



# REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2020-21



Thank you for all your support during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are delighted to have *Thames Venturer* and *Thames Discoverer* back on the water, making special time on the river possible once more!

“RTBP is a wonderful local resource for our whole community. The volunteers and staff are knowledgeable, excellent communicators, warm and friendly and clearly love what they do.”

Support group for adults with learning disabilities

# Review of the Year 2020-21

My formal review of the 2019-20 year in our last report ended with the full UK lockdown, announced in March 2020, but I also noted some post-year end events and concluded with what I described as “considerable cause for optimism for 2021”. As I now look back to 2020-21 and the period since then, I can safely say that that optimism was not misplaced.

In 2020-21, we faced very considerable challenges from staff changes, from pressure on all our sources of income and from a big reduction in our activities, both cruising and educational. Notwithstanding these challenges, we ended the 2020-21 year in a strong position.

We made selective use of the Government’s furlough scheme to manage staff costs, with staff furlough staggered over April and May 2020 to allow continuity of cover and completion of key tasks, a return to work for all in June 2020 and a further furlough period from July to mid-August 2020. We maintained strenuous efforts throughout the period to keep connected with our donors, client groups and sources of grant income. We kept in touch with our volunteers through the wonders of Zoom, with the AGM, crew supper and a quiz all held online.

Behind the scenes, a lot of work went into The Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service nomination process, preparation for a safe and effective return to activities in September (ultimately frustrated by another lockdown), induction of our new

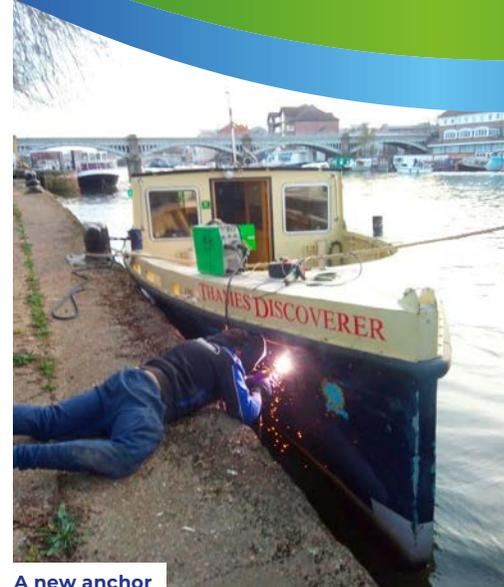
Skipper and Boat Manager, Gunnar Christensen, and later bringing Hannah Bottomley onboard as our new Education Coordinator.

Happily, the success of the vaccination programme and the general opening-up of society in recent months has allowed us to get well on the road back to normal operations. We all very much hope that this trend onward and upward will continue into 2022 and beyond.

The fact that, after these unprecedented events, we are able to look to the future with excitement and confidence is, in very large measure, due to the cheery and undaunted dedication, commitment and resilience of our staff, my fellow directors and our volunteers, and huge thanks are due to all of you, as well as to our members and Friends for their continuing invaluable support.

I would end with the award of The Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service, which was announced in early June this year. I think there can have been no better morale boost, after the challenges of 2020-21, for all of us who love and cherish this charity and what it achieves.

**Jon Chapman**  
Chair of Trustees



A new anchor



Autumn education day



Spring cleaning



Keeping things shipshape

“The Boat Project is a wonderful gift to isolated people, disabled people, and other members of our community longing for a breath of fresh air, to be in nature, and to enjoy the good companionship of volunteers.”

Support group for older people

## What we achieved

We aim to give people of all ages opportunities of experiencing river and waterways' environments to benefit their personal, social and educational development. We focus on children, young people, older people and those with disabilities, offering therapeutic cruises and residentials, cruises for isolated older people, as well as education days for primary schools. We offer a highly rewarding environment for local people to volunteer with us, including those in retirement. All our volunteers benefit from this active and stimulating form of volunteering.

In 2019-20, we provided 227 days on the river for 3,332 beneficiaries. We had a full calendar of bookings for 2020-21 and were ready for an equally busy year. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and series of lockdowns meant that, although we restarted for a limited period in the Autumn, we were only able to do 4 education days and 2 cruises before the end of 2020.

In July, we took part in the River Blessing with St Mary with St Alban church in Teddington, a much loved community event. A half marathon fundraiser alongside the river for RTBP trustee Bob Darke and supporter Phil Tauwhare, was the other “in person” event.

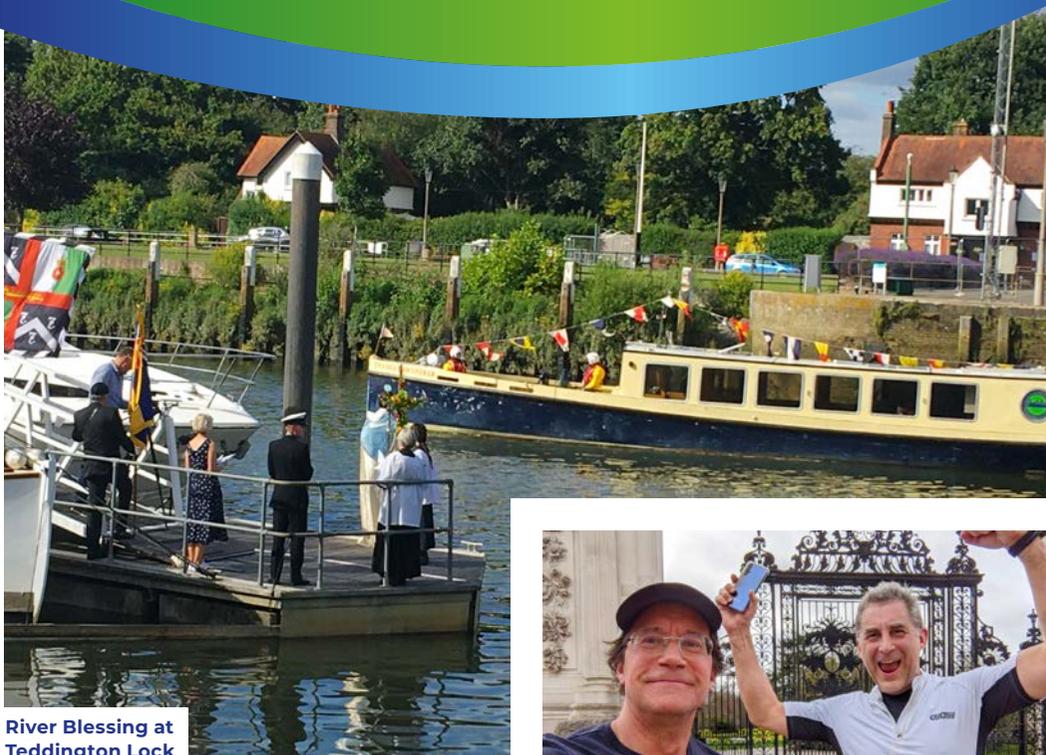
In June, our Operations Manager left the charity. We recruited an interim Boat Manager to be responsible for the safety

and maintenance of the boats. In December, our Education Co-ordinator left the charity. We deferred recruitment of a replacement until Spring 2021 to manage resources and costs.

With far fewer activities on the river in 2020, we focused on making positive changes and adaptations to our services.

### Activities included:

- staff working from home via the more flexible Office 365,
- increased communication with volunteers via email, WhatsApp, Zoom, phone calls,
- increased communication with Friends of RTBP and supporters via more frequent newsletters and updates,
- modifications to *Thames Discoverer* to add extra safety features: a new anchoring system and additional hand-rails for more secure access,
- work on moving our database to Filemaker to improve our systems,
- new risk assessments for our activities and revised operating procedures to be COVID-19 secure,
- volunteer training online and onboard our boats, to ensure the revised procedures were communicated and understood,
- digital content creation for our education days to share with schools to provide support for home learning,
- moving events online: AGM, Trustee meetings, Crew Supper, Quiz Night,
- we continued to recruit new volunteers.



River Blessing at Teddington Lock



Bob & Phil's half marathon



Autumn cruise



Christmas Crew Supper

“It would take a month of learning in the classroom to achieve what the children have learnt in one day on ‘School on the River’”

Year 5 teacher

# Financial Results

For the year ended 31st March 2021, the charity generated a surplus of £2,408. It was an extremely challenging time financially for the charity. Our fee income from client activities in 2019-20 was £61,403 and this normally represents c.30% of our income. In 2020-21, our fee income was just £1,480.

