Commercial estuary uses have shaped settlement patterns in the south east. The Thames provides a focal point for development and regeneration and a setting for port facilities and other river industries

Air pollution has an impact on everyone living and working in London. The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee published a report that put air pollution as the contributor to as many as 50,000 deaths per year. In London, around 4,300 deaths per year are caused by exposure to $PM_{2.5}$. The economic cost of the health impacts from poor air quality could as high as £2 billion. Reductions in emissions and exposure will generate significant savings in health budgets and are worth investing in purely on the basis of preventative health care. A green (see Biodiversity) and clean river environment creates a healthier and more enjoyable recreation experience

In London, levels of PM_{10} and NO_2 continue to exceed the national air quality standards. Road transport is the largest source of both.

Creating sustainable passenger and freight movements on the river could significantly reduce traffic on a congested road system. This requires that goods and people can safely alight to shore from the estuary. However, wharfs have often been lost or fallen into disrepair, meaning that existing and future opportunities for the movement of passengers, goods and materials have been lost. This is unsustainable. Passengers, goods and materials have to be transported through the estuary area by road, and the reconstruction of facilities elsewhere in future is both expensive and likely to cause significant damage. Appropriate sites and adjoining land should be safeguarded for future port use. Where new infrastructure is required, it should use green infrastructure to enhance biodiversity (see Biodiversity).

The Port of London contributes significantly to economic activity. The Port of London Authority (PLA) handles over 50 million tonnes of cargo and adds £3.75 billion to the economy every year. An important part of the economic well-being of the Port, including the provision of passenger and freight movements, is to ensure that shipping channels are maintained, and where necessary, created. Maintenance dredging of channels that have suffered from siltation or capital dredging where a new channel is required, can result in changes to the physical processes of the estuarine regime, disturbance to archaeological resources and loss of marine and intertidal habitats. These conflicts can be reduced by joint working between interested parties

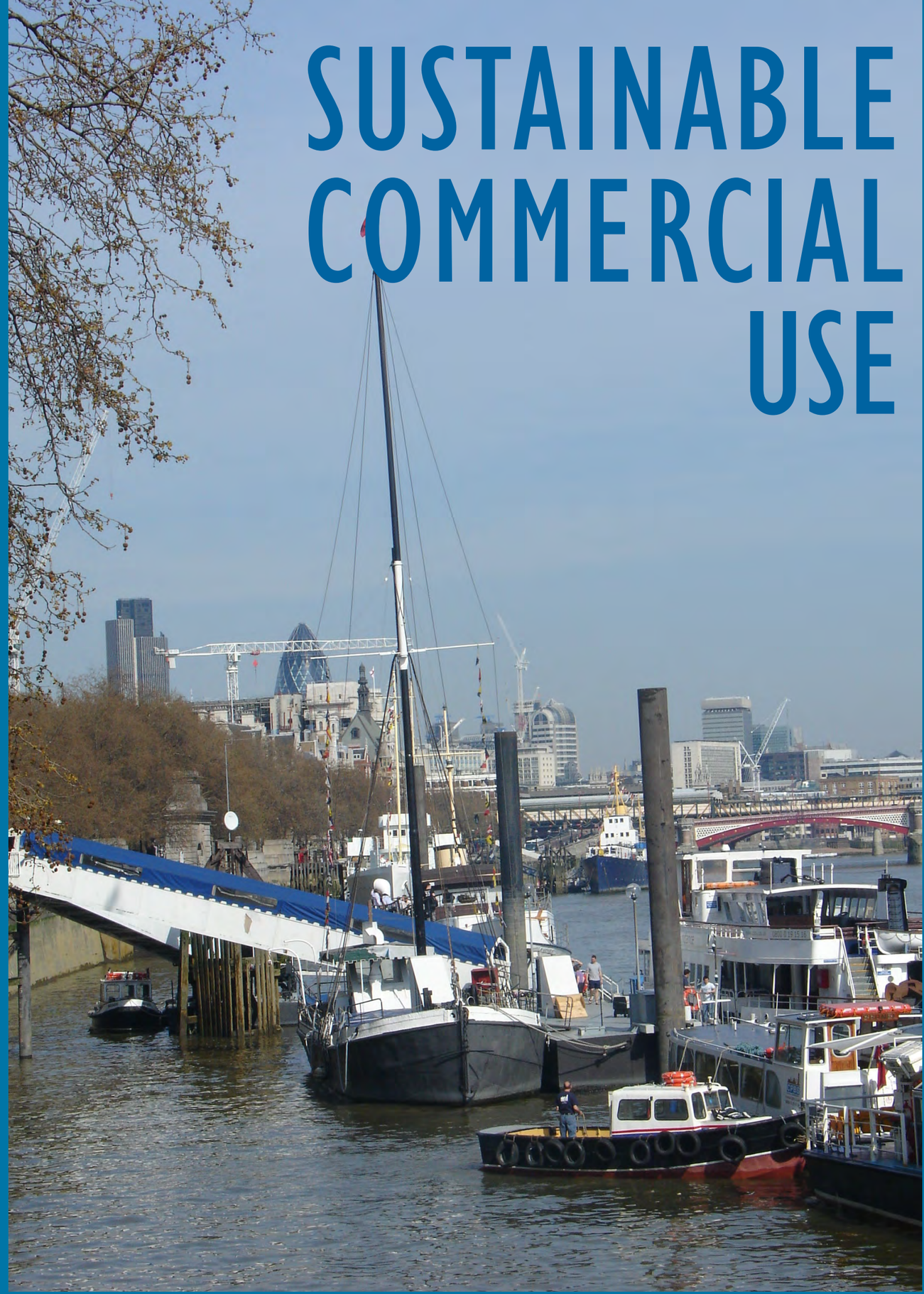
THAMES21

Thames Estuary Partnership

UCL Environment Institute

YOUR TIDAL THAMES

SUSTAINABLE COMMERCIAL USE



Timeline for Sustainable Commercial Use in Thames Strategy and Policy

‘Management Guidance for the Thames Estuary’

