**File: COR3MR14Dec2015P2.WMA  
Duration: 0:29:00  
Date: 26/03/2016  
Typist: 778**

START AUDIO

Interviewer: Yes so they’ll be indoor and outdoor education space and some of that will be around the role of Thames Water and how Thames Water use it, and how it results in drinking water.

Do you think that will affect, in any way, a more sustainable relationship with water, for visitors?

Respondent: Yes, I think they’ll think it’s a perfect opportunity for Thames Water to get those messages across and to get people to think about their water usage.

I think that’s one of Thames Water’s ambitions from the project, is to get that message across to people. I think that’s an important message. It’s a perfect opportunity to get that message across.

You know, how water works and the cycle and the processes that go into producing water and also the cost of producing water and the implications that that brings up from wasting water as well.

Also the benefits as well, of drinking tap water, the company will be quite keen to get across to people. With it being cost effective and the cleanliness of it, to get that message across to people, could actually help a lot of people on low incomes who continually buy bottled water. Because maybe culturally they’re used to doing that and from where they lived in the past, they believe that tap water is not good to drink.

The water that comes out of your tap, is a pharmaceutical grade product and yes, I think those sort of messages would be good to get across to people. That’s where the project will give them that form to do that.

Interviewer: So we’ve spoken about the benefits, and we have spoken about some of the tensions before, I know that, but do you think there is a risk of dis-benefits?

Respondent: Well the biggest one, is the impact that an increase in visitors, the project is discussing and aiming for really. And the impact that that’s going to have, on the wildlife that currently uses the site.

I think Natural England are going to be doing some studies along those lines, to see if the increase in number of visitors has had a detrimental effect on breeding birds and other wildlife that uses the site.

Interviewer: Any other social dis-benefits? Are there disadvantages?

Respondent: I wouldn’t say so, not really. Increase number of conflicts were between users on the site, I think that potentially and then also anti-social behaviour and managing that. I think that’s going to be the tricky thing.

And also, I guess the only other thing is risk of death. (Laughter) and I know it sounds a bit doom and gloom but we have had people fall in the reservoirs and die in the past.

Luckily not whilst I’ve been here and I think obviously encouraging the age restrictions, I think that potentially, is a huge risk and I think it’s been pushed to the side line, because to manage it, they can’t do that project, in my opinion.

You know, it wouldn’t’ be the same project, if you had to take that into proper consideration. So, I think that’s where we are at the moment.

The reason Thames has a restriction on children under 8 is because some young children died in the reservoirs, when they shouldn’t have been allowed on site.

Also the no bicycles or pushchairs or prams in case they accidently roll down the reservoir press into the reservoir.

I think the reason why we’ve got to this point, where we can be seen as restrictive to access, is because of this ultimate risk of people dying on site.

I think the projects wanted people to move away from those sort of restrictions and open the site up, but I think along with that comes increased risk of activities, around large bodies of deep, open water.

Interviewer: Obviously this sort of thing came up during the consultation?

Respondent: It did yes, particularly from us and Thames Water but it was paid lip service basically, it wasn’t really taken on board. They thought we were being harbingers of doom. (Laughter)

It’s difficult for us, because we’re seen as the people that don’t want change and we’ve had to fight that from the beginning.

Certainly myself, I’m accepting that there is going to be change but it’s getting it right and not just doing something because it looks good on a postcard or on the back of a newspaper.

That’s been a bit of a struggle to be fair.

Interviewer: Can we talk a little bit more about the consultation process and what that involved?

Respondent: Well they had public consultations for the anglers and the bird watchers. The bird watchers and the fly fishermen, they turned up to their consultations. The coarse anglers, which are by far and away our largest user group, didn’t turn up to the first one, not a single one.

Partly because the fly fishermen are organised into a club and have been for the last 20 or 30 years or even longer. So they‘ve got a structure there, they’ve got an organisation that they can go to, voice their concerns and then they’ve come back to us. So they had all that in place.

The course fishing here, they’ve never had a club, as such and the nature of coarse fishermen is they are a little bit more sort of selfish in their pursuit.

So they don’t like clubs as much, coarse fishermen will go and do their own thing, go fishing by themselves or with a friend.

You’re usually fishing against everybody else around you because you want to catch the biggest one that no one else has caught.

Whereas fly fishing, they’re more keen to help others. There’s not that much difference between the fish they’re catching, so it’s just a more open, it’s just a different type of fishing really.

Interviewer: And therefore attracts and encourages different behaviours?

