**File: BIRDPL 16.2.16P1.WMA  
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Interviewer: If we could start with you introducing yourself and your connection to the fisheries for me.

Pete Lambert: Okay. My name’s Pete Lambert, I come here to bird watch once a week. I first started doing it in 1986, I think, so I’ve been coming here a long while.

Interviewer: Why is it that you come here?

Pete Lambert: Two reasons, I suppose. One is it’s within walking distance of my house, I don’t have a car so it’s easy to get to. Secondly, you get a wide variety of birds here which you don’t get in the other place nearby.

Interviewer: Okay. Could you talk to me a little bit about what it is specifically that you probably value the most about this space? And what you get out of this space?

Pete Lambert: I mean, it’s really those two things I’ve said. You know, it’s easy to get to without public transport and you do see birds here that you won’t see anywhere else without getting on buses and trains. I mean, it’s basically that, really.

Interviewer: Is there anything about the actual environment that you treasure?

Pete Lambert: I just walk round looking for birds. If you asked me, “Have you seen a fish?” or anything like that, or, “What colour was the car that just went by you?” I haven’t the faintest idea.

Interviewer: Okay. What particular birdlife makes this site very special?

Pete Lambert: Well it’s two things really. One is the islands that you’ve got on large areas of water, because the birds are totally safe there. You get birds that either nest there or sit round there or use the trees to roost in because- well, I haven’t asked them, they haven’t told me, but I assume they feel safe there.

The second one is the large expanses of water. I mean, if you go into any park which has got a small area of water, you’ll find moorhens and coots and mallards, but other barn fowl you’ll only tend to get when you’ve got bigger areas of water and also you get more birds where there’s vegetation round the edges.

You can see the difference if you compare the birds here with the birds in Banbury Reservoir which is just north, which has no vegetation at all. It’s all concrete.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you think the fact that this is a water-based space affects how particularly unique this is? Or what it brings to the area?

Pete Lambert: Yes, there’s a thing about water, isn’t there? People like to be near the water. You go out for a walk with people and there’s a walk by a stream, people tend to do that in my experiences. Unless it’s just me, \_\_\_[0:03:05] think it’s other people. I think human beings like being near water, it’s why they like to go to the seaside. So I think the water is a lure for us in some way. I don’t have any scientific evidence for this.

Interviewer: What is it, do you think, that we get out of the water space?

Pete Lambert: I don’t know if it’s about movement. Even here where there’s not a flowing stream, you know, there are little ripples that you can see, aren’t there? And the changing light and stuff like that, perhaps it’s that. (Audio buzzing 0:03:40-0:03:44) your children are growing up, as mine did, they get very near water and they want to go in it, they want to jump in it, splash in it, muddy puddles sort of thing.

So I think water is particularly attractive for people.

Interviewer: Do you think the opening up of the site to \_\_\_[0:04:03] increased access, shall we say, because it is already open, but the increased access to the site, do you think it is likely to affect people’s relationship with water? Those that weren’t even aware that this was here or haven’t been round here?

Pete Lambert: It’s hard to say, really. I mean, opening up the site, particularly at the south end up near Walthamstow markets will make a big difference. But people that are wandering down there are probably walking near water anyway because of the River Lea. So in this area, you know, you don’t have to go far to be near water because the River Lea runs all the way up and then the boundary is on it.

I think there’s an unmet demand for- well, people do ask me when I’m down the bottom end inside the fence, “How do we get in there?” I tell them, “At the bottom \_\_\_[0:04:55].”

I don’t know if it’ll change their relationship to water, really. It might do if there wasn’t any other water around here, but as I say, the River Lea is quite a popular place for walking, jogging, cycling.

Interviewer: Yes. I wondered if we could move, then, to what you perceive might be the additional benefits of increasing the access to the site in the way that it’s going to be opened.

Pete Lambert: Well from my point of view, because everybody can come here now providing they can afford to come here, I think there are two aspects of it. One is that people who’ve got children will want to come here. At the moment, you can’t come in with a child under eight, and of course you have to pay for each of them, which is expensive. The second aspect has trickled off the edge of my brain (audio buzzing 0:06:00-0:06:12). What was the question about?

Interviewer: Community benefits, what you think are going to be the benefits of it.

Pete Lambert: I think having this access, particularly down there- because I don’t think it’ll make a difference on the north side, because if you’re by that entrance, it’s not that far to walk. But from down there, it’s an enormously difficult job to get in here. So I think lots of people who, at present, wander around there at the weekends will wander in here for a bit and then \_\_\_[0:06:40]. I think that’ll be a great benefit for them.

Interviewer: So increased access will be helpful. Do you think having increased access to nature in London brings additional benefits? Is there something particularly about-

Pete Lambert: I think personally, but then not everybody does because otherwise they’d all be out in the wild at the weekend, wouldn’t they? Which they’re not. So it depends on the people. There’ll be some people who will never come out here regardless.

Interviewer: Do you think there are barriers to people feeling comfortable in this site, or wanting to be here?

Pete Lambert: I think the present barriers are the access and the cost. I mean, you can, at the present moment I could be walking round here and not see another soul on some of the reservoirs, so it may be that some people will not want to come in on their own, because they feel vulnerable. I’ve never had a problem with that.

Interviewer: Do you think with this opening up as a nature reserve rather than being perceived as a public park or presented as a public park affects the identity of the area? Does it bring anything to the identity of the area? The fact that this fishery will now be a nature reserve?

Pete Lambert: Oh, I think it does. If somebody comes down to London for any reason and wants to go for a walk, they’ll Google or search on the web, won’t they, to find places? This will come up as a nature reserve, which is different.

I mean, I have had people who’ve come on my walks that I organise in other parts of London who’ve even come from America for a few days. They come here and they Google, ‘where can I go for a walk?’ Then they go. So I think that will, yes. I mean, just like it does with the Wetland Centre, a lot of people hear about the Wetland Centre because it is a reserve, isn’t it? \_\_\_[0:09:00] it is a reserve.

People are quite interested in that, I suppose they think wildlife will be more accessible there than it will be if they just go for a walk in a big forest or down the River Lea, wherever they want to go. I don’t know if it’s entirely true, but I think that’s a perception.

Interviewer: Do you think there’s a risk that if-

Pete Lambert: Oh, I’ll just come back with the other thing when you were talking about benefits, I think the big benefit for me if there’s going to be a reserve is it would be managed properly for wildlife. Well, to some extent for wildlife, which it hasn’t been in the past. I mean, Thames haven’t chosen to do that. \_\_\_[0:09:55] the wetlands thing is that I think (audio buzzing 0:09:58-0:10:10).

