts 1:09:23] and all communities.

Kevin Burke: Yes.

Interviewer: I think that’s a very interesting contrast, and I don’t know whether that’s because you’ve got such a range of communities in such a small space.

Kevin Burke: Yes, it could be. It could simply be the risk of flooding as well. In London obviously you have the huge tidal barrier a few miles downstream, and it’s probably a sense that actually you know London is made of clay, and if the sea levels rise that certainly people are aware of that, but in the short-term…

You don’t see the flooding in London, just in Cumbria. Certainly \_\_\_[1:10:08] Southwest Ireland, over across North Wales, Cumbria. It’s almost like seeing something on television, but it’s not that relevant to you, in terms of where you live. Certainly there’s that.

As I say, there’s almost that fear of water, and [as a1:10:28] personal viewpoint, not as a [council officer], some of the flood defences are very much utilitarian, almost built to encase you from the sea or river, as opposed to actually there are better ways to do it.

It might simply come down to actually giving some areas back to the sea or back to the river. Planning comes into it, in terms of there are so many housing developments built on flood plains.

You can see why people are fearful of water, but really, back in the first places, should those houses be there? Absolutely they shouldn’t be. It could get to a stage where there are just certain parts you can’t deliver housing. You can’t do it because it’s just too much of a…

I think probably less so in London, but definitely my hometown, where you might have flooding once or twice a year, sometimes the [quays 1:11:31] are used for car parking space.

Whereas in Amsterdam obviously it’s a highly engineered system of canals. Utrecht are restoring one of the canals, it’s a huge engineering project, but it’s also an amenity, amenity is kind of at the heart of it.

There are definitely opportunities there, with a bit of imagination, to say, “Well, look, it could flood once or twice a year. We might need a certain amount of traditional flood defences, or whatever it is, but actually there are opportunities here for green corridors.”

You're removing car parking. You might be putting in a cycle path, a walking path. Obviously trees and stuff hold water back better than hard surface. So I think there are opportunities there as well, as opposed to just…

Interviewer: So more creative planning and engineering solutions to our interaction and our relationship with water?

Kevin Burke: Yes, I think so, but sometimes there’s probably a lack of going to the communities. It’s understandable, if you’ve got a town of local business people who have been flooded and lost everything. They're trying to rebuild. They can’t get insurance.

I can see why they would, “We need flood defences. We need them now.” That’s perfectly understandable, but actually maybe it’s up to central government and local authorities to say, “Look, absolutely we understand, but there are more creative ways of doing it because, apparently, we can turn it into an asset.”

Interviewer: Do you think that in that case there are new ways that we have to share some of those ideas? Do you think there are new ways to secure an alternative relationship with water, to break down some of those fears?

Kevin Burke: Yes, I think so. There’s an emphasis now on Smart Cities, and the best Smart Cities [get 1:13:27] engagement from the bottom up, third level, and definitely you have [hackathons], people meet up, Twitter meet-ups, all these kinds of things. Certainly there are enough people with interest in these topics to come together.

People might come at it from a different point of view, but ultimately they're looking at flood defences, or using riverside amenity or town centre revitalisation, whatever it might be.

[It’s just a matter of they 1:14:03] co-create solutions, and getting people around the table. I think getting people together in a room is sometimes a skill. Moderators are quite – not everyone has that skill of being able to chair a meeting and stuff, but I think definitely forums have to happen.

Interviewer: Do you think we have the right climate for that in our civic infrastructure in this country?

Kevin Burke: I think cities probably do. Somewhere like London, where you tend to have a lot of creative people, and people are very interested, and you’ve got the third level education here. Maybe [in parts 1:14:55] where that isn’t there, the best and brightest have left, maybe it’s just not there.

It’s very hard to speak for outside of my own \_\_\_. I do think, given especially the last few weeks, the flooding is happening on a more regular basis. There is definitely an opportunity there. If not now, never.

Interviewer: Yes. That focuses the mind, doesn’t it?

