

Woodberry Wetlands – urban wetland restoration North Hackney, London

Salix

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Large scale permanent

Project overview

Salix worked with London Wildlife Trust and the local community to develop the Woodberry Wetlands Project— particularly the Stoke Newington East Reservoir set in the very urban setting of North Hackney.

The site had faced ongoing threats and neglect, including the threat of sell off and being drained. The site was leaking and was closed to the public, although the surrounding flats had an excellent view of the site.

From the old reservoir we have created 17 acres of reed-fringed ponds, dykes and scrapes and the site will be opened to the public again.

Planting up of reed beds and the future management has involved 25 local volunteers as well as Wildlife Trust and Salix staff.

The site is an infrastructure project which is supporting an effective SuDS project from the new buildings around the site as well as dealing with a water quality issue. The total cost of the project was £2,000,000.



Photo: Woodbury wetlands skyline

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

The site has some wildlife, however silting up of the reservoir had resulted in algal blooms which are toxic to people and wildlife.

The poor oxygen levels would have impacted the invertebrates and therefore all the higher species resulting in ongoing degradation of the biodiversity value.

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

Section 106 Housing regeneration project as mitigation and the site was in poor condition with the reservoir leaking.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

De-silting areas of the reservoir meant that new reedbeds could be created using the “waste” product, this meant that the water quality around the rest of the site could be improved whilst creating a large area of new habitat.

Reed and plants have been encouraged to grow in the new reedbeds making this a very replicable project in terms of what people can do with silt and sediment waste.

The work is innovative in that it is habitat creation on a massive scale in the heart of London, what has been

created is a bucolic scene which people can thoroughly enjoy a short hop from the tube station.

The work is also innovative in that it's taking a problem and turning it into a solution which is good for wildlife.

Wetland habitats have been massively degraded over the centuries, often been seen in the past as a problem which needs draining. Recreating wetland habitats, especially margin habitats such as these, provide a rich resource for wildlife, improving habitat for invertebrates through to wildfowl.

The site has seen an overall biodiversity gain with water quality improvements, habitat creation and improved SuDS access for the new housing.

Stoke Newington East Reservoir is identified in the LBAP as a priority site for habitat enhancement with the bittern being identified as a priority species.

The local community have been very much involved in the project through the London Wildlife Trust and their engagement programme.

People across the site were consulted and took part in the days where the work



Photo: Chestnut and Hazel revetments in place

was explained, the Wildlife Trust has had a significant number of people ask to volunteer for the project with a core group who will be doing ongoing reed management on the site.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

Further information

Depth measurements were taken of the whole reservoir, these were mapped out.

An area of silt was dredged and then back filled behind hazel and chestnut revetments as well as Nicospan silt curtains to ensure that the silt was held back.

Dips and channels for fish fry and young breeding birds were created. The newly created reedbeds were planted up with locally sourced plants.

The site has only been newly finished and whilst there is anticipation that there will be significant biodiversity gain and surveys will be done on a regular basis.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

At Salix restoring habitats are a core of our philosophy, we use nature to come up with solutions for modern problems whether it's erosion, water quality or flooding.