People go to places and (audio buzzing 0:10:13-0:10:18) without being disturbed by anybody else, I want that to continue. So suddenly there’ll be loads of people walking around disturbing all these birds before I get to see them (audio buzzing 0:10:30-0:10:34) you get people who come in here first thing in the morning, as they get round, and they disturb the birds. You see them [fly up 0:10:39], they vanish. I can understand that.

Interviewer: Do you think there are any other disadvantages? Will there be any other impacts?

Pete Lambert: I don’t think so because, you know, in terms of nesting birds and feeding birds, there aren’t a lot of areas here where- it’s not like we’ve got a big expanse of open ground. These birds might be feeding or nesting and there are more people charging through there to disturb them. This is mostly paths and all the vegetation and feeding is, sort of, away from human habitation. So I don’t think it’ll make a lot of difference.

I think if you do get places where it- say you water the management site and you let grass grow so the skylarks might nest on the side of the reservoirs, then you could manage that. You know, you can put up signs to people saying, “Please do not disturb,” which they do that in \_\_\_[0:11:28], they do that in Wimbledon Common.

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: As I say, not everybody feels the same. Some of the fishermen probably think, “Oh God, now all these people keep complaining about me casting my lines round four and five,” which is a hazard, because they don’t always think about you.

Interviewer: This, sort of, brings me on to one of my questions which was around tensions and potential conflicts between different users.

Pete Lambert: Well, the fishermen, they pay a lot of money. They do have a lot of gear with them and in places, you know, they have their tents (or whatever they call those things that they hide in) across the paths or the banks, so that you have to walk round them.

The fly fishing can be difficult, I have, over the years, occasionally had fly fishermen [crash 0:12:32] their line right past you because they haven’t looked and you haven’t thought that they were going to cast. So I do think somebody might have to do something, particularly round the back of- you know, between three and five, one and four. That sometimes happens. Most of the other places, it’s not an issue.

\_\_\_[0:12:54] difficulties at the moment with fishermen who cast their lines and they reach the island. They want to get as close to the island as possible because they believe that the fish go close to the islands to feed, but of course, you can’t always judge that well. So you can see lines and those white things they put basically hanging from the trees. Last year there were two dead little egrets, I’ve seen dead birds caught in them, seen shelduck caught in them, grebes caught in them. They can’t usually see them, they’re a very fine line, aren’t they?

So that may be a management issue in terms of trying to do something. The reeds might help, I suppose, round the islands, because they won’t be able to cast into the trees by accident, you know.

But you always get this, don’t you? there’s always conflict between \_\_\_[0:13:48]. At Tottenham Marshes there’s conflict between people who want to walk round there with dogs and people who want to walk round there and look at birds and people who want to go over there and have a barbecue. It’s illegal, but… And people who want to live there.

Interviewer: Yes. Can we talk a little bit about the consultation?

Pete Lambert: Oh yes.

Interviewer: You were involved in the consultation, could you talk to me a little bit about your experience of that and what that involved?

Pete Lambert: Well blimey. That’s going back down memory lane. I mean, I think the consultation has been, you know, quite reasonable. I think there could be more- and I’ve said to Rachael about providing information in the place where you get your permits to say what the state of play is and what they’re doing and why.

People kept asking other people, “Why are they planting all these things down here?” “What are these plants they’re planting down here?” There was nothing to explain that here. There might have been on the website. Perhaps some people did find out that way, but otherwise it was like Chinese whispers. “They looked like such-and-such, I presume they’re there for cover or whatever.” But it’s difficult if you don’t have staff, you know, actually based here to do it. There’s only Rachael, she’s part-time, isn’t she?

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: And she’s got loads of things to do.

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: So I think that’s an issue, and perhaps whoever \_\_\_[0:15:24] in the project should have thought more about asking for some money to have somebody to deal with those issues earlier on.

I mean, there was very little information about those reeds and stuff. There was a notice up saying, you know, ‘we’ve put reeds’, but it’s just a case of everybody looking and thinking, “Oh, what are these posts in the middle of the thing about?” You don’t know.

I suppose they- well, it’s not in their job description, but the Thames Rangers or whatever they’re called could have been given information. Perhaps they did have it, I don’t know, it wasn’t their job to publicise it, was it? I suppose. I mean, the council has publicised it well in the free paper that they deliver to all households, or Waltham Forest Council, I don’t know that Haringey, whether they’ve done something similar.

Interviewer: And when you say publicised, do you mean just the fact that it’s opening? Or updates?

Pete Lambert: Well, separate time there have been articles updating you on what’s happening. It’s been my main source of information.

Interviewer: The fact that it will be a privately-owned public space, do you think the-

Pete Lambert: While the water authorities stay private, yes.

Interviewer: But do you think it will affect people’s experience of the site? The fact that it isn’t publically owned?

Pete Lambert: No, I don’t think so. I don’t think people are aware of who actually owns the land. Sometimes you get situations like, there was a big reserve in the Isle of Sheppey in Kent called Elmley, that was an RSPB reserve. I always thought the RSPB owned it until suddenly it changed. Apparently they just leased it, so they weren’t actually the owners. They leased the land and they had to agree with the owners what they did.

Interviewer: In the same way that happened here?

Pete Lambert: This project, yes. So I don’t think those people will be concerned until somebody says, “Well, we can’t do this because…” That wouldn’t matter whether it was public or private, I don’t see that that would make any difference. Personally, I think \_\_\_[0:18:01] publically owned. But that’s a political issue rather than an issue of concern about \_\_\_. \_\_\_ gliding by, that’s the other attraction of water, things \_\_\_.

Interviewer: Yes. What do you think are Thames Water’s motivations for opening this site? It’s quite a risk for them.

Pete Lambert: Well, in the past they did have a biodiversity officer, Thames Water, I don’t know if they still do. There have, at times, been attempts to engage with people and see how you could increase the biodiversity of the area, how you might increase access.

They have currently an arrangement with- I think it’s the Berkshire Ornithological Group, in which they allow members of that to have access to Queen Mother Reservoir. They are just negotiating with the London Natural History Society, which I belong to- I’ve been in \_\_\_[0:19:11] negotiations to open access to Queen Mary Reservoir, just for LNHS members. They have spent some money on providing a hide and parking spaces.

So they have had that attitude in the past. At one stage they were trying to encourage access to Stoke Newington Reservoir, I think, but that stopped. For what reasons they have, that, I wouldn’t like to ponder on.

