



## 7.1 Ladywell Fields

Techniques:	Re-meandering, backwater and pond construction
Project end date:	September 2008
Length:	200m
Cost:	£400,000
Upstream grid reference:	TQ372737
Designer:	Building Design Partnership (BDP)
Contractor:	Fergal Contracting
Partners:	London Borough of Lewisham and Environment Agency

### Site background

The Ravensbourne River at Ladywell Fields formerly ran only along the edge of the park, had been artificially widened, its banks toe-boarded, whilst also hidden behind railings and dense vegetation. As a result it had become largely unnoticed by most park users and was considered to have little ecological value. The park itself lacked features and facilities and was under-used, and only 44% users felt safe there. Works were proposed as part of QUERCUS (Quality Urban Environments for River Corridor Users and Stakeholders), a partnership between the London Borough of Lewisham, Chester City Council and 's-Hertogenbosch part-funded through the EU's LIFE Environment Programme which aimed to enhance river corridors and establish them as attractive features of urban environments.

### Objectives

The main objective of the project was to re-meander the river through the centre of the park, increasing the profile of the river within the park, improve the quality of habitats for wildlife whilst encouraging a well used public open space which would be seen as an important local resource in order to create a busy and potentially self policing place;

### Design

A new meandering v-shaped channel was excavated through the centre of the park intending to divert around half of the river's flow. A backwater and a pond were also excavated adjoining the new meandering channel. Excavated earth material was re-used to create terraces and other landscape improvements which in some cases were delivered with help of members of the public.

A new entrance from Ladywell Road, a footbridge and new footpaths were constructed to improve accessibility for members of the public. Railings adjacent to the original channel and footpath were also removed.

### Subsequent performance<sup>15</sup>

Ladywell Fields has been transformed from its previously characterless and formless landscape into a diverse, popular and accessible public open space, with surveys indicating that the public's perception of the park in terms of recreational value and safety has improved.

Now 78% visitors feel safe, and use of the park has increased over two and a half times. The creation of a new gravel-bedded river channel through the centre of the park has also brought about significant improvements in biodiversity, with survey results indicating a near 100% increase in the number of species present in the park (in particular fishing birds), which are benefiting from the greater range of habitat types now present following the restoration works.



<sup>15</sup> Review of the scheme by the River Restoration Centre - 2009. Taken from London Rivers Restoration Action Plan <http://www.therrc.co.uk/lrap.php>





Before restoration



Immediately after restoration



Several years after restoration

## 7.2 Cornmill Gardens

Techniques:	Removing concrete channel, bank re-profiling
Project location:	Lewisham, South East London
Project end date:	2007
Length:	Approx 100m
Cost:	Approx £350,000
Upstream grid reference:	TQ381757
Designer:	Building Design Partnership (BDP),
Contractor:	Skanska
Partners:	London Borough of Lewisham and Environment Agency

### 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.

### Subsequent Performance<sup>16</sup>

Flood management within the channel should have been improved through a combination of making space for water by re-profiling the bank and creating additional storage on the floodplain. The area demonstrates how river restoration can be an integral part of a regeneration programme the 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.

### Awards

- 2008 Civic Trust Award
- 2008 Waterways Renaissance Awards (Commendation – Area based Regeneration Category)
- 2007 Landscape and Amenity Award (Best Streetscape Project)

<sup>16</sup> Review of the scheme by the River Restoration Centre - 2009. Taken from London Rivers Restoration Action Plan <http://www.therrc.co.uk/lrap.php>