



River Ravensbourne, Ladywell Fields, Lewisham

"I've spent hours paddling in the meandering river with my young daughter. You would never know you were in Lewisham!"
Chris, local resident

The story so far

The river ran through a concrete channel in a dark, unloved corner of the park. Low light levels made the site unpopular with locals and limited the number of species which could live within and beside the water. This restoration project liberated the river from its old channel by meandering it back through the centre of the park; giving it more room to safely store flood water during rainy spells and creating more habitats for wildlife, including kingfishers and herons.

The river was restored by

- Providing a broader range of habitat by varying the riverbed depth with a new gravel-bed
- Removing railings and creating new access points to the river
- Creating small side channels called backwaters for fish to rest in
- Creating river terraces and meanders
- Installing new footpaths and improving park entrances

How has it helped wildlife?

- Surveys show a near 100% increase in number of species; particularly fishing birds.

How has it helped people?

- Before the restoration works, only 44% of visitors felt safe in the park. Now, 78% of visitors feel safe.
- Use of the park has more than doubled.

How does it help protect against flooding?

- Excavated material raised land levels meaning that the river now has the space to increase and decrease its flow during heavy rainfall without causing flooding elsewhere.

Partnership organisations

London Borough of Lewisham, EU's LIFE Environment fund, Environment Agency, Building Design Partnership, Arup, Fergal Contracting



AFTER – vegetation lines the river as it meanders through the park fields ©Bill Green Photography



BEFORE – The River Ravensbourne was entirely hidden from view prior to the restoration effort © Lewisham Council



Nearest Station: Ladywell