Interviewer: I mean, it’s an unusual, sort of, mixed ownership/delivery model.

Pete Lambert: Why is it unusual?

Interviewer: In as much as it’s a privately-owned operational site.

Pete Lambert: Well, the operational side is, isn’t it? But as I said to you just now, you see like Elmley which, as far as everybody was aware, was an RSPB reserve. They have cattle and things like that on there. They do this on a number of sites, they own the land and they have an arrangement with privately-owned- farmers- well, not farmers, but you know what I mean? Private people, to use that land and in other places where they only lease the land, then that still goes on.

I mean, the issue of operational, still wanting to maintain the (audio buzzing 0:20:30-0:20:37) entirely a wildlife site then you’d want to adjust the water levels to optimise biodiversity or something, wouldn’t you? And that won’t be possible. Can you see the kingfisher \_\_\_[0:20:49]? \_\_\_ my eyes. So I think it’s that aspect.

Interviewer: Yes

Pete Lambert: It’s the operational nature, which is unusual. I don’t know, there are other reservoirs. There’s Abberton Reservoir in Essex, there’s Rutland Water. Is it Rutland Water? It might be Grafton Water.

Abberton, it’s not owned by Thames but it’s owned by some water authority, but there is access to the public. At Grafton Water, which is, sort of, in the Midlands somewhere, I’m sure it’s- well, it’s a water authority anyway, I’ve been there and again, there’s access by the public. But the waters are used by the water authorities. So it’s not unique, I don’t think.

Interviewer: Yes, okay.

Pete Lambert: You’d have to Google it and see.

Interviewer: So water authorities being such large landowners tend to have this agenda for increased access, either through RSPB or Wildlife Trust or-

Pete Lambert: I think here you’re into your political views, aren’t you? Mine are that privately-owned companies like to present a public face of being concerned about environmental issues these days. Therefore, that’s their agenda. But, you know, they would say it’s for other reasons perhaps.

Interviewer: I suppose, the whole project falls within their corporate social responsibility, doesn’t it?

Pete Lambert: Yes. It just depends whether you think corporate responsibility is something that’s a major interest to them. As far as I can see, ever since Thames was sold to private owners, which have changed several times, of course, what has been a concern to them is a return to shareholders. That’s the problem with the financial crisis we had. That’s what that’s all about. But as I say, this is going into \_\_\_[0:22:46] politics, isn’t it?

Interviewer: Well, the politics of water is very fraught, isn’t it?

Pete Lambert: Yes. That’s why I think they ought to be national again. I think my terns have gone for the moment. They will come back.

Interviewer: I hope so. We were talking about the consultation. I didn’t really sort of, ask you during that question, which people, user groups, you feel have been most able to influence that process? Do you feel that the birders were able to increase that process?

Pete Lambert: I mean, I can only speak about the birders, really. I know that the fishermen had been involved, because there was one meeting at which they were there and we were there, we the birders. At meetings since then, they don’t seem to have attended.

Maybe that was deliberately arranged, because that would be quite a good idea, really, to look at the issues that concern each different group and then see how you could balance \_\_\_[0:23:51] rather than getting into everybody shouting at each other and whatever. So I don’t know, I can only say from the point of view of the birders.

The difficulty has been publicity, because, you know, a lot of people who come here, they just come in. If they’re an annual permit holder like me that may not even go into the office. So they just walk on site and they won’t necessarily have known what was going on unless, you know, one birder talks to another etc.

I think that could have been dealt with better if people had talked to individuals within those groups and said, “How can we communicate [to them 0:24:31]? Things like \_\_\_ have been given the email addresses for all the people you’re in touch with, blah-de-blah.” But again, that comes down to the resources that were available, you know.

It’s been much better since Rachael’s been here. There was somebody at Waltham Forest, wasn’t there? A woman with a double-barrelled name, I seem to remember.

Interviewer: Rose Jaijee?

Pete Lambert: Yes.

[Break in conversation 0:24:59-0:25:10]

Again, I think at that stage, you know, it tended to be- she was Waltham Forest interests, so probably what’s happened since Rachael’s been here \_\_\_[0:25:20] has just been about the \_\_\_ place, hasn’t it?

Interviewer: Waltham Forest are the, sort of, responsible body in terms of HLF funding.

Pete Lambert: \_\_\_ land, isn’t it?

Interviewer: Yes. So what do you think their motivation is for being involved?

Pete Lambert: Well, what they say publically and discuss between \_\_\_[0:25:44], what they say publically is in terms of improving the access and making people at Waltham Forest aware that there is this wonderful site on their doorstep, which I agree with and I support. \_\_\_.

Interviewer: We’ve spoken about how local communities, you think, would benefit from the opening up of the sites. I wondered if, particularly given your role in the guided walks, we haven’t really spoken about the role of these sites in education.

Pete Lambert: Well there’s the education in terms of schools. I mean, schools have visited this site over the years. Coming in during the week, as I occasionally do, during the weekdays I have seen buses come in with the kids. They jump out and they take them to do things. Obviously, I would assume, once you’ve got full-time staff here, that, sort of, side would be encouraged and they will be visiting all the local schools and trying to get some sort of regular programme.

That would be great because, you know, lots of these kids- I tend to ramble. I was involved with the local play scheme in Bruce Grove in the mid ‘70s and we had kids come on that. They were all local kids in the Bruce Grove area. We took them out on trips into the countryside or to the seaside, and for many of them, they’d never seen it before, they’d never been to the seaside.

They’d never been on the tube, some of them. I remember people taking them saying, “We had to stop at the top to tell them how to get on an escalator,” you know. So I think that side is very important.

In terms of the public- I mean, as you know, I lead walks for London Natural History Society and for other people sometimes. People like to go on those because they want to know what is it they can see here? Where can they see it? What’s the best time to visit? That sort of thing, which you can only find out by talking to somebody who’s done it for a long while. It’s hard to find these things in books.

But I hope that once the Centre is up, information like that will be available on your website. It often isn’t though. Rainham is notoriously bad for that, the RSPB reserve, you know, you can’t find out much about that on their website.

Interviewer: So you think, for many, particularly of the children in the area [crosstalk 0:28:27].

Pete Lambert: [Crosstalk] grown up children, yes.

Interviewer: You think that there is a real opportunity to re-connect them with nature?

Pete Lambert: Yes, because it is so big. They may have been taken by their parents in the past, most of them- I mean, I took my kids to reserves and things but most people don’t unless they’ve got a specific interest themselves.

So it will be mostly going to the local park with their kids [running 0:28:50], or going to the seaside or stuff like that. An area that’s as big as this with so much to see will blow their minds, so to speak.

