



STEERING GROUP MEETING 16 SEPTEMBER 2026





RICKMANSWORTH AQUADROME PROJECT STEERING GROUP MEETING

1. Project Overview
2. River Restoration along the River Colne
3. Refreshments and Networking
4. Update from the Colne Valley Regional Park
5. Steering Group Members Updates
6. Next Steps
7. Aquadrome Development Phase Video





1. Project Overview



Where we are....

- Public Engagement
 - 12 Feb – 17 March – online
 - 7 March – public drop in session
- Scientific studies and investigations
 - Hydrology
 - Ecology
 - Asbestos
- Design changes
 - Drawings / feedback / outcomes
- National Lottery Heritage Fund Feedback
 - Development Phase Review
 - Funding
- RIBA 4 and Permissions
 - Detailed Designs and Modelling
 - Planning Permission
 - EA FRAP





2. RIBA 3 Drawings and Changes



RIBA 3: Visitor Hub & Changing Places Toilet

Current Situation

The current arrival to the Aquadrome lack's identity, there are limited spaces to gather and interpretation is limited.

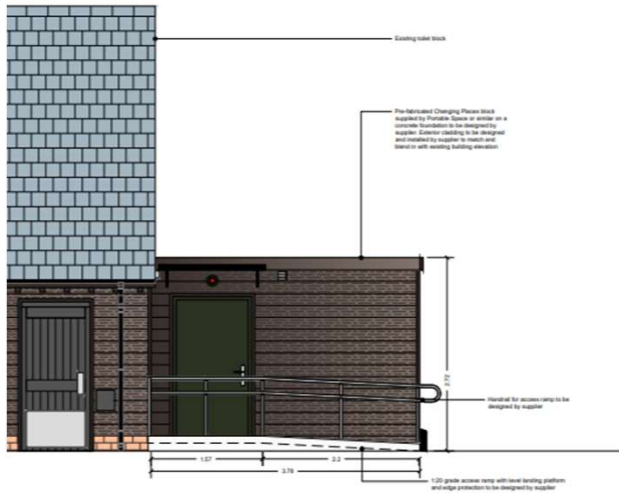
What the science says

Through the public engagement, 67% were very supportive/supportive of the proposed concept plans for the Visitor/Welcome Area. In addition to the main RIBA 2 engagement, 27% of respondents to the Accessibility Survey, identified that having accessible toilets / changing places toilet, would improve their experience of visiting the Aquadrome. Thousands of people with profound and multiple learning disability, as well as other disabilities that severely limit mobility, cannot use standard accessible toilets. These people may need equipment to help them or may need support from one or two carers to either get on the toilet or to have their continence pad changed. Without these, people often get changed on the floor, which is dangerous, unhygienic and undignified. By providing a Changing Places Toilet in the Aquadrome, it will make a dramatic difference to those people who visit the site and desperately need the facilities.

