

River Wandle at Watermeads Island

Techniques: Excavating ditches, water level control structures

Project location: Morden, South London

River: Wandle

County: London

Project end date: 2008

Length: Approx 500m

Cost: Unknown

Upstream grid reference: TQ273677

Partners: London Wildlife Trust's; National Trust; Crillion PLC; EA



Site background

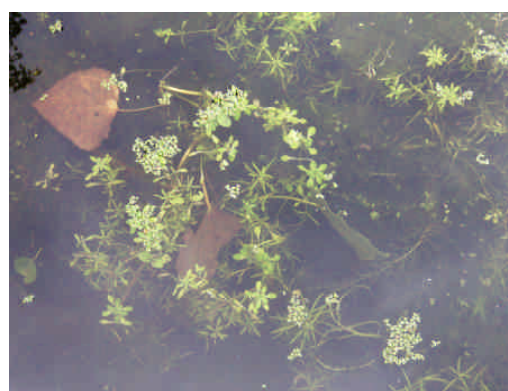
This site is an historic 13 acre wetland area now owned by the National Trust. The ditch network had become filled with sediment thus losing much of its biodiversity value. In 2007 Watermeads Island was identified by the London Water Vole Project as a potential site along the river Wandle for the reintroduction of water voles, a mammal protected under the Wildlife and Countryside act (1981) and UK priority BAP species.

Objectives

- Provide suitable habitat to enable the reintroduction of water voles.
- Provide recreational facilities at the lake to improve public access.

Design

Nine hundred metres of ditches were excavated primarily for water vole habitat. Ditches were constructed with steep earth banks and shelves, suitable for digging burrows. Six water level control structures were constructed within the excavated ditches to enable water levels to be controlled to encourage the development of a diverse wetland habitat and to ensure sufficient water is retained in the main river and the mill leet during times of drought. Angling platforms for disabled people were constructed on the edge of the mill pond to be stocked with native fish. The scheme also provided the opportunity to create a recreational facility through the provision of angling platforms along the edge of the old millpond.



Diverse range of in-channel vegetation

Site connectivity

Water voles require 1.5km of continuous connected habitat to thrive. The work at Watermeads Island is therefore part of a wider river Wandle strategy aimed at creating a sufficiently sized habitat network to enable these creatures to flourish. Once this habitat target is met, water voles will be released.



Newly excavated ditches provide suitable bank habitat for water vole

Subsequent Performance - RRC's views

Whilst the re-introduction of water voles has yet to take place, the work which has taken place at Watermeads Island is important in ensuring a network of habitat is created along the Wandle. The banks will provide an excellent habitat which should enable the species to thrive. The project is a good example of providing improved recreational facilities and access to a watercourse within a highly urban environment.



the River Restoration Centre Case Study Series

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

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