

The Crown Estate London Ecology Masterplan London

The Crown Estate

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Most innovative

Project overview

As part of The Crown Estate's ecological master plan for its holdings in Regent Street and St James's, the organisation is creating a green corridor linking Regent's Park and St James's Park.

Plans include green roofs, brown roofs, green walls, pocket habitats, community gardens, street trees, window boxes and planters, as well as bird boxes, bat boxes and bee hives.

Through its estate-wide approach, The Crown Estate will create valuable habitats for wildlife and improve the experience for people living, working and visiting the area.

It has also kick started the 'Wild West End', a unique collaboration by London property owners to promote green infrastructure in the capital, supported by the Mayor of London, the London Wildlife Trust and Arup.

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

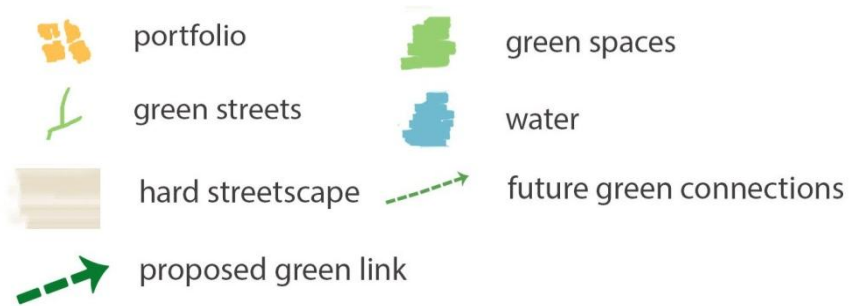


Photo: Concept legend

Baseline bird and bat surveys were undertaken, identifying the species currently present within and adjacent to the Masterplan area.

Sightings were recorded of many target different bird species, including the rare black redstart, blue tit, great tit, greenfinch, goldfinch, long tailed tit, pied wagtail, song thrush and wren.

Bat of several bat species spotted included the pipistrelle bat and Leisler's bat.

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

The original concept evolved from undertaking numerous BREEAM assessments within the central London portfolio, to accord with The Crown Estate's corporate

objectives to achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' and local policy planning objectives.

The Crown Estate partnered with Arup to develop an estate-wide approach to ecology, through a phase 1 habitat survey and an ecological master plan from 2013.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The London Ecology Masterplan which forms an integral part to Wild West End is the first city centre ecology project worldwide to be conceived and driven forward by an industry partnership of this sort, is also being supported by the Mayor of London, and the London Wildlife Trust as strategic partners.

The Ecology Masterplan goes beyond a plan for

biodiversity on individual projects, this looked at opportunities across the entire estate, highlighting weaknesses in the green corridor, which The Crown Estate could improve. Actions that are being undertaken are as follows:

- Target setting was key to the approach, with measurement used to guide implementation and monitor success in terms of benefits to biodiversity, the local environment and health and wellbeing.
- Defining green corridors as an area of significant green space (100m² or greater) with a maximum separation of 100m.
- Setting Key performance indicators for total area of green space established, and for observation of increases in species type and number over a defined period of time.
- Measuring the benefit of green spaces via specialist species survey and monitoring, as well as occupier satisfaction surveys. It will also explore impacts on voids, turnover and rental prices. At a project specific level, The Crown Estate intends to monitor roof and air temperatures and stormwater retention associated with green roofs.



Photo: Concept

- Exploring opportunities to engage with universities and statutory consultees, including the London Wildlife Trust (strategic partner) and others such as Natural England and the RSPB, to support and extend the learning from the monitoring process.
- Biodiversity measures include green roofs (extensive and intensive), brown roofs, green walls, pocket habitats, community gardens, street trees, window boxes, planters, bird boxes (generic and species-specific), bird feeders, bat boxes, bee hives and webcams in nest boxes.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

Further information

The ecological master plan was designed in accordance with national and local policies, targeting not only common species, such as shrubs, flowers, trees, invertebrates, bats and urban birds, but priority species for Central London, such as the black redstart, buttoned snout moth, peregrine falcon, house sparrow, stag beetle and mistletoe.

Plans and policies considered include the National Planning Policy Framework, London Plan, Westminster City Plan, Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy, London Biodiversity Action Plan and Westminster Biodiversity Action Plan.

In July 2015, The Crown Estate and other London property owners, Grosvenor Britain & Ireland, Shaftesbury, the Howard de Walden Estate and The Portland Estate, announced that they have formed a unique collaboration to promote green infrastructure in the capital, through an ecology project entitled 'Wild West End'.

The project, the first city centre ecology project worldwide to be conceived and driven forward by an industry partnership of this sort, is also being supported



Photo: Pocket habitats

by the Mayor of London and the London Wildlife Trust. Arup is providing technical advice and support to all the partners. Whilst The Crown Estate is set to kick start the Wild West End with its ecological master plan for Regent Street and St James's, other West End property businesses are working on their own master plans to expand the project even further.

Ultimately, the Wild West End will create an extensive network of green stepping stones which form connections between the large areas of parkland which are already key natural features of the overall environment in the West End.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The Crown Estate is guided by its values in everything it does – commercialism, integrity and stewardship. For centuries, The Crown Estate has owned and carefully managed almost all of London's Regent Street and around half of St James's.

To the north of The Crown Estate's Central London portfolio lies Regent's Park, and to the south west, Green Park and St James's Park.

This estate offers a unique opportunity to significantly enhance biodiversity, creating a green corridor that allows more species of flora and fauna to move through the urban fabric.