



Schools' tapestries featuring the river in London were produced to mark 50 years of The Queen serving as Head of the Commonwealth, and show the exciting potential for the Thames Heritage Tapestry



# The Thames Heritage Tapestry

A major schools project to capture the history of the River Thames has recently been awarded a £50,000 grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund. By 2012 this will have created the longest tapestry in the world

An exciting and innovative new project has been announced by the Thames Heritage Trust which will enable schools to create tapestries that will show how the Thames has shaped and influenced its riverside landscapes and communities. Working with the Millennium Tapestry Company, the Trust has secured £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and is now contacting 240 schools – spread from the source right down to the estuary – with the aim of creating a unique record of Thames history, architecture, industry, nature, sport and recreation. The plan is that the tapestry will be completed by 2012, as one of the cultural components of the London Olympics.

Each school is being asked to complete a one square metre panel depicting aspects of the Thames in their area. Pupils will be supplied with carpet canvas and all the yarns, plus materials and implements needed to complete their panel, and trainer sessions will be held to provide the practical know-how needed for the

project. More than 6,500 metres of yarn will be used, equivalent to the entire length of the Thames from source to sea and back again.

**This imaginative project will mobilise thousands of children and their families to tell the ever-flowing tale that links thousands of communities alongside the River Thames**

The project aims to engage an estimated 50,000 children who will be encouraged to research and understand the impact of the river on life, work and the environment as well as getting involved in all stages of the artwork needed to complete the work.

Lizzie Owen, Chief Executive of The

## HOW CAN RTS MEMBERS HELP?

Paul Coleman, Chairman of The Thames Heritage Trust, says: "RTS members are very welcome to get involved, sharing their enthusiasm for the river with our younger generation." Here are a few suggestions, should you wish to help.

- RTS members may like to tell schools about the project – a list of those participating can be found on [www.thamesheritage.org.uk](http://www.thamesheritage.org.uk).
- Could you help share your knowledge of the Thames, or perhaps artistic or needlework skills? Either contact a school direct or speak to Lizzie Owen, project manager, on 01869 233165, email [thamestapestry@btinternet.com](mailto:thamestapestry@btinternet.com)
- The cost of providing equipment, implements, etc to each school will be more than £350. Can you or your business contacts help by sponsoring a school or two? Details are on the website.
- From the end of 2010, the tapestries will be displayed at eight public locations along the Thames. Hampton Court Palace will be one venue, but can you help find others or could you assist at one or more of these exhibitions?

Millennium Tapestry Company and project manager, has extensive experience of running large-scale art projects in schools and told *Thames Guardian*: "The Thames Heritage Tapestry project will be a totally joyful celebration of everything that makes the river so special. We can't wait to see the young people's work displayed during the London 2012 Olympiad."

The completed one metre panels will be mounted on wooden frames and displayed in their respective schools, before the whole tapestry is assembled at a number of venues, concluding in London to coincide with the Olympics. The full joined-up tapestry will measure 240 metres in length, making it more than three times the length of the world-famous Bayeux Tapestry. The longest tapestry in the world is the Apocalypse Tapestry which dates from the 14th century and depicts scenes from the Book of Revelations. This was originally 140 metres long but only 100 metres survive and are displayed in Angers, France.

*Thames Guardian* will be following the project over the coming months. 