

Regeneration of Battersea Power Station – effective management of Peregrine Falcons
London, United Kingdom
Battersea Power Station Development Company

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Temporary

Project overview

In September 2012 ownership of the 42-acre Grade II* listed Battersea Power Station site passed to the Malaysian consortium of S P Setia Berhad, Sime Darby Property and The Employees Provident Fund of Malaysia. The consortium appointed Battersea Power Station Development Company to undertake the delivery of an £8 billion mixed use regeneration masterplan, including a £750 million restoration of the Power Station and its four iconic chimneys.

Work is well underway on the restoration of the Power Station, with around 30 sub-contractors on site and a 3,000-strong workforce. The first chimney has already risen, with two further chimneys on schedule to be rebuilt by the close of 2016. The restoration of the Power Station building is scheduled to complete in 2020. Work is also underway on new link roads and bridges, which form a major new infrastructure project in their own right.

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

The Battersea Power Station site includes small areas of grassland (of low habitat and botanical value), grasslands and plant species typically associated with a pre-redevelopment industrial site. There are also points around the site where both immature and semi-mature trees are found.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

Peregrine Falcons and black redstarts nesting on the site are afforded the highest degree of legal protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The Peregrines were first seen in the Power Station in 2000 nesting on the outside of the North West wash tower



Adult Peregrine Falcon in flight (courtesy David Morrison)

(the square structure below each chimney) and are a key reason for its designation as a Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation (SBINC). Its designation as a SBINC is further strengthened by a presence of breeding black redstarts. Both species are included in the London Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The presence of the protected species meant that extensive engagement with Natural England and London Peregrines formed part of the planning for the site redevelopment. With respect to the peregrines it was agreed they would have a dedicated nesting tower as part of the redevelopment and would be monitored by David Morrison from London Peregrines.

The falcons were originally nesting on the outside of the north western wash tower (the square structure below each chimney), but it was necessary to sensitively relocate these birds into a custom built nesting tower to enable the redevelopment.

To make way for construction, a 'peregrine tower' with a new style nest box was erected in February 2013. Before the 2014 breeding season started, mitigation measures, with guidance from London Peregrines, Natural England and Wandsworth Council, were also put in place to deter nesting on The Power Station. These measures included closing off the Wash Towers to restrict access, mannequins placed at strategic spots and potential nest ledges made unsuitable. The falcons bred successfully in the tower and three juveniles fledged.

A falcon recovery plan was instigated and despite groundings, only one juvenile was taken (probably by a fox). London Peregrines confirmed that the mitigation measures put in place to deter the falcons from breeding on the Power Station in 2014 proved successful. The falcons continue to successfully use the nesting tower. Four chicks were fledged in 2015 and four were hatched this year (2016).



Custom built nesting tower (courtesy David Morrison)

A total of 27 chicks have fledged since 2000 including those chicks fledged in both the new and older tower (that stood on the western side where Phase 1 is now).

Living on a building site has given the birds new opportunities; the pair are often spotted using the tower cranes as perches to hunt pigeons.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

Further information

So that the falcons are managed appropriately under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) every proposal of work near the Tower, during the licence period (February to at least start of July), must consider the falcons. A Code of Practice covers this which applies to, and has been communicated to all teams present on site.

A dedicated Falcon Recovery Plan (downed bird procedure) has been developed and circulated to all contractors. The falcons are particularly vulnerable at the end of the nesting period when they start to fledge. To date; the procedure has been activated three times (twice in 2014 and once in 2016); following which the birds have recovered, flown back to the nest and successfully survived into adulthood. In each case the juveniles were caught **where they 'grounded', placed in a box and taken to a specially designed safe area up on the Power Station.** From here the adults then fed them.

In addition to the falcons; breeding black redstarts are present. Exclusion zones are present around the nest site and a specialist foraging habitat has been set aside for them and their dependent young.

Other species using the foraging areas include linnet, goldfinch, house sparrow, dunnoek, grey wagtail, blackbird, robin, wren, great and blue tit, kestrel, moorhen, coot, greylag and Egyptian geese, starling and pied wagtail. All are or have been annual breeders on site. The sheer diversity of species gives The Power Station a unique place in London construction sites.



Adult Peregrine Falcon feeding chick in custom built nesting tower in May 2016 (courtesy Battersea Power Station Development Company and David Morrison)

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Long time residents of Battersea Power Station, the Peregrine Falcons are very much part of our community. We feel privileged that we are able to follow these amazing birds and hope that we can continue to provide a habitat in which they can continue to breed and thrive.

Supporting information and photographs

Older nesting tower

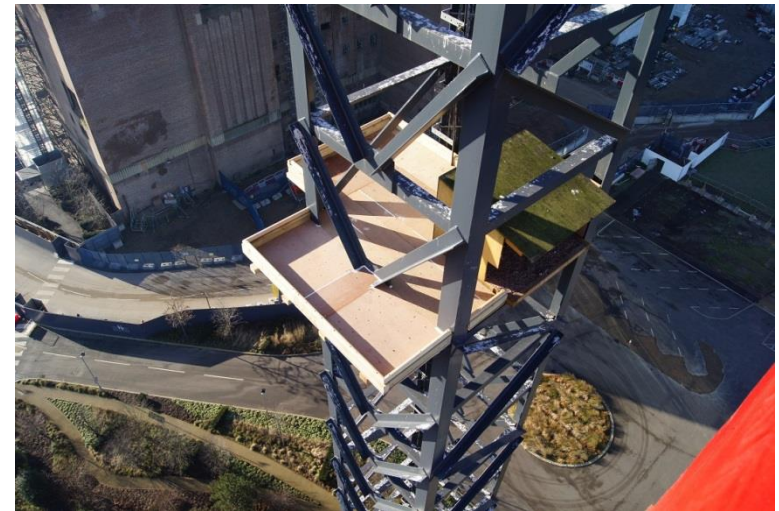
The older Tower was erected in January 2004 on the north western side and was de rigged on 24th January 2013 to make way for Phase 1. During this time it was only successful once in 2007 when the older pairing fledged 3 juveniles. It was 164feet/50 metres high and was fitted with the older style nest box.



Old tower and old nest box (courtesy David Morrison)

Custom built nesting tower

The 'new' tower was of an equivalent height to the old tower and was erected in the first week of February 2013, with a custom built nest box made by London Peregrines. It was accepted by the peregrines in 2014 and they have bred in it every year since. The pair stayed faithful to the tower, even when it was relocated 80 metres north east on 01 November 2015, again to make way for construction. To date broods in the new tower have been 2014 – 3 juveniles – 2015 – 4 juveniles and 2016 – 4 juveniles. Platforms have also been added to the nest box area to give the young more exercise space for building wing strength for when they fledge.



New tower, nest box and ledges (courtesy David Morrison)