Pete Lambert: There are issues about danger with all that, of course, which you’re coming onto at some stage, aren’t you?

Interviewer: Yes. Well, let’s do that now. Let’s talk about [crosstalk 0:29:15].

Pete Lambert: I think at present, children under eight are excluded. They even exclude people with children in buggies which is a shame because they’re quite safe. But the thing that young children, they’re worried about, is them falling in the water.

Some of these are- well, almost all of these reservoirs, the sides are quite steep if you go near the water. Children love to go near water. You know, they won’t want to go near here, if they fell in, you could fish them out as I fished out my son at \_\_\_[0:29:45] park \_\_\_ my grandson. \_\_\_. With the actual reservoirs, they almost all have sloping banks, don’t they?

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: There’s going to be an issue there with them wanting to go near the water, if they slip in. I don’t know how they’re going to try and manage that. It is a problem with the River Lea already. I mean, children do fall in. There have been children drowned as well at Tottenham Lock coming out of the estate there, Ferry Lane Estate.

They have very steep sides, so they’re not so likely to get down there. They could fall in there off their bicycles and stuff like that. But here, you’ve got this sloping thing and it seems to me, a bit of a problem.

What they’ll want to do, if you have kids going out to the Lockwood, they’ll want to go down to the edge \_\_\_[0:30:43] over the top, down the slope and \_\_\_ edge, it’s very slippery sometimes there.

Interviewer: Yes. I mean, are there other risks on site?

Pete Lambert: I don’t look at it from the point of view of the children, me, because children are excluded, small children. It’s only that can think off at the top of my head.

Interviewer: That’s the main one, yes.

Peter Lambert: I mean, the sloping sides are a difficulty. Like, with my walking, I \_\_\_[0:31:20] health and safety route where there are steps. You can do that on the Lockwood, but there’s only one set of steps up there, so you’ve got to walk up those steps, walk away and then go back. There are no other steps to go down until you get right up the far end. So I think that may be an issue with the East Warwick. Yes.

When I took my kids to places which had slopes, they wanted to roll down them. They loved that. They may want to do that here. As I say, I’m not quite sure how that would go. Most reserves I’ve been to, they don’t have that, sort of, steep sides. If somebody had to look at it from a health and safety point of view and say, “If I was a three-year-old kid, what would I want to do here? How do we manage that? Do we assess the risk and manage it?”

Interviewer: So my understanding is that this will be an [incredibly 0:32:20] volunteer-lead space.

Pete Lambert: Is it?

Interviewer: With maybe, sort of, a handful of paid staff, LWT staff.

Pete Lambert: Yes, but things like the health and safety- I mean, I did risk assessment when I was a union rep, that will be done by the staff here, I assume.

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: You know, by Thames. If you do that properly then that’s \_\_\_[0:32:46], isn’t it? “Why are we having this risk assessment?” “Because otherwise somebody will fall over this pile of boxes or that trailing \_\_\_.” “Oh yes.”

Interviewer: \_\_\_. Do you think there are benefits in this being a volunteer-lead site? Or challenges?

Pete Lambert: No, I don’t think anything much volunteer or professional, because that’s the difference, isn’t it?

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: \_\_\_[0:33:19] as somebody who’s retired and spent most of their time spent volunteering at various things, it’s something that people like to do. Some people who have the time when they’re working would like to do it. And it is a way of getting different skills in here which you couldn’t otherwise get. I mean, it’d cost you a lot of money to pay somebody to do what I did with the walk.

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: (Audio buzzing 0:33:44-0:33:50) but also to you, you know, people learn skills, don’t they? I’d use volunteering as a way to change jobs, acquire new skills and then put it on my CV (audio buzzing 0:34:00-0:34:06). I don’t think, really, professional versus volunteer is much of an issue.

Interviewer: Okay.

Pete Lambert: [I was in 0:34:14] in favour of David Cameron’s Big Society but (audio buzzing 0:34:17-0:34:22), that’s good.

Interviewer: I wonder if we could talk about the role of the increased access of the- well, the renovations being done, the conservation being done and the fact it’s going to be opened up more, but the role of that in the wider regeneration story of the area, and whether it plays into that?

Pete Lambert: Blimey, you’ve lost me there.

Interviewer: So do you think the investment and the project itself contributes to the wider regeneration story of this part of Waltham Forest?

Pete Lambert: I’m not sure what wider regeneration of this part of Waltham Forest is.

Interviewer: Do you think it will be used as part- say, for example, as part of (audio buzzing 0:35:07-0:35:12) of the area? Does it bring anything to the area in terms of regeneration?

Pete Lambert: I don’t think so. I mean, the big issue which sparks off in my head as we’re talking is the industrial archaeology, sort of, aspect of this site which, you can see behind you those rotting doors and this collapsing building and the same with the mill down the bottom.

People are fascinated by all of that, and the money that they’re going to spend or \_\_\_[0:35:43] in, sort of, making that an experience people can come and look at, I mean, that will be a draw that isn’t here at the moment, because they don’t have access to those. And there’s not really much information here about those. Given that you’ve got Vestry House Museum, you know, in Waltham Forest which concentrates on that sort of thing, you could do a real great thing there, both in terms of education and kids and in terms of making people aware.

I know when my kids were at primary kids they did all these things about ‘where does the water go?’ and all this sort of thing. It was fascinating to them. To actually be on site and to be able to use that, I mean, that’s something extra that the wildlife, sort of, stays as it is, if you see what I mean. Unless the management changes the nature of what happens here.

You know, and also in terms of the railways, because of all these railways going round here, you could tie all that in. I was a teacher for a while \_\_\_[0:36:39] but, you know, you could tie all that in about, “How come there are all these railways? Where were they going? What were they doing?” The radioactive waste used to go [on this route], Barking to \_\_\_. I don’t know if it’s still going. Apparently you can stand here in the evenings- I have seen them. You see these sealed-off [funny] shaped containers.

So there is loads of stuff. That goods vehicle that went by, a lot of cars and stuff are now being transported on that. I’m not sure if they’re from \_\_\_[0:37:10] or Dagenham or not, but, you know, there’s all that aspect and that, no this is all connected.

Interviewer: Yes, that, sort of, economic geography.

Pete Lambert: Yes, there’s loads of stuff like that that I think schools could live off for a long while. And colleges and further education, I suppose. The universities \_\_\_[0:37:27].

There’s the other aspect about, you know, the \_\_\_. How is it they’re all down here and what are they doing? Because they are all down here, you know, if you walk up Lea Valley, that’s all you see. You don’t see so much of these walking down the street.

