

Increasing habitat area

River Quaggy, Lewisham

Background

The River Quaggy runs from Bromley in Kent to Lewisham in London, through built-up areas along most of its length. This has led to flooding, which used to be managed by 'boxing' the river into an underground concrete course, a practice that made it unsuitable for fish and freshwater invertebrates, and also destroyed floodplain meadows and riparian woodland. It is also no longer considered the best option for flood risk management.

Objective

The objective was to 'unbox' the Sutcliffe Park section of the river, create flood storage capacity to protect Lewisham Town Centre and revise the 'mown grass and lollipop trees' style of Sutcliffe Park.

Materials and Methods

Site

Sutcliffe Park comprises 20 ha of public open space in the Borough of Lewisham in southeast London.

Approach

The route of the river through Sutcliffe Park has been de-channelised and landformed into meanders. Landforming has also been used to create a variety of 'levels': the flood storage areas contain re-created wetland habitat, native trees have been planted in groups and avenues, upper levels have been interspersed with wildflower meadows and flatter play areas. Features for recreation such as boardwalks, bridges, footpaths and furniture made from Thames driftwood have been installed, and an outdoor classroom has been created.

Results

- A flood storage area has now been created that can hold up to 85 000 m³ of flood water. It protects 600 homes and businesses from flooding.
- The River Quaggy has become fully integrated into Sutcliffe Park, considered a public asset. The newly reinstated meanders and shallows of the River provide valuable habitat for wildlife such as freshwater invertebrates and damselflies.
- Via the River Quaggy, Sutcliffe Park also links to Chinbrook Meadows, another site where the river has been de-channelised and released back onto the floodplain

- The Borough of Lewisham has joined the QUERCUS (Quality Urban Environments for River Corridor Users and Stakeholders) Project, a partnership with Chester City Council and s-Hertogenbosch in The Netherlands.

Reference

Massini, P., Cook, R. and Robertshaw, E. (2005). *London's natural values: why an ecological approach to the design and management of greenspaces benefits us all*. English Nature (Natural England) and London Wildlife Trust, London.