Respondent: Yes and no. The fly fishing is quite an active activity, you’re out, and you’re moving around, you’re fishing always. The coarse fishing here tends to be, you set up where you’re fishing, you put a bed out and you lay down until your alarm makes a noise and you’ve got a fish.

Although they’re both fishing, they’re two very different styles of fishing. So yes, they attract different people. I know guys that do both and then I know people that used to coarse fish and started fly fishing and they’re like “Oh I could never go back and do that again”

And then other times, sometimes the fly fishermen get a bit older, they can’t move around as easily, then they go back to coarse fishing. It’s kind of a bit of a mix.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Respondent: So the coarse fishermen didn’t turn up at all, to the first one. Then between the first consultation and the second consultation, they opened up a Facebook page which has just got 3000 or 5000 members now and suddenly they started.

I wouldn’t call them an organised group, they’re more like a rabble of people on Facebook throwing opinions around. But suddenly there was a forum where you could get messages across to everybody and they had a second consultation. And even that wasn’t very well attended, but half a dozen people turned up to it.

But we’re still getting questions now, from coarse fishermen, saying “What’s all this work going on, on the Two and the Three?” because they’re out of the loop.

And also, let’s be honest, there’s not much signage up telling people what’s going on. Which I would have thought would be a minimum requirement, to a site that’s already open to the public.

I would have thought there would have been a notice board here by now explaining the project, what we’re going to be doing, when. But there’s none of that.

It’s almost like the project is seeing this as a blank canvas and there aren’t already users on the site. That’s the way I see it, and potentially that’s because that means they don’t have to engage with those users, which could be difficult.

But also, it’s been that struggle from the very beginning and when you hear the project being described as “Oh we’re opening up this area”

That kind of gets your back up a little bit, because we’ve been open always. We’ve always been open, you just had to find out how to get in. You could have saved all of that money and just put an advert in the local press and said “Look we’re open” then it would be done.

Obviously, we wouldn’t have the facilities and the additional habitats and stuff but I think the project- particularly the council, has seen it as, it’s better for the borough, to be seen as ‘Opening up an area that has never been open before’.

It’s a better headline, a better soundbite, to say “We’ve opened this up” when actually, you’re just investing in a site that’s already been opened and has already got quite a lot of history of people using the site for various activities.

Interviewer: And what about your involvement and your team’s involvement in the consultation. What has that been?

Respondent: I’ve been the working supervisor, I’ve been involved in decisions and consultation up to a certain level. So parts of the project will be that my managers see as affecting the fishery will be passed down to me, for a comment on and depending on that comment, some of it’s taken on board, other bits are sort of risk managed.

So they’ll look at it and go “Yes well, this is a big concern for the fishery but in the project, this is much more important that this happens”

They make compromises over the decision. I haven’t had any decisions to make, it’s just how well I’ve been able to put the fisheries’ point of view across, to build a case.

So then my managers and also the people leading the project and also the project managers can take that on board.

It’s not good enough to say “Oh we don’t like that” so you have to build a case and explain why we don’t like that, what impact it’s going to have to the business.

Certainly in key areas, when we’ve managed to financially show them that it wouldn’t be helpful to the fishery then they’ve taken on board, those suggestions as much as they can.

Not so much so, I’d say, when it’s been health and safety and that sort of stuff. Like I mentioned earlier, it’s been not skipped over, but kind of seen as we’re just being awkward.

But ultimately I think that’s decisions for people higher up, health and safety implications of allowing more people on and off the site.

The rangers will just work to rules that we’re kind of told and if something bad happens, then that’s someone else’s decision that’s taken that on board, to open the site up and allow children under 8 on site and bicycles and all the other activities.

Somebody else is going to be taking that decision and responsibility really.

Interviewer: Yes, what about things like, your knowledge of the site and the more sort of cultural and social things that you have, that you can share with people. Have you been asked to share any of that?

Respondent: Not so much at the moment, but I feel with the London Wildlife Trust and certainly the people that I know in the organisation at the present, I can see a good working relationship with them.

I supported London Wildlife Trust’s bid to be the partner…

Interviewer: [Crosstalk 00:14:29]

Respondent: Basically. So obviously, I’ve put as much pressure on my managers and decision makers that they were the right people, as much as I could and I think it wasn’t just down to me. Other people in the business wanted London Wildlife Trust.

I think for the fishery, having a partner like the RSPB wouldn’t have helped us at all and actually I’d worked with David at Woodberry Downs in the past and so I think we already had that working relationship.