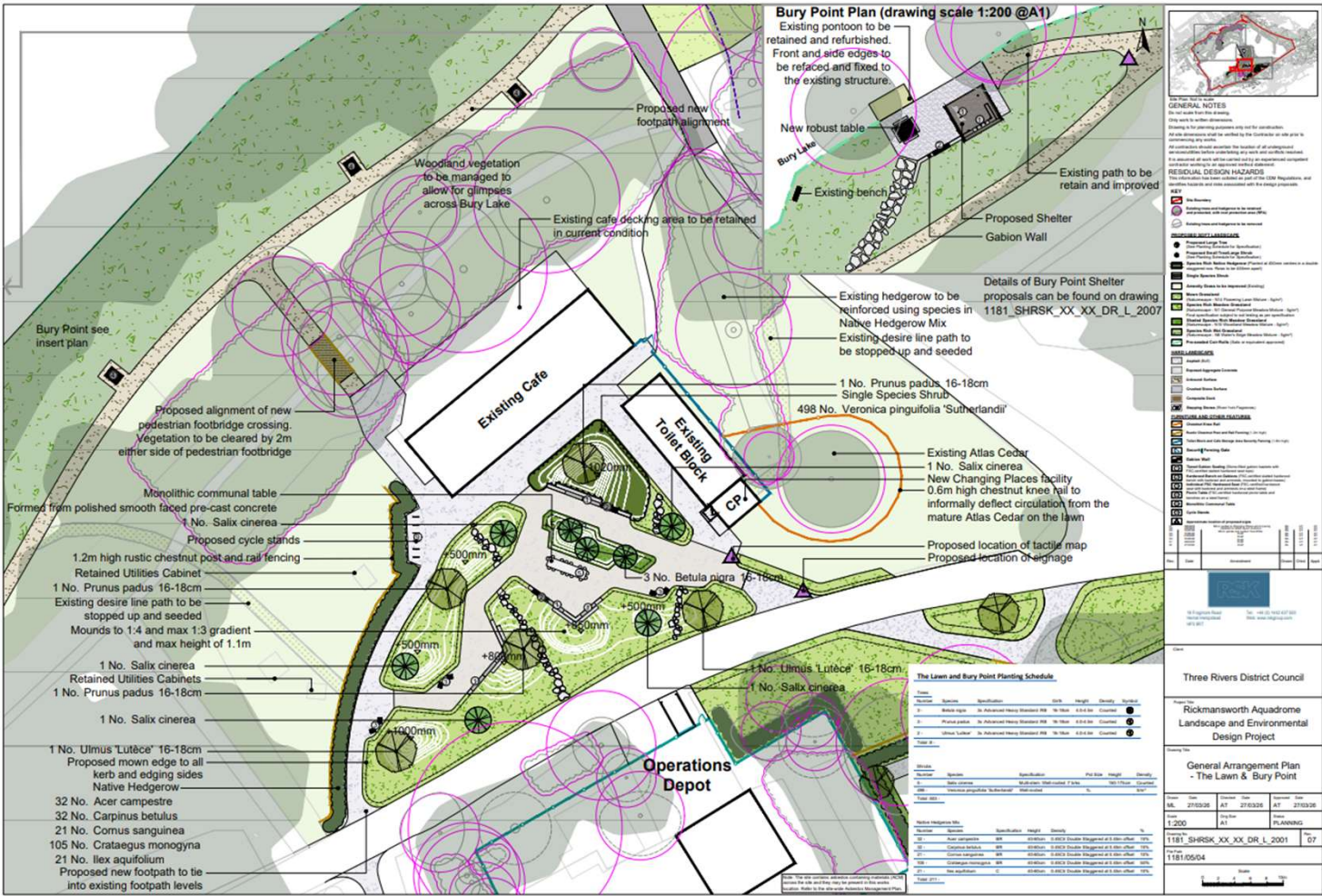
Design Outcome

As a result of the positive engagement, these proposals have been developed further to provide an extensively enhanced seating and welcome area, along with a new Changing Places Toilet.

The main visitor hub will provide a variety of individual and communal seating areas, with raised mounds for informal play and new planting to further enhance the biodiversity of the nature reserve. The layout of this space and the area behind the Café in the Park has been further developed to provide a single bridge over the ditch network and across the area of land next to the Lake. A new pathway will run from the main footpath into Bury Point, before exiting out onto the main avenue leading to Bury Lake Young Mariners. Along this pathway will also include new picnic benches and a bird viewing platform on Bury Lake.



RIBA 3: Visitor & Welcome Area



This proposal will be subject to the outcome of a planning application.

