

Capital Woodlands Project

Trees for Cities



London is a bustling capital city better known for its shops, nightlife and cultural heritage than its green open spaces. But spread across the 625 square miles of urban area is a diverse natural environment of woodland, heath, wetlands, formal parks and gardens. Seven million trees are dotted around Greater London – a staggering 40 square miles of forest. The Capital Woodlands Project seeks to improve London’s woodlands for people and wildlife, by protecting woodland flora and fauna, and strengthening links between woodlands and communities - reminding residents that the natural world is not that far away.

objectives

- To raise awareness and appreciation of London’s woodlands and increase the public benefits they provide.
- To improve the management of, and public access to, London’s woodlands.
- To carry out important conservation work to enhance biodiversity at key sites across the capital.
- To demonstrate good practice by improving access, biodiversity, community and training.

actions

- Formation of the Capital Woodlands Partnership with a broad range of woodland expertise as part of the London Woodland Habitat Action Plan Group.
- Ten local woodlands selected as the focus of events and activities including six flagship sites: Scadbury Park (Bromley), Birch & Rowdown Woods (Croydon), Coldfall Wood (Haringey), Peabody Hill Wood (Lambeth), Morden Park (Merton) and Claybury Wood (Redbridge).
- Development of four pan-London work programmes: Community and Education; Woodland management; Woodland management training and Volunteering Community.
- Consultation was carried out to identify barriers that prevent people from using woodlands and possible solutions to encourage more people into the woods.
- Development of an Access Plan, Audience Development Plan and Conservation Management Plan and five-year Woodland Management Plans (2007-2012) for each flagship site.

achievements

Achievements for Year 1 include:

- Phase 1 of ‘A Tree and Woodland Spatial Framework for London’ enabling improved targeting of resources towards woodland regeneration.
- Training in woodland management skills for 12 long-term unemployed people from London with four successfully gaining employment to date.
- Over 100 community events and 200 volunteer conservation days at London’s woods.
- Schools’ workshop programme including Forest Schools at Morden Park.
- Live London’s Woods - a seasonal celebration of woodlands designed to encourage people to explore and discover their local woodlands on the Capital Woodlands website at www.treesforcities.org

background

In 1996 the London Biodiversity Partnership was set up to protect and enhance London's habitats and species in response to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. There are 31 Action Plans relating to 11 habitats, 12 species and 8 Generic Action Plans. The Capital Woodlands Project evolved from the common objectives of partners to fulfil the actions of the London Woodland Habitat Action Plan, deliver the London Tree and Woodland Framework (launched March 2005) and improve local woodlands for communities. Woodlands occupy 8% of land area in Greater London, but many of the woodlands are in need of urgent attention. Most are single storey (plantation woodland with the canopy at the same height), rather than a more natural multi-level structure beneficial for biodiversity, with little ground vegetation and poor access. The GLA recognised the need for urban woodland management. At the same time the Forestry Commission was keen to set up a pilot to work in an urban environment.

Capital Woodlands is a pan-London project with programmes aimed at providing community, education, training and volunteer opportunities across the city. Six flagship sites were selected to provide a focus for project events, activities and programmes; and opportunities to pilot new initiatives such as Forest Schools and woodland certification. The flagship sites have very different landscapes but are representative of the problems commonly faced by London's local woodlands: poor management and antisocial behaviour, fly-tipping and vandalism. As a result woodlands are frequently under-used by local residents through fear of encountering these problems. Through Capital Woodlands these flagship sites will now become exemplars of best practice in sustainable woodland management.

quotes

"London's green space is so valuable to local people as a retreat from the stresses of urban life, and we are thrilled to help maximise public use and appreciation of woodlands across the capital" Jane Stancliffe, Casework Manager for HLF in London.

" Woodlands are essential to the health and well being of all London's citizens - cleaning our air and minds, providing outdoor space for relaxation and sport, and enabling children to come face to face with nature and wildlife in the heart of the City. This project will give us resources to help manage and improve London's seven million trees, and to secure safer and better green spaces for its citizens."
Lord Clark, Chair, Forestry Commission.

funding

Total:	£1,466,412	London Borough of Croydon	£23,550
BTC	£93,500	London Borough of Haringey	£16,500
EWGS	£40,081	London Borough of Merton	£41,000
Forestry Commission	£25,000	London Borough of Redbridge	£21,250
Greater London Authority	£15,000	Natural England	£10,000
Heritage Lottery Fund (Heritage Grant Programme)	£999,500	Peabody Trust	£21,700
London Borough of Bromley	£20,187	Trees for Cities	£139,144

lessons learnt

- Monitoring and evaluation are important to measure against targets and retain benefits – keep a record of what's going on with quantitative and qualitative data.
- Think long-term and ensure that programmes will continue to have an effect beyond the life of the project.
- Partnership projects ensure a range of expertise within the steering group but are complex to manage – a Project Manager is essential.