Sustainable Commercial use

“Ensure commercial activities continue to thrive and grown in harmony with the natural, heritage and recreation and landscape resources of the Estuary…”

Maximise the utilisation of the estuary as a transport corridor and promote accessible public transport interchanges (C1)

New riverside developments that do not require direct river access, should be set back from the riverside to enable the provision of public access between the development and the river (C2)

Promote the safeguarding of riverside land or areas with good navigational access for river-dependant activities (C3)

Maintain access channels serving the port, ensuring environmental impacts of dredging are minimised (C4 & 5)

‘Tidal Thames Habitat Action Plan’

Implement an environmentally responsible approach to dredging

To create new areas of riverine habitat using dredgings in suitable sites

‘Thames Strategy East’

Protect and enhance viable wharves, jetties, piers and associated infrastructure

Development proposals should protect and enhance the existing network of open spaces and their links, as well as essential river related infrastructure such as river related transport facilities (SG10)

Development should ensure that access is provided to the river at 150 metre intervals – a comfortable walking distance

1999

2002

‘Connecting with London’s nature’ - Mayor’s Biodiversity Strategy

Attractive green spaces reduce people’s need to travel further afield, thus reducing the use of cars. Under the GLA Act (1999) section 41(5, d), the Mayor is required to promote and encourage the use of the River Thames safely, in particular for transportation of freight and passengers

Development in the watercourse for river transport should be designed to minimise its impact on biodiversity

2003

‘State of the Thames Estuary’

The Thames Gateway Transport Agenda and the Blue Ribbon Network both recognise the Thames as an under-utilised resource for passenger and freight movement. The loss of piers/jetties and foreshore access restricts the potential for transportation provision

The PLA has a statutory duty to maintain designated depths of water in the navigable channels, jetties and berths

Sediment from dredgings could provide an opportunity for habitat creation to offset any loses due to development

2005

2008

2011

‘The London Plan: Spatial Development strategy for Greater London’

Navigable parts of the river should be prioritised for passenger and freight transport purposes. Reducing other forms of surface transport benefits climate change mitigation and improves quality of life (Policy 7.26, A)

Waterway infrastructure such as boatyards, moorings and jetties should be retained, improved and/or brought back into use (Policy 7.27, A, b, c)

Historic steps and slipways to the foreshore are often overlooked, yet are vital for enabling access (see Left)

‘Thames Strategy East’

At the Bugsby’s and Woolwich Reach, river infrastructure including the Woolwich Ferry, Royal Arsenal Pier, Queen Elizabeth II Pier and the steps and slipways will be enhanced

At the Greenwich and Blackwall Reach, opportunities to reinstate boat repair and maintenance operations at Ferry End Marine Slipway on the Isle of Dogs will be investigated

Examples of Delivery

Thames Landscape Strategy

At Syon (Reach 11) reinstatement of the Isleworth ferry from Kew to Brentford to the Grand Union Canal and Syon are ongoing although a boat has been purchased (Thames Wherry Trust)

At Richmond (Reach 9), the Castle Boathouses were rebuilt to provide boat storage and workshops on the ground floor with restaurant and residential above

At Brentford and Kew (Reach 12) the working character of the waterfront is conserved by safeguarding boatyard facilities around Thames Lock, Johnson’s Island and Lot’s Ait

At Teddington (Reach 6) the survival of the Swan Island boat repair facilities is an integral part of the river landscape and their replacement by uses not related to the river will be resisted

Improving air quality

In London, 4,300 deaths per year are caused by exposure to pollutants originating from road congestion. Shifting passenger and freight movements to the river could reduce the main source of pollution in London, and generate significant savings in health budgets

Historical resources

There are many remnant commercial and economic activities reliant on transport by water, harbours and docks, ship and boat yards. Promoting sustainable commercial use of the river can reinforce the local distinctiveness of the estuary

Landscape character

Education and Awareness

Recreation

Safeguarding historic steps and slipways can provide access to the Thames foreshore. This can create opportunities for greater appreciation of the landscape and cultural heritage. An important place for outdoor education and children’s play

Biodiversity

Commercial river use will have some negative impacts. Passenger boats can result in negative changes to the estuarine regime and can disturb archaeological resources. Litter trapped between moored boats can be unsightly and harmful to wildlife. However, Sustainable commercial use can have biodiversity benefits. Biodiversity can be incorporated into new river infrastructure and offsetting can lead to the creation of new habitats

Waste

4.5 million tonnes of excavated material from Crossrail is being used to raise land on Wallasea, creating hillocks and dips into which seawater will ebb and flow. The 1,500 acre reserve will be one of Euopre’s largest new wetland nature habitats

Crossrail, a new railway crossing London, is working with the PLA to maximise the use of river for transporting construction and excavated material and waste