RIBA 3: Natural Play & Discovery Zone

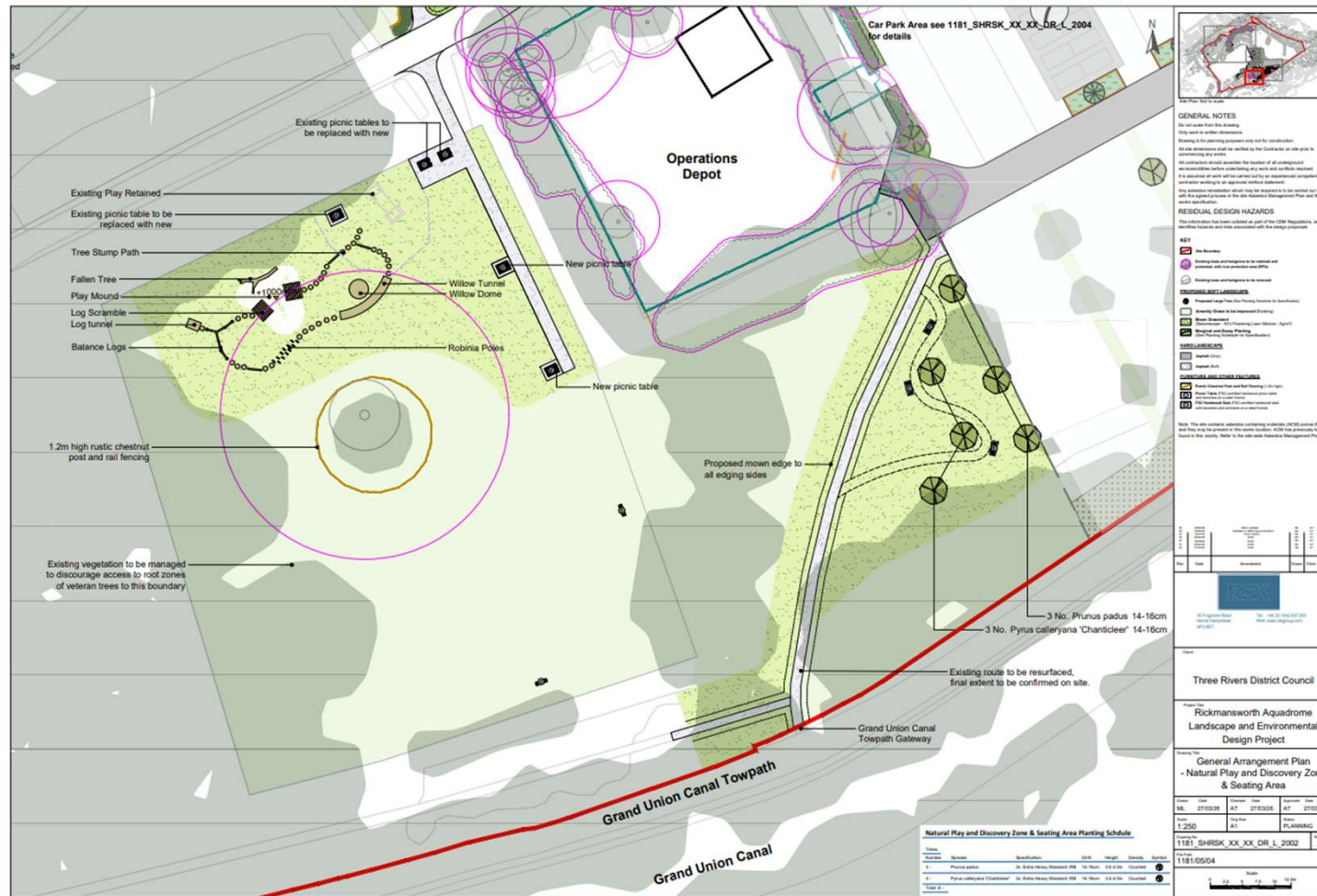
Current Situation	Within the dog-free picnic area there are limited opportunities for play and the large veteran oak trees are impacted due to impaction of their roots. There is also conflict surrounding dog behaviour to wildlife, fellow dogs and people.
What the science says	<u>Natural Play:</u> 69% of respondents to the engagement exercise showed support for the natural play and discovery zone plans which was therefore progressed to RIBA Stage 3. A root protection assessment was conducted on the veteran oak tree which created a root protection area and proposed the location of a fenceline to protect the tree. <u>Dog Enrichment Area:</u> Within the RIBA 2 plans there was provision for a Dog Enrichment area which would be a designated enclosed space to safely exercise dogs. Following the engagement period, it was deemed that the dog enrichment area would not be progressed. Principally this was due to very limited support for this element; comments included "I support the design except for the dog enrichment area" and "We do not need a dog enrichment area." Also, during the asbestos investigative work, the area proposed was learned to be a particular hotspot for asbestos. When paired with the limited support for the scheme, this reduced its viability.
Design Outcome	<u>Natural Play:</u> The natural play features are placed to expand the current play offer with a natural style fence around the veteran tree for its protection. <u>Dog Enrichment Area:</u> Many were passionate about retaining the ability for dogs to walk off lead through the site; whereas others were concerned about dog conflict with wildlife, other dogs and people. In addition to comments about dog fouling and acknowledging that there are many responsible dog owners who utilise the Aquadrome; the opportunities for increased engagement with dog owners has been included within the Activity Plan for the Aquadrome Project. This would encourage responsible dog ownership through picking up and disposing of dog waste, preventing dogs from bothering wildlife and keeping dogs under close control. The aim of this will be to protect wildlife, ensure dogs are able to safely exercise within the Aquadrome and so that both dog owners and those without dogs can enjoy the site.



LOOK & FEEL



RIBA 3: Natural Play & Discovery Zone



RIBA 3: Meadow

Current Situation	An open area of grassland cut as a hay meadow with old picnic furniture. Flooding has resulted in significant erosion within the bird feeding area, and the paths here often become slippery with bird waste in summer.
What the science says	Opportunities to increase the potential for flood storage was explored here using a cut and fill technique. In this instance an area of floodplain is lowered by removing soil and this soil (if appropriate) is used to create a mound feature. In creating this area of storage, a wetland habitat is also supported increasing the biodiversity of the area. Lake erosion is limited along the eastern bank of Bury Lake likely due to presence of vegetation and hard engineering (in the form of concrete slipways). Vegetation management should support both the bank stability but also the opportunities for marginal vegetation with sufficient light.
Design Outcome	The floodplain storage and mounded area will support biodiversity and create different views through the Aquadrome. Platforms over the concrete slipways will provide bird viewing, resting and picnicking opportunities. Vegetation management along the lake banks will open views over the water, enhance marginal vegetation and support the banks.



