

Crane Meadows Restoration Programme
Heathrow, Bath Road, Hounslow
Mace Group and London Wildlife Trust

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Community Engagement Award

Project overview

Crane Meadows is a 13 hectare nature reserve at the eastern end of Heathrow Airport. The Meadows is a unique wildlife site in a heavily industrialised, urban landscape. However it was suffering from a lack of management and is not accessible to the public. The vision for the site is enhance its biodiversity value and open it for use by the local community.

Mace partnered with London Wildlife Trust (LWT) to restore the Meadows and open it to the public. Mace and our supply chain have undertaken conservation across the site and improved access, including upgrading an bridge, allowing the site to be opened to the public one year ahead of schedule.

Mace’s Aviation business unit and suppliers delivered the project at no cost to LWT, through £15,000 of direct funding and £29,000 of materials, design and construction services provided on a pro-bono basis.

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

The site was once a market garden before Heathrow’s arrival on the scene. The old fruit trees survive but were overwhelmed by overgrown brambles. The site was never accessible to the public and it was in an unfavourable state due to a lack of management and funds.

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

A Mace’s strategic objective is to create more green infrastructure both for biodiversity enhancement and for the benefit of local communities. Mace’s 5 year partnership with LWT combines their conservation skills with our construction expertise, willing supply chain and enthusiastic staff volunteers to accelerate LWTs conservation programme.



Crane Meadows – Two Mace staff harvesting seeds



Market Garden once dominated the area before the arrival of Heathrow

Mace has a large workforce at Heathrow who were keen to contribute to a local community engagement programme to enhance the lives of the people in the area we work. We chose to adopt Crane Meadows in 2016 to allow us to help LWT provide a long lasting legacy for the local community.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Since the ownership of the site passed to LWT in 2010, which was previously owned by BAA, Hillingdon and Hounslow Councils, the Trust delivered several restoration programmes. However, the site needed more manpower and effort, and the priority was to open the site to the local community.

A phased programme was set up to deliver the key biodiversity measure proposals throughout the year.

During the programme, Mace Heathrow staff contributed to improving the site, including:

- 1.5 hectares of relic orchard opened up and enhanced through thinning and pruning
- Approximately 1000m of river bank enhancements, including removal of Himalayan balsam and buddleia (invasive species). The reserve manager stated *“it’s the first time in many years that LWT had the resources for a major clearance.”*



Mace Heathrow Team on Volunteering Day

- Weekly monitoring of the cows and calves on site, part of the conservation grazing programme to restore areas of grassland
- 1200sqm of dense scrub and bramble cleared, enabling vehicle access and safe access to the bridge
- Existing structural bridge and handrails repaired to allow a secondary entrance to the nature reserve
- £5000 worth of wooden and metal kissing gates purchased and installed
- Seven skips of rubbish removed and old squatters huts removed

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The 13 hectare restoration programme helped to deliver regional BAP targets for Lowland Meadows and Pastures habitat. In the London Plan it sets out that the Trust should maintain 685 ha of habitat, and enhance 40ha of habitat by 2020. As a result of works being undertaken by Mace, the condition of the habitat has been improved, resulting in an improvement in biodiversity, with the associated increase in botanical diversity and subsequent invertebrate communities.

How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

The proximity of Crane Meadows to Heathrow Airport and Mace, LWT and Heathrow's aligned aims 'to create quality of environment' provided the perfect opportunity to make a difference in the area.

A large population lives locally who have limited access to nature locally will now be able to visit the site.

Mace and LWT's strategic approach allows us to target the best use of our resources to maximise the benefits for London's wildlife. Improved management through Mace volunteers has maximised the site's biodiversity potential and also will enable the local community to access a high quality natural environment within walking distance from their homes.

The restoration of Crane Meadows is an excellent example of collaboration between a charity, a construction company and its supply chain to use our complimentary skills and resources to achieve a valuable ecological and social outcome.

As contractors and clients the project has allowed our employees to gain meaningful understanding of natural spaces through first-hand experience, learn new conservation skills, boost morale and generate a sense of pride of leaving behind a valuable community and wildlife asset.



Mace team removing Invasive species along side river crane (Himalayan balsam and buddleia)

By combining our collective resources and skills, the Crane Meadows site is now ready to formally open to the local community and be rebranded as Huckerby's Meadows, one year ahead of schedule. Going forward, Mace will continue support LWT with the opening events, ongoing management and encouragement of the local community to make use of the reserve.



What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

We're committed to making a positive contribution to places that we work, to both the quality of the environment and the facilities for local people. We've delivered both with this project, and supported one of our long-term charity partners. Opening up the reserve so the local community can experience and enjoy London's wildlife has given us all a buzz.

Project undertaken by:



Mace Supplier Merson donated way marking signage