There are lots of things like that that, you know- I mean, a lot of it will be through volunteers, I think, but there are lots of people interested in that sort of thing that come in and probably want to recreate some of these old things that were here. Like funny engines and stuff like at Markfield. You know, with the beam engine or something, is it? I’m not sure. But there’s the thing down there which people spend time on.

Interviewer: So there is something very specific about these reservoirs being connected to the Lea Valley and their situation in Lea Valley.

Pete Lambert: Well industrial, you see- I mean, one of the things I’m interested in is the birds that you get in urban areas because that’s where I’ve mostly bird watched all my life. What happens is birds like habitat, so they will come here, they don’t care that there are houses all around it, what they care about is what is here. So you can be in the middle of all this bit. That’s what people sometimes say to me, they’re wandering around, they say, “How can this be in the middle of all these houses?” It is, but it’s here for a particular reason which is related to economics and stuff like that.

I was born in Edmonton further up the River Lea. We used to walk down to the River Lea when I was a boy in the ‘40s. At that time you had the barges with horses still taking timber up and down and this huge Harris Lebus furniture factory over there where the Ferry Lane Industrial estate is. There’s a heritage here that’s part of people’s heritage. My family were all born down in Hackney, down there \_\_\_[0:39:22]. For the kids that come here, there may be that connection.

\_\_\_ has the opportunity to make those connections. You only get that properly, I think, if you do have local people involved. That’s what we tried to do with the play scheme, you know, we tried to get it all run by local people rather than have the students that normally get the students \_\_\_[0:39:52] themselves. But they don’t have the local knowledge and understanding of the kids which you’re working with.

I \_\_\_ about industrial heritage here but people who live locally do, and might be able to bring that in.

Interviewer: Do you think local kids coming here- that this can form part of their sense of identity, their connection with who they are?

Pete Lambert: Yes, your sense of identity is. I mean, why am I a birdwatcher? Because when I was a little, probably my dad used to take me over by the River Lea where there was an old gravel pit that was filled in. He used to go round collecting bits of wood and stuff like that that he’d use. We used to run around and fish for tiddlers and stuff like that in the remains of the gravel pits.

You know, I’m sure that was one of the factors of why I got interested in wildlife. Because if you don’t experience it, you don’t know, do you? I mean, people do experience different things at different times in their lives. There will be adults who come in and think, “Oh my God, I’d like to be a bird watcher,” or, “I’d like to look at flowers.” But, you know, those things are often started when you’re a kid.

It’s something that you can be less aware of in an urban environment but you can have- I do have friends who live in the countryside and they’ve brought their kids up, and some of the kids are less interested in wildlife than I am. it depends what you like, doesn’t it?

Interviewer: Yes, and what introductions have made you-

Pete Lambert: Yes, but what you like is partly how you are and partly created by the environment in which you’re brought up, isn’t it? There’s also, I suppose, thinking about the aspect of people whose heritage has not been for a long while in London who’ve come here from another country.

I know that with some of the Caribbean people, you know, people who came from the Caribbean and their descendants, when you get talking to them, you find out that their parents and heritage they come from is a very much less urban one than the present one they’re in. So they talk to you about, “Yes, we fished. We swam in the water. We did this with the animals,” and stuff like that.

So there will be that aspect. Some of the children coming here whose experience is entirely urban, it could connect up with their own heritage and their parents saying, “Oh yes, we had this-” a lot of the people who fish here now are from Eastern Europe. You can see it, you know, \_\_\_[0:42:43]. That’s because that’s what they did and the nearest they can get to living in the countryside and fishing in \_\_\_ is to come here. Or, I’m guessing.

Interviewer: So this space offers an opportunity as a, sort of, pathway back to that connection to that identity?

Pete Lambert: Yes. And there’ll be loads of things like that, you know. If you get people who are working here professionally involved and [so on 0:43:07] with the local people and follow up what comes out of that. \_\_\_.

Interviewer: Do you think with this being a nature reserve, that there is a risk- because often nature reserves are perceived as quite middle class, quite a white endeavour. Do you think there’s a risk, particularly given the demographic of the local community, that this won’t be perceived as theirs?

Pete Lambert: There is that. I think the way you get round that is through trying to get the kids in and then working with the families of kids. I mean, that’s what we did with the play scheme. We started the play scheme and all the people involved with the organising of it, I think all of them were white. I think I was the only one who was professionally middle class. By birth I’m working class.

But the majority of the kids who used the project were black, from the Caribbean mostly, \_\_\_[0:44:16]. In a short while, we started employing their bigger brothers and sisters to be workers on the site. Then that changes the dynamic of it all. You have to have people running it who can see through those eyes. I don’t know if that’s \_\_\_[0:44:38]. I mean, you can be middle class to be able to do that.

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: You can be publically school educated and be able to do it. But it often is easier to do if you are part of that community. That’s why I think the volunteering aspect is very important and trying to involve those sort of people. The big time is when the parents have small kids, because they’re really concerned about the kids, all of them are. You know, people do that.

You go on things where the parents go out on the school trips when the kids are in their first year of school, and you can [sit on that 0:45:16] and you can see the difference. You can see difference between the teachers and the parents. But obviously you will need quite a careful [hand 0:45:27] because of all the different communities that are involved.

When I was doing all that \_\_\_ mainly with people from the Caribbean, but nowadays, you know, it’s people from (audio buzzing 0:45:38-0:45:43) handle the interaction with those different communities. But, you know, it’s not difficult to do. There are lots of organisations, aren’t there? There’s already shops. You can go in Polish food shops (audio buzzing 0:45:54-0:46:00). You still don’t get many people who can be described as black coming in here. You know, it’s something that they may need [a bit of a hand with 0:46:11].

Interviewer: Yes. Do you know why that is?

Pete Lambert: I don’t know, it’s an odd one. As I say to you, my daughter-in-law’s parents were born in British Guiana, and I’ve spoken to them in the past about (audio buzzing 0:46:28-0:46:33) little country towns, they came from.

But I suppose, you know, you come here and you come here because you want to work and you want to get money and you want a good life for your children. That becomes it, doesn’t it? I think projects like this could be good at bringing that out, if you can. But it’s a hard life doing that, coming here (audio buzzing 0:46:56-0:46:58) her mum and dad, they both \_\_\_[0:46:59] full time all the time. She (audio buzzing 0:47:01-0:47:08) parents were there at home and she came home, somebody else was looking after her. So, you know, there’s that aspect. They have less time.