RIBA 3: Meadow



RIBA 3: Car Park

Current Situation	The carpark experiences significant surface water flooding often resulting in large puddles reducing the opportunity for parking. In contrast, during the summer, the carpark often reaches capacity. The limited direction within the carpark carries the risk of accidents between cars or with pedestrians.
What the science says	The accessibility audit highlighted there are insufficient disabled parking bays and that the ones present are not the correct dimensions. Through engagement, 68% of respondents supported the carpark improvements including provision for a one-way system. Opportunities for maximising the space within the carpark were also realised through the tree and vegetation strategy to reduce some of the scrub encroachment. The one-way system was also subjected to swept-path analysis to ensure easy vehicle movement around the one-way system and into the Grounds Maintenance depot for staff. Due to the known presence of asbestos, opportunities to delineate the carpark may use bunds with trees or vegetation also increasing opportunities for shade and wildlife.
Design Outcome	The RIBA stage 3 carpark design includes a one-way system where access is directly from Frogmore Bridge, and the exit follows the existing access route. Within the carpark vegetation management has increased the capacity of the carpark and to mitigate some of the lost habitat, bunds will be used to delineate rows. There is provision for a greater number of disabled parking spaces (both for cars and minibuses) of correct dimensions. The access into and out of the Grounds Maintenance depot has been adjusted to reduce the collision risk and there will be clear signage within the carpark directing the visitor into the Aquadrome.

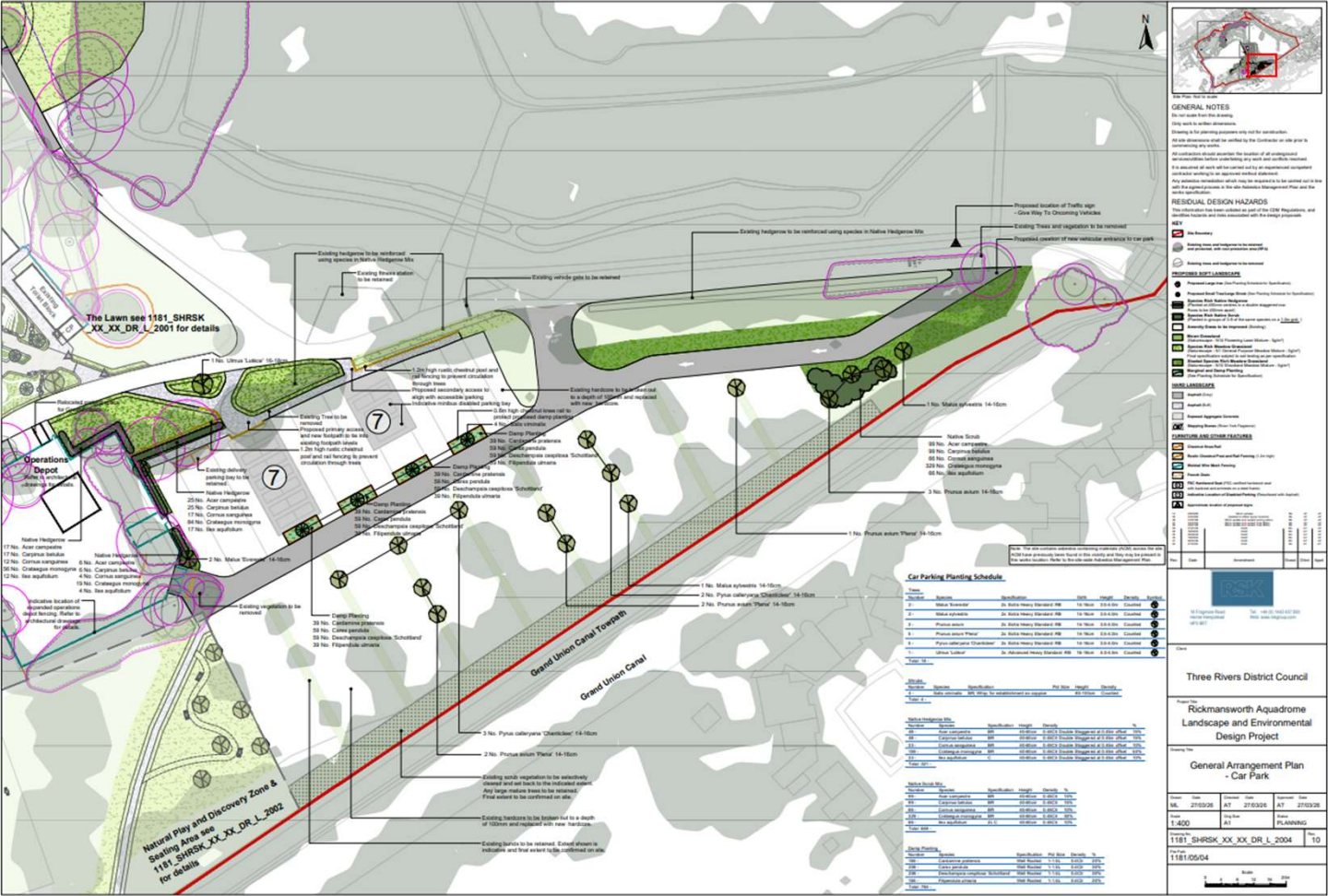


Current condition of the carpark during times of heavy rain.