And moving that forwards, we may not be on the same sheet, but I think we’re not too far from it and I think we can work together as a fishery and London Wildlife Trust.

They’ll be conflicts and they’ll be compromises, but I don’t think it will be a matter of “Well this is our wetlands, we’re going to do what we want” I think there will be that dialogue.

Male 1 (Aside): You’ll have to summarise that maybe in a quote.

Interviewer: That’s brilliant. Let me check, what the time is.

Respondent: We have got a bit more time, it’s half past and I’ve got until two.

Interviewer: Let me just double check.

Male 2: Would you like a biscuit? Hi guys.

Interviewer: Hi, how are you?

Respondent: It is that time of year, look. Where suddenly you need a…

Male 2: Yes it’s that time of year do you get little presents and stuff?

Respondent: Of course we do yes.

Male 2: Sorry to interrupt, are you going through the questions?

Interviewer: Yes. Dave has already been through them. We didn’t come to blows, we were alright.

[Crosstalk 00:16:13] (Laughter)

Interviewer: \_\_\_, you can’t get \_\_\_ of those quick enough. (Laughter)

Male 2: \_\_\_. Can I have a cup of tea as well, are you alright?

Respondent: I’ll have a black coffee, please.

Interviewer: I’m fine thank you.

Respondent: You need to pour that away Dave, I’ll give you that one.

Interviewer: Let’s just double check we’ve got everything.

We did speak about how you want people to behave on the site, but I wondered about people’s responsibilities on the site.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: Whether you feel like they should have particular responsibilities, either to care for the site-

Respondent: Yes, absolutely. And that’s something that we tried to get across to the existing users as well. If they see something happening that shouldn’t be.

It might be anti-social behaviour or people with poor angling practice. There’s no point coming back at the end of the day or in some cases, three days later “Oh we saw this happening” and no one did anything about it.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And I think taking responsibility for those actions and informing members of staff is very important because we don’t know these things are happening until you tell us often, so let us know and we can manage the site properly.

Similarly, yes I think people need to take responsibility for their own rubbish, in a way, other people’s rubbish as well. If a fisherman finds that’s there’s rubbish laying everywhere then just pick it up and if they don’t want to take it home with them, let us know, we’ll come and collect it. But yes, just general wellbeing of the site.

If they see water flowing from the side of a reservoir, where it shouldn’t be, then hopefully they’d let us know. You can never be sure, they’d probably sit on it and try to catch a fish. (Laughter)

Yes, so I think that’s something that we not struggle with, but is an issue now. As I said, you know, quite often we get people come in and they say “Last week there was this person doing this”

And it’s like “Well you need to let us know when it’s happening and then we can manage that properly”

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Yes, I think it’s just general caring for the site and what’s happening.

Interviewer: How do you encourage people to do that at the moment then, and how do you think that will be encouraged in the future?

Respondent: Usually, it’s verbally. So we have got a group of volunteers that walk around on the weekends occasionally or whenever they can get a bit of time.

So they’ll let you know if anything’s happening on site, but also as incidents occur, once that’s happened once, that they tell you that three days later. You say to them “Look do you not have our mobile number? Give us a call, let us know and we’ll come and manage it”

“Oh we didn’t know you’d do that” “Yes we will” so it’s just getting that message across to people that are on site and using it.

Also in some ways, I try to stay out of it, but Facebook as well. Because what will happen is, now they’ll see that someone’s left some rubbish and they won’t tell us, they’ll go and put it on Facebook.

And it’s like “Oh the site’s a disgrace, there’s rubbish everywhere” and actually they’ll just take a photograph of a small area where there’s a bit of rubbish and then that whole discussion comes up.

So in a way, it’s not ideal because a lot of the views are just ridiculous. But eventually someone with a bit of common sense, will put on there “Well let the rangers…” it gets across.

But as a Thames Water member of staff I try to stay away from the comments and stuff because you just get drawn into it, and because you feel emotional or passionate about the site, I might end up saying something I really don’t want to. (Laughter) So it’s nice to have.

There’s a few people on Facebook who we know are sort of ‘Friends of the Fishery’ and that would probably make more sense going forwards, as that gets bigger.

I think Dave is talking about having a ‘Friends of the Walthamstow Wetlands Group’

Maybe some of those people could be on the Walthamstow Reservoir’s Facebook page and when they see stuff like that, they can react to it and take the common sense approach to dealing with some of these issues.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: But like I say, it’s very tricky sometimes, not to get dragged into it, because you see some ridiculous comments.

