

River Ravensbourne at Cornmill Gardens

Techniques: Removing concrete channel, bank re-profiling

Project location: Lewisham, South East London
River: Ravensbourne
London Borough: Lewisham
Project end date: 2007
Length: Approx 100m
Upstream grid reference: TQ381757
Partners: Building Design Partnership (BDP), Lewisham Borough, Environment Agency



Concrete channel upstream of Cornmill Gardens

Site background

Before the regeneration of this site, this section of the Ravensbourne flowed through an area known as the Sundermead Estate. The river had been constrained within a narrow concrete channel as part of an historic flood defence scheme. This, together with high steel railings and overgrown vegetation had resulted in a neglected river possessing little ecological or local community interest. The river restoration scheme formed part of the 'Urban Renaissance in Lewisham' programme which aimed to create a new public open space within the Town Centre.

Objective

- To remove the river from its concrete banks and create an attractive public open space.

Design

Following the preparation of design proposals and a full public consultation, a masterplan was developed for the whole site. The concrete walls of the river were removed and replaced with more natural re-graded banks interspersed with steps and wooden platforms to improve river bank access. A puddle-clay liner was constructed to help restore flows. Gravels were introduced into the bed of the river. These were sized to ensure that they could move in the channel with respect to the flow conditions, thus creating natural habitat features for wildlife. Marginal areas were planted with native species such as Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Yellow flag Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) whilst a wildflower mix was sown along the banks. An overflow storage area which retains water during high flows was designed into the scheme by lowering an open space alongside the river.



River Ravensbourne following removal of concrete channel and provision of board walks

Subsequent Performance - RRC's views

Flood management within the channel should have been improved through a combination of making space for water by reprofiling the bank and creating additional storage on the floodplain. The area demonstrates how river restoration can be an integral part of a regeneration programme that helps to create a more attractive, diverse and accessible public open space with a natural river able to support a range of wildlife; mallards and moorhens have already been cited.



Provision of gravel/rock riffles within the channel



the River Restoration Centre Case Study Series

This site was last visited by RRC staff on 13th August 2008

Tel/fax: 01234 752979 Email: rrc@therrc.co.uk <http://www.therrc.co.uk>