Current carpark layout; light green polygon highlights space that could be gained.

RIBA 3: Car Park



This proposal will be subject to the outcome of a planning application.

RIBA 3: Woodland Walk & Pinetum Path

Current Situation

The woodland walk was closed in 2024 and deemed unsafe due to significant erosion of the path surfacing resulting from flooding. As a very popular path through the site, the woodland walk has been a priority area considered within this process.

What the science says

The outcome of the hydrology design work recommends several floodplain connectivity points along the River Colne, adjacent to the wet woodland. These connectivity points are approximately 3-4m in length and up to 500mm in dept and aim to support controlled flow into the wet woodland

Design Outcome

Proposals for the formal route through the pinetum and wet woodland have been developed in accordance with the hydrology recommendations to ensure safe accessibility during high river flows. Two bridges over the connectivity points are proposed along the woodland path with a natural material installed as the formal pathway surface. With greater understanding of the asbestos presence in this area, the likelihood of future flooding locally and to ensure the sustainability of the path; the formal route has been revised to provide access through the pinetum, turning north-east along the River Colne to re-join the main footpath network at Batchworth Lake. The remaining section from the Bury Lake entrance will see the pathway returned to a natural surface with the existing end of life tarmac removed. The proposals for a raised boardwalk have also been removed in this area.

Chestnut fencing and gates will be installed at the main entrances to the Pinetum Path and Woodland Walk, so that in the event of significant flooding it can be closed temporarily to protect public safety until the flooding has receded.



Indicative illustrations of the Woodland walk (left) and Pinetum path (right)

For more information on the Woodland Walk & Pinetum Path, please see drawing number 2006.

This proposal will be subject to the outcome of a planning application.



RIBA 3: Bury Point

Current Situation	This peaceful area of the Aquadrome is difficult to access, especially during wetter weather. It is valued by clubs operating on the lake and holds potential to be a reflective and contemplative space.
What the science says	70% of respondents to the survey were very supportive/supportive of the indicative proposals to develop a quiet, contemplative area at the newly named, Bury Point. Bury Point is also home to the Three Rivers Radio Yachting Club, part of Bury Lake Young Mariners. During inclement weather, this group tend to suffer from the elements and as such highlighted the need for an in-keeping shelter. Through engagement, these designs have progressed to provide a small shelter, similar to a small boat shed, with seating that provides opportunities to sit and quietly reflect across Bury Lake.
Design Outcome	Through engagement, these designs have progressed to provide a small shelter, similar to a small boat shed, with seating that provides opportunities to sit and quietly reflect across Bury Lake. The structure while open on all sides will provide shelter and is accompanied by a variety of seating including a picnic table and more bespoke seating. The open area will allow the model yachters to prepare their crafts before launching into the water. Pathways to and from the area will be linked into the main path network providing access in all weathers.