We managed our costs during the year mainly through a reduction in staff costs. This was due to our full-time Operations Manager leaving in June 2020 and our part-time Education Coordinator leaving in December 2020. Due to the lack of cruising activities, we covered the full-time role with an Interim Boat Manager one day a week for the rest of the financial year. Due to the lack of teaching opportunities, we deferred the recruitment of a new Education Coordinator until May 2021. Staff costs were also supported with contributions from the Government furlough scheme.

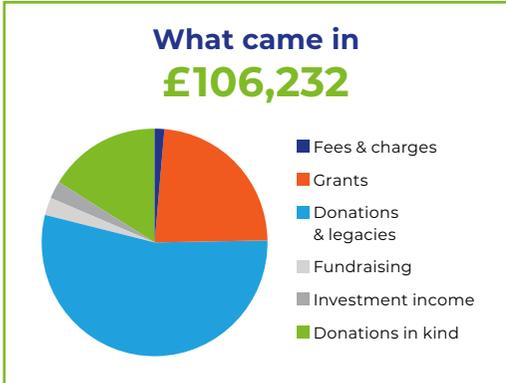
We made further cost savings by reducing our fundraising and marketing spends, running costs for the boats were lower due to fewer activities and we were very grateful to receive a rent reduction on our Teddington office space from Tamesis Club.

We were grateful for the support of funders through grants and donations which helped to keep the charity stable and ensure we were ready to restart once restrictions were lifted. This included support from The Hampton Fund,

Richmond Parish Lands Charity and Richmond Council.

At the end of the financial year, the Designated Development Fund (DDF) balance was £267,838. However, in time, this will reduce as further capital investment is required to maintain and improve the Canbury Wharf site in Kingston, where our boats are moored, in line with Kingston Council's wishes and to facilitate any potential upgrade to *Thames Venturer*. These improvements will allow the charity to increase the scope of its activities and thereby increase its client base.

2021-22 will be a challenging year as we restart our activities on the river. It will take time to regain momentum and rebuild to our pre-pandemic levels. We are working hard to be flexible to meet the changing needs of our client groups and to support them as they rebuild confidence. We expect to return to a more normal level of activities by 2022-23.



Autumn cruise



Teaching on deck



Farewell gifts for Peter



Spring sunshine at the dock



### Trustees

**Paul Barry**, Lead Trustee for Funding, HR Committee

**David Bell**, Lead Trustee for Engineering

**Jon Chapman**, Chair of Trustees, Lead Trustee for Safeguarding, HR Committee

**Bob Darke**, Vice Chair of Trustees, Lead Trustee for IT and Office Systems

**Chris Deavin**, HR Committee (co-opted January 2020)

**Jane Newman**, Lead Trustee for Education

**Prasad Shastri**, HR Committee (resigned February 2020)

**Stephen West**, Lead Trustee for Finance

**Steven Wibberley** (co-opted January 2020)

**Linda Varney**, Company Secretary

### Patrons

**Baroness Jane Campbell of Surbiton DBE**

**Anne Usher (née Dickens) MBE**

**Sir David Suchet CBE**

### Staff

**Pippa Butterfield**, Office Manager

**Gunnar Christensen**, Interim Boat Manager (joined June 2020)

**Kate Dodds**, Marketing and Fundraising Manager

**Peter Oldham**, Operations Manager and Skipper (left June 2020)

**Sophie Owsianka**, Environmental Education Coordinator (left December 2020)

### Photos:

John Frye, Kate Dodds, Gunnar Christensen, Jon Chapman

**“Opportunities for clients can be challenging to access, because of people’s abilities or disabilities, so it is very refreshing and inspiring to be involved with a charity which goes the extra mile.”**

**Support group for adults with learning disabilities**

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To view our full General Report and Financial Statements, visit

[www.thamesboatproject.org](http://www.thamesboatproject.org) OR call the office ☎ 020 8940 3509

[info@thamesboatproject.org](mailto:info@thamesboatproject.org)

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