

2018 UK River Prize Finalist



Connswater Community Greenway (Belfast, Northern Ireland)



Urban rivers project

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The Connswater Community Greenway (CCG) Project has created a park through East Belfast, aiming to connect green areas and revitalise polluted river systems on the Connswater, Knock and Loop Rivers. Extreme, intense rainfall events in Northern Ireland in the last decade caused widespread flooding in east Belfast. This project looked at bringing rivers 'back to life', involving the community, to create accessible, safe parkland for recreation and activities.

The project included realignment of the Knock River involving moving the channel further into the park to improve access to the channel; as well as construction of river pathways, improving connectivity of the river to the surrounding landscape. Waste materials were reused or recycled wherever possible to reduce refuse. The project was completed in 2017, creating a vibrant, attractive, parkland for recreation, improving community welfare and encouraging healthier, active lifestyles with new play parks, sports pitches, and shrub and tree planting, plus £11m dedicate to flood protection for local properties. The area creates a landmark for the community to enjoy.

Community engagement was encouraged through training activities, educational resources, increasing environmental awareness and improving green sustainable transport routes such as 16km of cycle and pathway. Involving the local community instilled a sense of ownership, stewardship and inclusion.

The project has helped minimise flood risk, as well as habitat creation and increased biodiversity. Success of the project was monitored, and recorded a 14x return on economic investment. Ecologically, indicators have shown water quality and biodiversity improvements, and the project plans to continue monitoring these indicators. In the long term, CCG will manage the use and benefits of green spaces, manage a programme of physical activity, education, recreation and tourism in the area, as well as a volunteering programme, whilst Belfast City Council manage and maintain the work through a 40 year contract.

Project partners

- Connswater Community Greenway Trust
- Belfast City Council
- Department for Communities
- DfI Rivers
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency