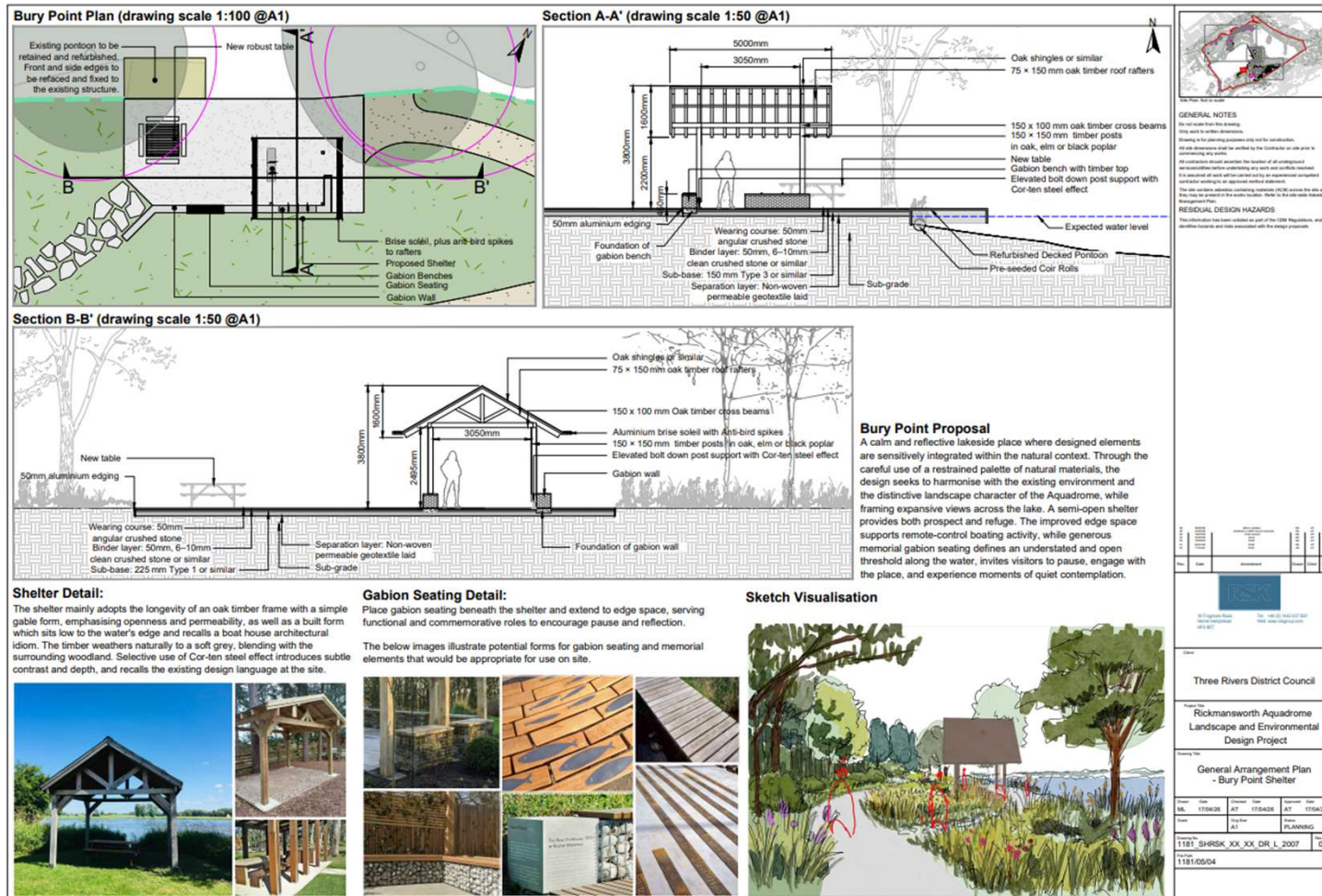


For more information on the Bury Point, please see drawing number 2007

LOOK & FEEL



RIBA 3: Bury Point

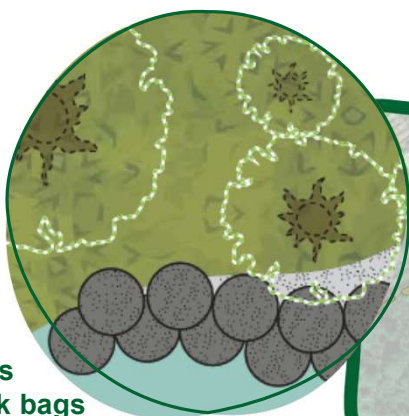


This proposal will be subject to the outcome of a planning application.

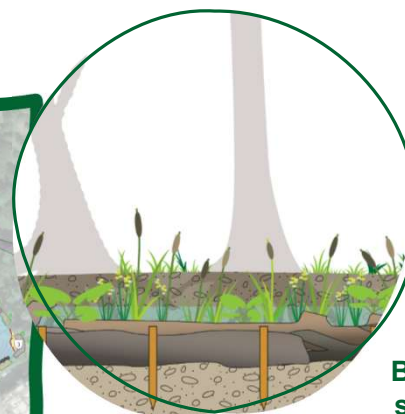
Lakeside Habitat Management & Shore Protection

The lakeshore design has been developed using a process-based, nature-led approach. The interventions aim to work with natural hydrological, ecological and geomorphic processes to deliver a resilient landscape that supports biodiversity, recreation, heritage value and long-term sustainability.

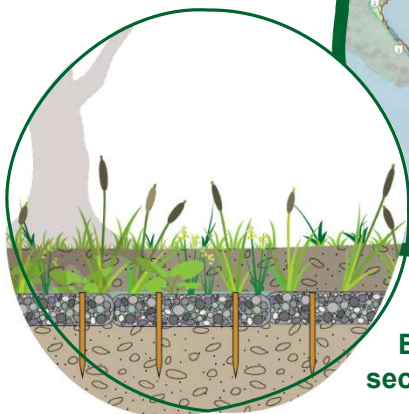
Berms along deeper sections using Aquarock bags



