



Graham Barham
Londoners for a Recreational Thames

January 25, 2016

Dear Mr. Barham,

It was a pleasure to speak with you concerning the Springbank Dam and its impact on water depth along the Thames River. During my career as a Landscape Architect in London I have completed over 40 projects that directly connect to the Thames River. These include the Blackburn Fountain, The London Prevost, Springbank Park, Storybook Gardens, The Cancer Survivor's Garden, The London Civic Garden Centre, Gibbons Park, The Children's Museum, The Thames Valley Bridge, Labatt Park, Eldon House and many other sites where the public interact with this beautiful and historic feature of our City. For most Londoners, their connection with the river mainly happens in warmer weather when public facilities are open and the temperatures are more conducive to being outside.

When designing sites along the river, we must take into consideration the fact that the water level in the Thames can be quite variable. During a hot dry summer, levels can drop so low that the river is barely a trickle, but immediately after a heavy rain it can rise dramatically. When the dam was in place these fluctuations were not as significant and the higher baseline water elevation provided a much better entry to the water. When levels are low the recreational potential for the river is diminished since access to the water becomes difficult. This is especially problematic for elderly or disabled people who are not able to climb down to the river bed and walk across the irregular surface to reach the water.

As part of the Back to the River initiative we are looking at ways to embrace the river and making it a vital part of our City. Providing opportunities to expand its recreational potential will make it more accessible to more people and allow a broader range of recreational opportunities.

As a landscape architect I certainly understand the ecological benefits of letting the river take its natural course. However, the section of the Thames that flows through our downtown area (that area mainly affected by the dam) should be assessed differently than those areas outside of the city where a more natural setting is entirely appropriate.

The tide has turned and people now see the core as the place to live. Making the Thames more attractive and functional will redefine the river, making it a real destination and an important part of being downtown.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ron Koudys'.

Ron Koudys
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O.A.L.A., C.S.L.A., A.S.L.A., C.L.D.