(Audio buzzing 0:47:16-0:47:22) that would be one way you might be able to do that. But it’s a different aspect- that is a different sort of thing than what usually people think of as a nature reserve, you know.

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: The people you \_\_\_[0:47:37] a nature reserve would be thinking of a nature reserve. It depends a lot on thinking about how you do that and you get those sort of people involved. Again, if you can’t get it professionally, then professionals have to find voluntary people who know how to make those connections and have those networks at their fingertips.

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: But you [know this anyway 0:48:03].

Interviewer: That really addresses some of my questions around barriers.

Pete Lambert: And the usual ramble that I do when I get going, yes.

Interviewer: No, that is important, actually. That addressed many of my questions around some of the barriers that local communities might find in terms of engaging with the site.

Pete Lambert: I mean, there is the general issue of- for ordinary working class people who I still think of myself as, apart from what’s in my head, who live in these communities that, you know, all organisations are seen as ‘them’. “Why are they not cleaning the roads properly?” “Why are they doing this?” “Why do they make these rules?”

I don’t know if that’s so if you were born into a middle class household, whatever that means. But it’s certainly true in a working class household and I think, also, for most of the people who come here as immigrants, who regardless of what class they might have been in other countries, are here, they are working class in that sense. So it will always be seen that way, just like schools are. All things are.

That to me is the nature of being working class, really. So that is always there. But it isn’t something that’s-

Interviewer: Around expectations.

Pete Lambert: It’s your view. It’s your view of the world. I mean, when I was a child and I wandered round, we weren’t bad children. We didn’t get in trouble with the police, my parents were never involved with the police, but if you saw a policeman you immediately froze and kept [calm 0:49:41].

Pete Lambert: They were the symbol of the authority, same as a school teacher. It’s the nature of things. I think it is different for people of different class. That’s why David Cameron was sent to a private school and he is who he is, to get those connections and that attitude, in my view, which is what you’re asking.

Interviewer: It is what I’m asking, exactly that, yes.

Pete Lambert: And that’s why I think, sort of, this being rooted in a working class community is a huge thing about this, to me. But then, that’s so with most of the reserves that are in London. But it’s not so true of the reserves which are outside. Rainham does quite a lot of work with local communities, or so I’m told. [Still 0:50:39], when I go round I never see many black faces, but that may be there aren’t many black faces out in that part of Havering, I think it is. They’re still all stuck in the centre.

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: Not all of them, because my daughter-in-law lives \_\_\_. She’s a professional. There is this aspect, I think, in any organisation, that what tends to happen is people who are \_\_\_[0:51:13] manipulating institutions have grown to be as well, who dominate, like you asked me to come and do this, you know, you could have asked Joe Bloggs who trundles round here every week \_\_\_ met.

Interviewer: No.

Pete Lambert: Somebody has to make a judgement on, “How representative is this point of view?”

Interviewer: That brings me very much onto pathways to engage in this space. Pathways to get your voice heard, ways to influence. I wonder what you think, what roots do you think there will be or have been?

Pete Lambert: Well, it could be none. I mean, I was interested- these sort of words change all the time, but in the ‘70s I was interested in the idea of community education. There was, for a while, the idea, “How would you employ people-” I didn’t manage to get a job, but I went for a couple, “To involve the community in the school?” It soon became clear, there are different ways that you can see that. Some of which are much more what I [would 0:52:35] view as radical involved in the local community and others which are much more in terms of, “Are some people in the local community using the facilities?”

So there’s that aspect, which could become dominant. And it will always tend to be, I think, because the people running the reserve, unless you have somebody with that specific brief, will see it as, “This is the nature reserve, we want to get people here enjoying nature.” The question about how you involve different communities in that is a different kettle of fish, really.

Pete Lambert: You know, there are tremendous opportunities but it might be quite hard to keep \_\_\_[0:53:19] people towards a normal nature reserve. \_\_\_\_ anything against nature reserves, but there are other aspects this could be.

Interviewer: Yes. I mean, you and I first met at the Friends of Walthamstow Wetlands meeting.

Pete Lambert: Did we? Yes.

Interviewer: So that is one route to, I guess, share your voice [crosstalk 0:53:50]. I guess my question, first and foremost, is why did you attend that? Why do you [long for that]?

Pete Lambert: Well, because my experience is if you don’t take opportunities to say what you think about a site then those won’t be expressed. They won’t be heard. They may be ignored even if you say it, but if you don’t say it, they can’t be acted on, can they?

I mean, the difficulties of Friends groups, in my experience- because I’ve been involved with different Friends groups, Friends of Castle Park, Friends of Tottenham Marshes, Friends of \_\_\_[0:54:29]. Not a lot of people have the time to put into them to do the basic hard graft that you need to do. There’s just a lot of work in doing those things, and people are always saying, “I’ve got too much to do. Can’t anybody else do it?” until they give it up because then

somebody else struggles to do it. So it’s a real difficulty. Sometimes I think people see, “Oh we’ll set up a Friends group.” If there are loads of local people who aren’t working every day who can put in the time, then you might be able to run them. But it’s harder in areas where most people are working full time. (Audio buzzing 0:55:14-0:55:21) Friends of Hampstead Heath, there’s probably no shortage of people \_\_\_[0:55:25] some of them have immediate access to David Cameron’s ear or something \_\_\_. So there’s all \_\_\_.

So I think there was a problem last time, wasn’t there? They set it up and I think David what’s-his-socks?

Interviewer: Mooney?

Pete Lambert: Yes. I think he set it up \_\_\_[0:55:45] he could set up an independent thing involving local people who could then speak and say something. Somebody took on the job of being secretary or facilitator or whatever, but it soon stopped. It is a lot of hard work \_\_\_[0:56:04].

So if you’re going to have that, I think it will need a lot of support from the professionals involved here. There are ways of doing that without taking away from them the power, but it needs some subtlety, which you don’t always have at the age that people are going to start [working 0:56:31] there, isn’t there? \_\_\_.

I don’t know whether the management is actually involved, because that’s different from the management, isn’t it? I don’t know if with the management they’re going to try and involve- You know, like with companies they have non-executive directors who theoretically have to represent other interests that are not involved with the shareholders and whatever. I think that, sort of, concept is a good one, but again, you know, \_\_\_[0:57:02] people can be involved.

I used to do that through Community Health Council in Haringey \_\_\_ on a hospital board. You bring a voice there which is otherwise not there, because everybody else has got jobs to do. There were some people who did those very good jobs and sorted out other aspects, but they’re limited, not many people can do that. So it might be quite useful to try and do that. It’d be a hard job to do.