Interviewer: And this is Walthamstow Reservoir Facebook.

Respondent: It’s mainly coarse fishermen.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: They set it up, pretty much, I wouldn’t say it’s completely but the birders have their own sort of site, I think, I don’t think the birders use Twitter and that sort of stuff.

The fly fishermen don’t use it, that I know of, it’s just the coarse fishermen.

Interviewer: We’ve done responsibilities, we’ve done consultation. I mean, you’ve hinted at it a little bit, with going forward, making sure that the routes that people have to try and influence the site or make either yourselves or David and his team, aware of anything that was going on. How they might be involved in the governance.Do you see some obvious ways to help that happen?

Respondent: It’s a tricky one, it’s something which in the past, we’ve not encouraged, to have our anglers telling us how to manage the site.

But I think inevitably, that will happen a bit more, where we’re engaging with our customers more frequently and I can see that happening.

The other thing is about people getting their points of view across in a way that you can listen to them. Because often, our fishermen will kind of shout something at us, as we walk by.

And you can’t really use that for anything and it gets your back up, but I think that’s where the Walthamstow Fly Fishers Club… Because it’s all organised into a group and they’ve got that structure.

They’ve got people within that group who are capable of forming an argument without being offensive. (Laughter) and getting it across to you.

I mean, the bird watchers similarly, they can write letters and have that voice a little bit, although they’re not as prevalent as the Fly Fishing Club, partly because of their numbers here and they’re a little bit more individual in their pursuit.

The bird watchers often come in one or two, they don’t really want big groups of people. I think maybe the type of people that bird watching is popular for, are slight more loners.

People who kind of go out and do their own thing, whereas the fly fishermen are a bit more gregarious and like to go for a drink in the pub afterwards and they have annual events that they all join up and go to.

I think that’s the main difference between those two groups and then obviously the coarse fishermen, who just haven’t got themselves organised into a group to have their requests or their views heard as such.

Interviewer: Do you think there is a chance that they will respond and recognise that that absence of voice is partly a function of the absence of any sort of structure?

Respondent: I don’t know. They tried to get a group of them together, but I really don’t know. The silly thing is, there’s probably 10 times the amount of them as three are all the other groups, maybe even more than that.

They don’t have that will to do it. Like I explained earlier, the coarse fishing side of things, their motivations for doing it, are much more selfish than other pursuits.

Although they like the wildlife, the only thing they’re particularly interested in, is catching a particular fish and usually one of two species, generally here, that they’re after.

Whereas the bird watchers are obviously concerned about the habitat, and what’s the water quality and all those sorts of things because it affects the bird life.

And the fly fishermen, because they are already organised into a group have had a voice for a long time. So they don’t feel as though they need to.

I don’t know with the coarse fishing, it’s a tricky one. If they ever did, it would be the best thing they ever did, and also the worst- for us. (Laughter) I’ll be honest, so I’m not going to encourage it. If it happens naturally, it happens, but yes. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Pandora’s box. (Laughter)

Respondent: Yes, exactly.

Interviewer: Okay, I think my last questions, you’ve already slightly answered them, in terms of the current users and stake holders, because they’ve had a voice, have had the most influence over the process and this process has been going on for a long time.

But who would you see as having the strongest voice as in expressing…

Respondent: Of the current users?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: It would be the Walthamstow Fly Fishers’ Club, probably followed by the local birding community and then the coarse anglers.

Interviewer: Okay, I think…

[Background noise 00:27:35 - 00:27:49]

Interviewer: Oh my last one. So you’ve explained there why the coarse fishermen haven’t had the voice that they might have, given their numbers here.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Is there any other group that you feel have been missing, in terms of sharing their voice?

Respondent: I’d say local residents potentially, who aren’t anglers or bird watchers. But then again David might say “Oh no we consulted all the people in the local…”

I don’t know, that would have been outside of my knowledge of what’s happened. Obviously, I can only speak for the users that I know of on this site.

I have a sneaking suspicion London Wildlife Trust did consult residents and stuff. You’d have to ask them. (Laughter) “No we didn’t bother” (Laughter)

Interviewer: Okay.

Male 2: Are you recording that?

Interviewer: Yes. (Laughter) I think that’s all my questions, thank you so much.

Respondent: No worries, yes.

END AUDIO

[www.uktranscription.com](http://www.uktranscription.com)