



Money pledged to clean London's 'damaged' rivers

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Money pledged to clean London's 'damaged' rivers

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Plans to clean up London's rivers have been given support with the announcement of more than £1.8bn investment from Thames Water, City Hall and Transport for London (TfL).

It follows Sir Sadiq Khan's [recently announced plans to "make rivers in London swimmable within 10 years"](#).

Around £1.8bn from Thames Water has been promised to tackle 26 sewage overflows on the Rivers Roding, Wandle, Lee and Brent, [despite the water company facing financial crises](#).

[Television naturalist Steve Backshall](#) told the BBC: "Thames Water has been the absolute pariah, public enemy number one when it comes to anything to do with sewage, but they are here, pledging actual money. It's a huge sign of hope."

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJsGZL-zb54>

Despite the announcement of money, Thames Water refused to speak to the BBC during an event to publicise the new investment.

When asked if the £1.8bn from the water company would ever actually materialise, the Mayor of London, Sir Sadiq Khan said: "We've had commitments from them that they've put that money aside so they can do this job."

"I think it's important Thames Water is responsible for some of the problems and cleaning up the mess as well."

"We are a city that for decades has seen damage and neglect of the River Thames, and the other 41 rivers and tributaries in London."

"We want Londoners to be able to access them and enjoy them, but also we've got to recognise our biodiversity and habitats need the rivers to be clean."

The Mayor has also pledged £7.15m from City Hall and TfL, to be used to prevent road runoff pollution into the rivers.

The money will also be used for rewilding and nature projects.

David Mooney, chief executive of London Wildlife Trust, said: "For too long, our rivers have been treated like open sewers, and this roundtable presents a crucial opportunity to change that."

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In February, Ofwat, the water regulator, announced it was investigating Thames Water after it admitted [it will not complete more than 100 environmental schemes funded by customers.](#)

The projects included upgrades to sewage treatment works and reducing wastewater spillages.

The regulator will consider whether the water firm has breached its licence.

In December the water firm [defended executive bonuses as the firm called for a hike in customer bills](#) to ensure its survival.

Bills will increase by around £17 for customers from 1 April.

Although Thames Water has promised £1.8bn towards improving the rivers, it simultaneously faces a huge financial crisis, and could enter special administration if [it does not get court approval for a restructuring plan.](#)

It is in about £16bn of debt and needs £3.3bn over the next five years to continue operating.

In a statement released via City Hall, Chris Weston, chief executive of Thames Water, said: "Like our customers, we care deeply about our rivers.

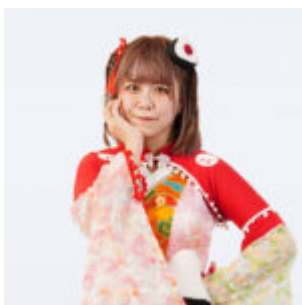
"Our sewage works upgrades, the Lee Tunnel and Thames Tideway Tunnel are already protecting the tidal Thames and reducing sewage discharges by 95%.

Mr Weston said an additional £20m fund had been launched for environment and community groups who work with the river networks.

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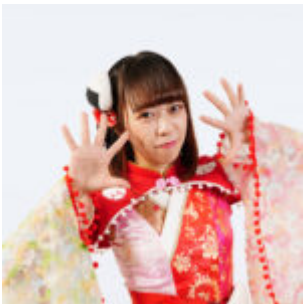
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Date Created

March 13, 2025

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