

News Release
11 November 2004

EXTENSION ON THE CARDS FOR RECORD-BREAKING RING MAIN

London's record-breaking water tunnel, the Thames Water Ring Main, is set to spread its wings to help keep up with growing demand in the capital.

On the tenth anniversary of the project's inauguration by HM The Queen (11 November 1994), Thames Water has revealed an outline £150 million plan to create two new feeder tunnels, boosting the company's ability to distribute supplies across the capital, particularly during periods of peak demand.

Completed ahead of schedule and under budget, the Ring Main is a 50-mile (80-km) loop, buried at an average depth of 130 feet (40 metres) below

London. With an average diameter of approximately eight feet (2.5 metres), it can carry more than 285 million gallons (1,300 million litres) each day, enough to fill the Albert Hall eight times.

The planned extensions will increase the area served by the Ring Main deeper into north east and south east London, significantly boosting Thames Water's ability to transfer large volumes of water into these areas.

In north London, Thames Water's plan is to construct a new tunnel connecting Coppermills Water Treatment Works in Walthamstow into the Ring Main via Stoke Newington and New River Head (Islington), or the Primrose Hill area. This project is pencilled in for completion by 2009.

South of the River Thames, a similar new spur would feed water from the Ring Main at Brixton down to an existing underground reservoir in Honor Oak. This tunnel's target completion date is 2010.

Both the new tunnels would be approximately three to four miles (five to six kilometres) long, with a combined capability of carrying over 110 million gallons (500 million litres) each day. As with construction of the original Ring Main, work would be completed by excavation machines, minimising disruption at street level.

Bill Alexander, Thames Water's Global CEO, who as Engineering Director was responsible for delivering the original Ring Main, said: "The Ring Main has served London superbly well, playing a key role in maintaining supplies to our customers in the capital, not least during the heatwave of August last year.

"Population growth and climate change, however, mean that now is no time to rest on our laurels. The likelihood of more frequent, hotter, drier summers, combined with the forecast of 800,000 more people living in London by 2016, means we have to plan ahead.

"The original Ring Main designs always incorporated the option of later extensions ? now is the time to make them a reality."

Funding for the proposed work is due to be finalised as part of the water industry Price Review, which will set customers' bills for the five years from 2005-2010.