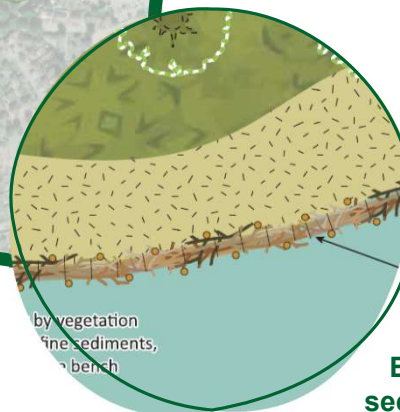
Berms along deeper sections using logs



Berms along shallower sections using rock rolls



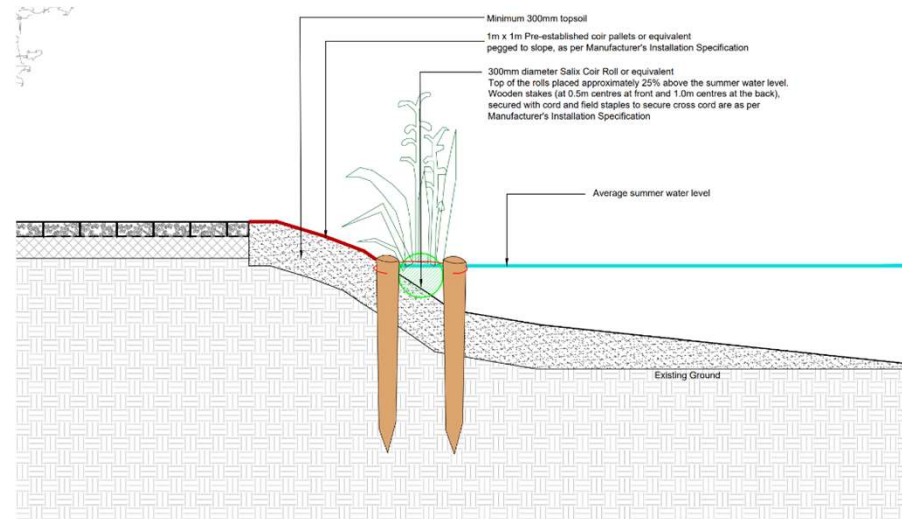
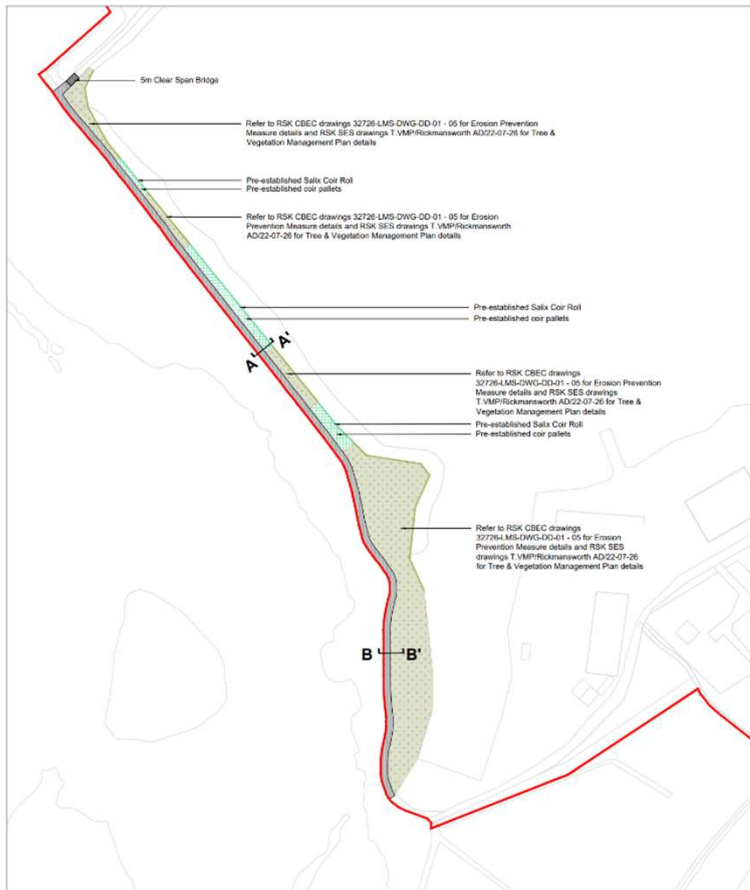
Berms along shallower sections using brushwood



Some of these proposals will be subject to the outcome of a Flood Risk Activity Permit from the Environment Agency.

RIBA 4: Footpath 65, The Causeway

The path between Bury Lake and Stockers Lake experiences significant erosion and overland flow of water in times of flood this has deteriorated the footpath. Many options have been considered to alleviate these issues including raising the footpath, facilitating the water under the footpath and more.



RIBA 3: Signage and Interpretation

The graphic style has been developed to complement the Rickmansworth Aquadrome branding while ensuring the designs remain distinctive, easily identifiable within the landscape and sympathetic to the surrounding natural environment.

Dark teal is used as the primary graphic colour, supported by accent tones drawn from the wider colour palette to create moments of contrast and interest.