Kevin Burke: Absolutely, yes.

Interviewer: It focusus our attention to developing a more sustainable relationship with water?

Kevin Burke: Absolutely, yes.

Interviewer: I'm interested in how planners in particular seek to enable that more sustainable relationship with water?

Kevin Burke: To be fair, a lot of planners, some have come from fairly traditional town planning, land-use planning, and flooding has only come – obviously there was flooding, but they just don’t have the skills to do that, so there’s a certain amount of re-training involved.

Urban Design London do some good workshops on a wide range of topics. I haven’t seen flooding, to be honest. I've seen \_\_\_[1:16:11] that’s really planners. Not just planners, architects and upscale developers.

It’s not much good for the developer if he spent millions on a site if it floods, because they don’t know how to put in either flood defences, or [attenuation 1:16:29] measures, or whatever. Maybe it’s just a skills lag at the moment, where people don’t have them.

Interviewer: That’s interesting. We’ve done benefits. We’ve done [activities].

[Background noise 1:16:44 - 1:16:58].

Kevin Burke: One of the things I've certainly seen in Ireland, it’s a big topic at the moment because a councillor has been shown to be re-zoning land, interfering with the planning process, building on a flood plain, trying to get developments on flood plains.

It’s brought it into a bit more \_\_\_[1:17:21] people don’t have the skills involved in this, in rezoning. Given that it’s one of the few powers that councillors have, rezoning, it tends to be one that’s abused more often as well, in that they see it’s a way of making their mark or getting development for a town, [though it might not be 1:17:42] [Crosstalk].

Interviewer: They perceive it as a legacy, rather than understanding [Crosstalk]?

Kevin Burke: I think so, yes. The short-termism is, “I've delivered jobs and housing”, kind of thing. “Well, yes, it’s on a flood risk 3A site”, or whatever it happens to be.

Interviewer: And it might be a one-in-a-hundred-year risk?

Kevin Burke: Absolutely.

Interviewer: So it’s really down their priority list.

Kevin Burke: I do think as well with the current government it’s more or less the way the planning system, they have shaped it, it’s more of less a – if you’ve got money, if you're a developer and you’re going into an area where it’s traditionally seen as poor, or \_\_\_[1:18:22] any local opposition if they're trying to develop in the Home counties area, where people will fight stuff.

With the new NPPF, so the planning framework, it’s almost the thing unless you can prove something is completely atrocious, shouldn’t happen, the emphasis is more or less that it’s going to go ahead. Sometimes you're looking to mitigate, as opposed to…

Interviewer: So, that precautionary approach, that traditionally I think, certainly in terms of sustainability, was the priority within the planning framework, has been largely removed? The focus is now economic development rather than environmental [sustainability 1:19:11]?

Kevin Burke: I think so. I don’t think there’s any doubt about that, definitely from this government. They're basically looking at developing wherever it’s proven to be viable. They have tried to loosen…

Planning is always seen as a negative for the government, it’s holding up development, ‘progress’. It’s certainly something I would be worried about.

Interviewer: Which of course has then a direct relationship, in terms of how some of these amenities are made available to who?

Kevin Burke: Yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: I know speaking to some of the other people in the projects over the course of the last six months, the history of the 1980s London, and the risk that the Thames footpath didn’t even exist and this idea that…

Growing up, for me, assuming that that footpath was always there, and that we’ve always had access to that river, and that river is ours, but actually that’s not the case, and so that risk-

Kevin Burke: The privatisation of public space almost, yes.

Interviewer: It’s really haunting, I think, in terms of how we increasingly interact with it, and the loosening up of the planning framework.

Kevin Burke: Yes. To my mind it’s definitely a negative, and I think a lot of other planners would feel the same, that [it helps being 1:20:45] tied to a certain sector.

Interviewer: It’s a real restriction?

Kevin Burke: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time, Kevin.

Kevin Burke: No problem. You're welcome.

Interviewer: I really appreciated it.

END AUDIO

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