



Princes Lakes
Heathrow Airport, Hillingdon, London
Heathrow Airport Ltd

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: *Biodiversity Legacy*

Project overview

Princes Lakes is a former watersports club purchased by Heathrow in 2012 to form part of the airports existing surface water run-off treatment process. The opportunity was recognised to bring the site into Heathrow's award winning biodiversity management system.

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

The site comprised approximately 60 ha of lakes, woodland, landscaped areas and a number of buildings. We carried out a baseline assessment of the site to assess the current ecological value of the site. Though containing a number of habitats and species the terrestrial habitats were dominated by short mown, improved amenity grassland. In the water bodies significant chemical dosing had occurred. Enhancement were identified, in particular we were concerned with the dominance of non-native invasive species across the site. As we were acquiring this site we wanted to improve the sites ecological value as well as ensure its operational importance.

What were the reasons behind this project ?

The purchase of the site was an operational decision to help improve Heathrow's extensive surface water treatment process. We also recognised the long-term potential that the site could have for local wildlife.. At the time of the acquisition we were managing over 100 ha of land for biodiversity enhancement for which we had received the Wildlife Trusts prestigious Biodiversity Benchmark Award. By implementing our system approach of ecological management and monitoring at Princes Lakes we were demonstrating a commitment to environmental enhancement that goes beyond Heathrow's normal business commitments.

Princes Lakes



The site is part of 170 hectares managed by heathrow
3,424 species found



Local importance
Princes Lakes is a part of the Bedford Lakes, site of Metropolitan Importance to wildlife.

Princes Lakes
The site contains a number of important habitats, woodlands, grasslands and lakes.
The site also contains a number of important species such as: bats, reptiles, Kingfisher, Bee Orchids and varieties of moth species.

Site management
Overseen by the biodiversity team, the site management seeks to enhance the ecological value of the site.
Actions include: coppicing, grassland cut and collect, pond management, ecological monitoring, planting and seeding.

Heathrow Hive Project
Heathrow started keeping managed hives in 2016 with over 30 hives and 1.5 million bees in 2018. The CNR contains four of these hives.

People involved
The biodiversity management at Heathrow is an holistic approach, overseen by Heathrow Engineering with support from specialist contractor, Ecology & Habitat Management Ltd. The management also engages people from Heathrow and the local community in volunteering activities.

Princes Lakes overview

Our 13 Biodiversity sites

- 1 Colne Valley
- 2 Orchard Farm
- 3 Twin Diverted Rivers
- 4 Robb's Nursery
- 5 Sprout Lane
- 6 Oaks Road
- 7 Mayfield Farm
- 8 Princes Lakes
- 9 Clockhouse Lane Pit
- 10 Two Bridges Farm
- 11 Cains Lane
- 12 Camp 4
- 13 Causeway Nature Reserve



Map of the Heathrow biodiversity sites

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Following the assessment we created a habitat management plan to enhance the habitats on site in line with local and regional Biodiversity Action plans. Actions carried out included;

- We created a new area of reedbed on a site of a former bathing area which contained very little of the way of emergent or bankside vegetation.
- Implementing of grassland management such as cut and collects and grazing with the help of Surrey Wildlife Trust livestock. This has created an improve grassland sward across the site on previously short mown lawn areas. Creating c.3.5 ha of floral rich meadows.
- Establishing a woodland management regime that seeks to improve the structural diversity of our wooded areas by using management techniques such as coppicing.
- We have erected a number of bat boxes, the site is an important habitat for bats, containing eight species, the bat boxes provide additional roosting habitat.
- We have actively controlled invasive species such as Floating Pennywort and Japanese Knotweed.

We also carried out a number community engagement activities over the years working with local schools, charities and scout groups as well as staff from the airport. These have included;

- We have organised educational visits with local schools and educational groups.
- The local scout troop has been on the site carrying out activities such re building a dilapidated bridge.
- Teams of Heathrow staff have been on site to carry out management activities such as scrub control.

We have developed a long term management and monitoring scheme at Princes Lake. Over the years we have seen an increase in certain species found at the site in particular the diversity of floral species. Species found on the site include; Nathusius Pipistrelle, Smew, Bee Orchid, Grass Snakes, Wasp Spider and Emerald Damselfly.



Princes lakes (L-R); sheep grazing to enhance grassland, view of lake habitats, created reedbed, active water treatment, bat boxes, woodland management.



Some of the species found at Princes Lakes.

Further information

The project at Princes Lakes was implemented via an existing biodiversity management system that Heathrow has invested in over the years. Heathrow Airport created water quality improvement infrastructure on site. We have improved the site for local wildlife creating a large area of ecologically diverse habitats. We have developed a holistic approach to biodiversity management. With the Heathrow Environment Team leading on biodiversity and being support by a specialist contractor; Ecology & Habitat Management Ltd (EHM). We have a full time Biodiversity management Team, who carry out the practical site management as well as community engagement activities.

The biodiversity enhancements at Princes Lakes are part of Heathrow's wider commitment to biodiversity which we promote on local and national media. The site is part of our award winning Biodiversity Benchmark accreditation and will continue to be managed for the longer term. This project didn't involve one or a few initiatives but an on-going programme of biodiversity enhancement implemented by a dedicated and qualified team.

Project Team

- Heathrow Airport Ltd- Environment Team
- Ecology and Habitat Management Ltd
- Scouts, Green Corridor, specialist ecologists

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The inspiration for this project came from the desire of the Environment team at Heathrow to manage our assets in a responsible way. We are driven by our corporate social responsibility who's business operation incorporates a large area of landholdings. We wanted to include the newly acquired operational areas within our Biodiversity Benchmark Award as this would help to set a standard for future land management and put wildlife conservation to the forefront. We are passionate about continuing to manage our sites to ensure biodiversity protection and enhancement in the long term.



Community engagement pictures :



Princes Lakes. Showing how Heathrow is managing their surface water treatment to provide a haven for local wildlife