Interviewer: What I think is particularly interesting about the Friends group is they obviously can’t be constituted here because they won’t have an opportunity to- because of the issues around it being an operational site and the control must always reside with the final answer, I guess, in terms of things like with the Rangers with the operational work that’s being [crosstalk 0:58:08]

Pete Lambert: Well, it’s control of what, isn’t it, really? Obviously they are in control of certain aspects of this site, but I understood that the management of the site in terms of wildlife was going to be entirely-

Interviewer: LWT.

Pete Lambert: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes, that’s right.

Pete Lambert: In that aspect, volunteers could be involved, couldn’t they?

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: The local people could be involved in that. There’s no reason why they couldn’t also be involved in Thames Water, you know. My view would be if they were controlled by the public then they could be people who were elected on to represent the local community [and 0:58:46] their voice, have a say in what they did. But that isn’t the view of private organisations \_\_\_, which is why I think it should be publically owned. Same old, same old.

Interviewer: Do you think it might affect the connectivity between different communities?

Pete Lambert: What do you mean by connectivity?

Interviewer: Just connections. Do you think people will forge new-

Pete Lambert: Yes, I suppose it could. I mean, there is a stereotype for example, I don’t know how much this is true, but we now call them ‘Muslim women’, don’t we? Somehow, as if their religion affects this rather than their ethnic and their heritage, but anyway, [the precedence 0:59:39] about Muslim women don’t speak English, don’t interact with the local community. As I say, I don’t know that’s- that to me is a paper stereotype, I don’t know what evidence there is for this.

But anyway, if there are people like that, then it could be that through working with the children and schools and whatever, there could be more interaction. You know, there are people whose origin is some sort of Asian origin down my road who speak to me and say, “Hello,” and pass the time of day. I don’t see that acting as a barrier.

People do tend to like what they’re comfortable with, don’t they? You’re comfortable mostly with people from your own background. As I do, I mean, when I lived in Norfolk for a while, one of the reasons for coming back was I was just so fed up with always being amongst people whose backgrounds were nothing like mine and, you know, we didn’t have anything in common.

So I presume that’s the same for \_\_\_[1:00:48] Muslim women \_\_\_ here, whatever origin she came from, that she may be more comfortable with people who share her heritage than she is with me. But, you know, obviously the more people mix, the easier this becomes.

The reason why you get things like tremendous votes for UKIP in obscure seaside areas, and you don’t in London (in fact, the Labour vote went up in London and the UKIP vote went down) is because in London you’re mixing all the time with these people. We don’t have time to keep saying, “Oh, what’s going to happen if these Africans are here?” Because they’ve been here since the ‘60s and most people, they were brought up with them.

My son is married to a woman whose parents came from a British Guiana, she was a friend of my daughter at school, that’s how he met her. You know, why did my daughter meet her? Because she was in the same class. That’s how it is. The parents didn’t have much to do with each other, but the kids did and that’s how it goes, really.

So I do think, you know, there are enormous opportunities there for doing that sort of thing.

Interviewer: For this to be a space of mixing?

Pete Lambert: Yes. \_\_\_[1:02:04] about everything, you know, you do that on the tube, you do it at work (audio buzzing 1:02:10-1:02:17).

I’ll tell you, when the Eastern Europeans first came here fishing, all the fishermen were telling me about, you know, “They’re bunking over the fence,” and, “They take the fish and they eat them and they cook them and (audio buzzing 1:02:32-1:02:36) and I don’t get that now, because they’ve all been standing next to these Poles and Lithuanians and Estonians, it’s not an issue for them anymore. They’re just people.

Interviewer: Yes, so those barriers have been broken down through the mixing over the years.

Pete Lambert: Yes. I mean, they aren’t barriers, really. I mean, obviously they are barriers in terms of language, but it’s about, “Well I’m not used to this. This is what I’m used to and these are different.” There’s a song by Peter Gabriel which has a wonderful line in it, “You’re not one of us. You’re not one of us.” I love that song because that is how we are. I mean, I can’t change it.

As I say, if I walk into a room of people like David Cameron and whatever, my feeling is, “You are not one of us.” \_\_\_[1:03:20] I can’t be there, really, because it upsets me so much. Obviously I’m \_\_\_ that position can kill you, because what else \_\_\_. It is how we are, I think. The more interaction we have with people, the more we say, “Well yes, they’re one of us.”

You’re, to an extent, not one of us because you’re an academic, but I’ve mixed with lots of- I’ve worked (audio buzzing 1:03:48-1:02:54) you’re more one of us to me now than you would be to my mum and dad. But people like my mum and dad who work in the clothing factories and paint, which is what they both did, you know, you are a (audio buzzing 1:04:09-1:04:14) academic background and you talk posh.

We use words, like you’ve been using in this, which I’m not sure what you mean, and they don’t know what you mean. So that’s there, that is part of life, isn’t it?

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: But the more interaction we have with people from these different backgrounds, heritages- heritage, I think, is a wonderful word, actually, because it sums it up beautifully. Rather than saying, you know, “You are Afro-Caribbean.”

My daughter-in-law is an Afro-Caribbean, my two granddaughters are Afro-Caribbean yet they were all born here. You know, my daughter-in-law is as British as my daughter is. They grew up together \_\_\_[1:04:58], but there is still a different heritage and it [affects] \_\_\_.

Interviewer: And presumably their perception of themselves and their sense of identity.

Pete Lambert: I mean, it’s not there at the beginning. At the beginning, they’re not aware of being black and white and whatever, are they? See, my two granddaughters, one of them has hair like mine and the other one has hair like her mum’s \_\_\_[1:05:25] crispy \_\_\_ what we used to call ‘negro hair’ when I was a boy.

Pete Lambert: Now, that isn’t something they’re aware of when they’re small. As they get older, they are aware of it. How they put all that together in terms of saying what their identity is, is something they have to grapple with as they get older, isn’t it?

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: One’s 13 and one’s 8, so for the 8-year-old it’s not an issue but for the 13-year-old it’s becoming an issue, I think.

Interviewer: I think, particularly for young girls, their hair is really quite pressing in terms of their identity.

Pete Lambert: Yes. Particularly in terms of people whose hair is, let’s say, Afro-Caribbean [crosstalk 1:06:09] jargon word. The whole issue about how that is their natural hair, but women generally spend all their time trying to make it different from that is, to me, something that really gets me worked up.

Pete Lambert: You have to be comfortable with what your body is. You may want to change it, but it’s a bit of a worry to me. But, you know, it’s their lives, not mine.

