

I enjoyed seeing your article on Philadelphia's forward thinking stormwater program Green City, Clean Waters. I have been working as a consultant to the Philadelphia Water Department on their stormwater programmes for over a decade, and have seen how a progressive group of water department visionaries have steered the city from a large tunnel solution to a green infrastructure approach to dealing with combined sewer overflows. I have been to London several times to discuss the applicability of a green stormwater approach to London's CSO problems. I have seen nothing to date that suggests that a green solution would be any more challenging than what we are dealing with in Philadelphia. Interestingly the scale of London's discharges are actually relatively small if compared to Philadelphia's and the Lee tunnel and treatment works upgrades will halve this problem, leaving an even smaller annual total CSO volume. It does not appear to me that sufficient studies have been performed to truly assess a green approach as a viable solution in London. There are many factors that favor a London green approach, rainfall patterns are ideal, there is adequate space (as solutions are being found in Philadelphia and New York in areas more impervious than London), there are no clear geologic constraints, and the systems being installed in Philadelphia clearly work. The environmental benefits in water and air quality, heat island reduction, aesthetic improvements to streetscapes, and property value increases associated with greening are now well documented. In fact, it was the overwhelming benefits of green when compared to the tunnel solution that was the deciding factor in choosing green over the tunnel. When a 4 billion pound solution to a CSO problem is proposed, one should expect a thorough study of the water quality in the Thames, and analysis and prioritisation of the water quality problems, an identification of all sources of pollutions, and then open negotiations on the best total solution to improving the aquatic environment of the river. I have little doubt that, if such a study were performed, like in Philadelphia, the tunnel solution would not fare well in a direct comparison with a green solutions.

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