



**Enhancing our
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and operational
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In 2017/18, we invested around £500,000 on 33 different projects to improve biodiversity and access at our sites. Here are some examples of the work we've been carrying out at our nature reserves and operational sites over the past year:

Long Reach sewage treatment works.

We're working in partnership with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust on the 'Making a Buzz for the Coast' project, which aims to safeguard rare bee populations by creating and restoring habitat, and linking isolated populations by creating flower-rich habitats along the coast.

Our Long Reach sewage treatment works provides a habitat for the rare shrill carder bee. In 2017/18, we changed our grounds maintenance regime to allow pollen and nectar rich wildflowers to flourish, which provide a valuable food source for this struggling bee species and other declining pollinators. We've also installed knee-rail fencing and signage to subtly separate this new wildlife area.



Common Carder bee at Crossness nature reserve.

Beckton Creekside nature reserve.

Last year, we created a 'mini-beast area' where visitors can explore the wildlife and collect insects using a variety of simple techniques and equipment, before returning them to their natural habitats. New paths with seating areas have been created as well, to improve access around the site.

We've also created a new home for a pair of breeding kestrels. The kestrels had previously nested in a vent pipe on Beckton's sludge powered generator. At the end of the breeding season, we sealed the pipe off and provided them with a new dedicated nest box close to the previous nest, which the kestrels accepted and successfully bred in.



Kestrels at Beckton Creekside nature reserve.



- £500,000 invested on 33 projects in 2017/18.
- Improving biodiversity and access to wildlife at our sites.

Mogden sewage treatment works.

Last year trained volunteers caught, monitored and released 588 eels (a critically endangered species) in the fish pass on the Duke of Northumberland River, which runs through Mogden sewage treatment works. This was a joint project with Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and is running again in 2018/19.

Hogsmill nature reserve.

Recent improvements to the lagoons at Hogsmill nature reserve have included creating a new wetland scrape and a brand new community hub.

Wetland scrapes are shallow depressions with gently sloping edges, which hold water. They can provide important feeding areas for breeding wading birds because they support a wide variety of invertebrates.

The new community hub is an important addition to our successful programme of education visits at Hogsmill sewage treatment works. The hub will help us support more and more requests from local school and youth groups for visits, focusing on the natural environment in the wetlands with popular activities like pond-dipping and 'mini-beasting'.

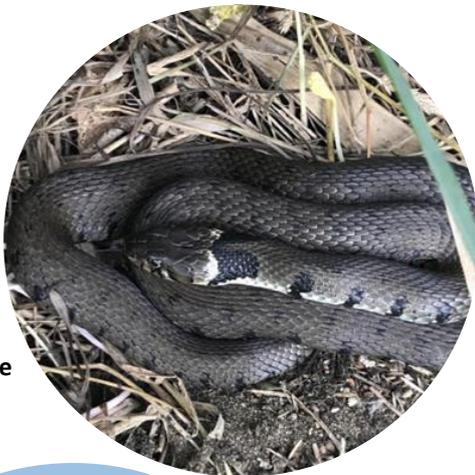


Eel (30cm) caught in the fish pass at Mogden STW.

Kempton nature reserve.

Last year we did lots of work to manage plants at Kempton, including New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) and willow, to prevent them from encroaching on the wetland's islands and discouraging ground-nesting birds.

Regular reptile surveys have been carried out by Friends of the nature reserve for many years, with frequent records of slow worms and grass snakes. The British Trust for Ornithology's Wetland Bird Survey and Bird-Ringing has continued, and we've also started making a bat cave by modifying a redundant inlet tower to turn it into suitable bat hibernacula.



Grass snake at Crossness nature reserve.



Bird ringing demonstration at the Beckton Creekside nature reserve.



Cetti's Warbler at Hogsmill nature reserve.

Sites in the Chilterns.

We've established a partnership with Butterfly Conservation, a charity devoted to saving butterflies, moths and their habitats. The partnership has already seen volunteers undertaking extensive work across three of our sites at Chinnor, Winchester Wood and Wendover Dean. Butterfly Conservation provides biodiversity training for our grounds maintenance teams, carries out surveys and food/plant assessments.

Two of our sites, where Butterfly Conservation has worked so far, may be able to support the rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly (*Hamearis lucina*), which is only found in England and whose numbers have declined rapidly in recent decades. We hope we can play a leading role in boosting this species' numbers.

Maple Lodge nature reserve.

Maple Lodge nature reserve is a 40 acre reserve consisting of lakes, marshland, woodland and hedgerows which we lease to the Maple Lodge Conservation Society. Last year, we created a new two-storey bird hide for visitors to use, as well as a storage facility for the society.

Fobney water treatment works.

In order to improve the hydrology of a wetland area at Fobney, we've dug new ditches and dropped the ground level of existing ditches to help retain water.



Marbled white butterfly on a Pyramidal Orchid.



The Environment Agency Thames Catchment team removing willow scrub.

Staines pumping station.

We've re-established a traditional orchard at Staines pumping station in Surrey by planting native apple trees. Traditional orchards are an important and often overlooked habitat, which support a wide range of flora and fauna.

Pinkhill nature reserve.

We've been reintroducing a number of aquatic plant species at Pinkhill nature reserve by creating new ponds. We've also held a number of corporate volunteer task days when employees from other businesses helped actively manage willow scrub.

Ecological monitoring of bats and moths has been undertaken, too. 'Bat nights', which involve evening walks to look and listen for bats, and 'moth mornings', which include identifying species in a moth trap have become regular events at the nature reserve. We've also invested in a people-carrier trailer for open day events at the nature reserve.