Interviewer: Yes. And I think they’re probably very influenced, aren’t they, as we all are by the cultures that surround us.

Pete Lambert: The images that are presented to us, which, of course, is what education should be all about. You know, making them aware of that and that they have the power to choose what they want to do. But there are different views to that.

\_\_\_[1:06:55] Muslims, for example. How can a religion be a description of people? I mean, it’s just nonsense. Do they go round and say, “This Christian man with [a beard],” here?

Interviewer: It’s just not a label that’s used, is it?

Pete Lambert: I mean, my beliefs aren’t who I am, necessarily. But anyway, I digress.

Interviewer: Two final questions.

Pete Lambert: [Crosstalk 1:07:19], I shall be here forever, otherwise.

Interviewer: I’m enjoying it. Are you warm enough? Are you okay?

Pete Lambert: Yes.

Interviewer: Activities and behaviours that are going to be formally encouraged, and those that will be discouraged, and how that’s going to be managed, I think.

Pete Lambert: I hadn’t thought about that at all. It’s quite an issue, because like with walking round Tottenham Marshes, they’ve got up signs, you see, because they don’t have any staff that can actually be there. So it’s a bare open space.

They put up signs saying ‘no barbecues’. Well, you know, all these- I haven’t seen them doing it but I’ve seen some of these Eastern European men who are over here living six to a house, three to a room, you can see it, can’t you? Walk down in the summer and there are two men sitting on their beds in, what to me, is their front room.

If it’s hot and they’re not working, then they want to go in the space, don’t they? It’s great to have a barbecue, we do it in our back gardens, they can’t. So there will be that aspect here. How you do that- because obviously just putting up a sign and then saying, “Don’t do it,” doesn’t work. Things like litter and beer cans and stuff, it doesn’t work.

Look at that kingfisher, to the left of it.

Interviewer: Oh yes.

Pete Lambert: It just dived in, caught a fish.

Interviewer: Yes.

Pete Lambert: Well, it came up with a fish in its beak, you can’t see it now. [Crosstalk 1:08:51].

Interviewer: Yes, I can see him.

Pete Lambert: It’s what I normally say to people, “You can see the kingfishers on here, but of course you have to sit still.”

Interviewer: \_\_\_ sit here and be interviewed by me.

Pete Lambert: So what were you saying?

Interviewer: Behaviours.

Pete Lambert: Yes. I mean, like the beer cans, the fishermen do leave a lot of beer cans. Not all of them, some of them take them away obviously. It will be an issue. Some people will come here and will take all their rubbish home but others won’t. So you need to provide something where they can get rid of them, really.

See, Lea Valley won’t do that. Lea Valley obviously doesn’t feel it has the money to have people to come and collect and empty these bins. They don’t provide any, so they chuck them in the dog mess bins or they just leave them on the floor. Then people moan.

You have to, sort of, manage the space so that either there are no opportunities to do that or there are opportunities to get rid of that stuff. It’s no good saying, “People shouldn’t do this.” That’s what everybody’s doing. Well, a large proportion of people are doing.

Interviewer: Yes, okay. I think my final question was (audio buzzing 1:10:17) a memory or a thought that best sums up your experience here or maybe one that has been particularly striking for you.

Pete Lambert: Birdwatchers have different, sort of, things that excite them about birdwatching. I am notorious for this, you can ask other people-

[End of BIRDPL 16.2.16P1] [Start of BIRDPL 16.2.16P2]

Pete Lambert: Where are we again? So, memories, yes. What I like to do is walk round the same route every time I come, record the birds that are here. I mean, go home and write it up and all that sort of thing, you know, so you’ve got records and you can see what’s happening.

Sorry, I’m just trying to work out if that was a \_\_\_[0:00:24] coming but I don’t think it was. What I like is something different and unusual. So the memories are that I’m \_\_\_ walking round the West Warwick, and I’ve done that every week for years and years and years. One time I walked up the slope and two heron-like birds flew up, one of which was darker looking than the other. I thought, “Oh my God, this could be a purple heron,” which I’d never seen in my life. And it was.

There’s another time when I was walking round here and I looked at the island on the East Warwick, as I normally do, nothing sitting on it, unusual. Went for a walk round the West Warwick, there was a thunderstorm. I got soaking wet because there’s no shelter round there. Came back up to the West Warwick and there’s a large white lump on the island. “That’s not a mute swan, \_\_\_[0:01:19] it’s a spoonbill. \_\_\_.”

So, you know, it’s the excitement of those memories. So that’s the sort of thing that I remember but it doesn’t mean that I don’t enjoy just walking round here when there’s nothing in particular- because I don’t \_\_\_.[0:01:41].

Interviewer: Just as an aside, I guess, I’ve spoken to a range of people who collect information as they go along. I wonder if there’s a way to share that with other users who maybe don’t get the chance to come so regularly, or don’t have that expertise.

Pete Lambert: I mean, there are ways. That’s why people do all these blogs and things and, you know, people write what they’ve seen and send it round to other people by emails or whatever. The difficulty is, this all takes time. So I don’t tend to do that.

There’s been articles in the British Birds magazine about, “What to do with my old records?” I have 30 A4, sort of, hardback books of notes over the years, you know, which is useful to me because I can look in and see, but at some stage I’ll be dead and I don’t know what happens to that.

Interviewer: But that’s a phenomenal, sort of, ecological record that needs to be captured.

Pete Lambert: But it’s hard because the LNHS has this problem all the time. You know, theoretically bodies like the London Natural History Society should be collecting those as people die and having them available for people to- if you ask our librarian he will say, “I don’t have any room. I’ve got nowhere I can store these things.”

Interviewer: But can they be archived?

Pete Lambert: It will be the same for libraries, wouldn’t it?

Interviewer: Digital archives?

Pete Lambert: Well, they are talking about digitally archiving some of our printed copies of reports and stuff like that, but whether you could do that with handwritten notes, mine are all handwritten.

Interviewer: So you’d need those to be transcribed.

Pete Lambert: You might need them transcribed unless you could do optical character recognition, is it, or something? \_\_\_[0:03:32] page, I don’t know. But they’re all in hard-bound things. So you’d probably first of all have to- well, perhaps you can scan them into a computer these days and then you might be able to with computer software. I’ve been told it’s not very good on that.

Interviewer: Or it’s an incredibly time-thirsty job for someone, yes, to sit down and go through them and capture that record. Right, I think they were all my questions.

Pete Lambert: Good, it’s enough to be getting on with.

END AUDIO

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