

# Retain and improve existing water's edge and bankside habitats in modified watercourses

## Project Summary

**Title:** River Pinn Blue Ribbon Network Enhancements

**Location:** River Pinn, London Borough of Hillingdon, England

**Technique:** Restore historic watercourse; bankside scrub clearance

**Cost of technique:** ££

**Overall cost of scheme:** £££

**Benefits:** £££

**Dates:** 2008 - 2013

## Mitigation Measure(s)

Retain and improve existing water's edge and bankside habitats in modified watercourses

Sensitive techniques for managing vegetation (beds and banks)

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## How it was delivered

Delivered by: London Borough of Hillingdon, Big Green Fund, Section 106 Agreement, Heritage Lottery Fund

Partners: Groundwork Thames Valley, Friends of Eastcote House Gardens, Blue Sky Social Enterprise

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Tree clearance works daylighting the channel of the River Pinn at Long Meadow

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## Background / Issues

The Long Meadow reach of the River Pinn is part of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and consists of both semi-improved neutral grassland (managed by London Borough of Hillingdon as a hay meadow), and a strip of amenity grassland with a mosaic of copses, scattered trees and scrub alongside the River Pinn and High Road Eastcote. London Borough of Hillingdon in partnership with Groundwork Thames Valley and community groups / volunteers aimed to enhance the River Pinn corridor as a strategic river corridor and key part of London Borough of Hillingdon's Blue Ribbon Network. This entails river restoration as well as regular vegetation clearance, with the aim of achieving a number of biodiversity and environmental benefits. In particular, the project was intended to benefit spawning fish and freshwater invertebrates as well as enhance and create new riparian habitats. The project also

aimed to increase community involvement with the river by encouraging access and views of the channel and enabling environment education sessions.



Long Meadow Reach prior to works. Proposed habitat enhancements (relic backwater and river channel) indicated.

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## Step-by-step

A number of activities were undertaken as part of the scheme. Key to the management of beds and banks were:

### Restoration works

- Excavate part of the former channel of the River Pinn, before it was straightened in the 1930s, as a high level overflow.
- To excavate an old backwater to create a wetland habitat.

### Vegetation works

- Appropriate planting for wetland stabilisation, undertaken by volunteers.
- Selected tree works and scrub clearance along shaded river banks to allow more light into the area, undertaken by volunteers.



(1) River Pinn Volunteers pulling Himalayan balsam; (2) Scrub clearance around Old River Pinn relic channel; (3) Volunteers planting resistant elm trees (4) Tree clearance in Long Meadow

## Benefits

- The backwaters provide a new and important wetland area for amphibians, aquatic invertebrates and a refuge for spawning fish. In addition, the restored channel now provides a range of new habitats.
- Reprofiting the section of the river bank by the footbridge allows easy access for children to enjoy environmental education sessions organised by London Borough of Hillingdon officers and volunteers. This provides opportunities for local children to experience river habitat.
- By involving existing volunteer groups in the river restoration projects and monitoring they will learn both useful skills and an appreciation of the environment that will ensure the long term sustainability of the river to continue the success of the enhancement scheme.

## Lessons Learnt

- Bringing the community to the watercourse through restoration and community events can maximise the amount of benefits the local and wider community can gain from minimal works undertaken to the watercourse.
- Use of volunteers and using existent remnant channel can deliver environmental benefits at a low cost.

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