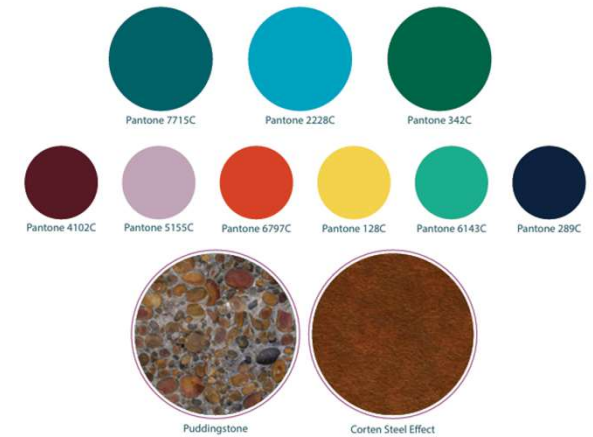
The shapes of the panels are influenced by the fluid movement of water throughout the Aquadrome, alongside the organic and often irregular forms of the site's distinctive trees, creating a softer and more natural relationship with the landscape.

The map style is designed to be clear, intuitive, and easy to navigate for a wide range of visitors, with raised surfaces being more tactile for a wider range of audiences. The illustrative style uses simple line drawings to highlight the unique characteristics and details of the wildlife, habitats, and natural features found throughout.

There are 5 different types of signage and interpretation included in the suite of signage. These can be seen below, left to right: main gateway, minor gateway, fingerpost, interpretation and incidental:



This proposal will be subject to the outcome of a planning application for advertising consent.



In addition, a tactile map will be located within the Visitor Hub area, providing an engaging and accessible introduction to Rickmansworth Aquadrome. Surrounded by interpretation exploring habitats, trees, waterways, canals, and lakes, the map will highlight key points of interest across the site. At this point, an acknowledgement to The National Lottery Heritage Fund will be included.

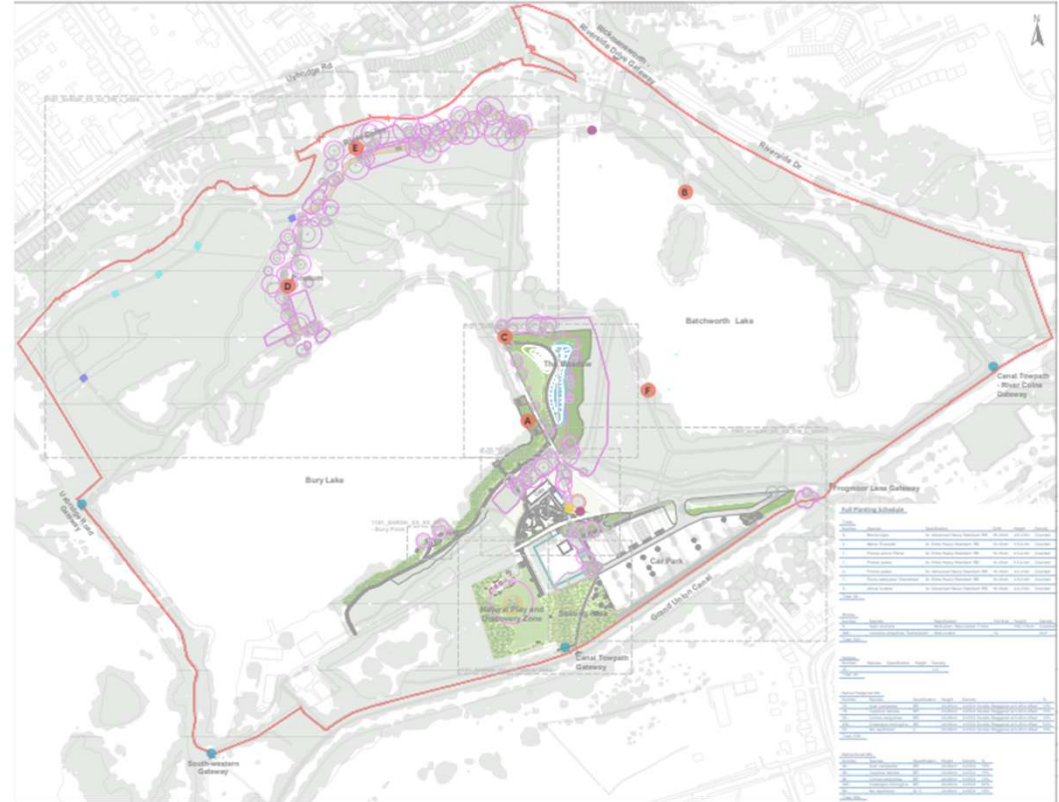


RIBA 3: Signage and Interpretation

Signage will be strategically positioned across the site to not “clutter” or detract from the natural beauty. Interpretation will celebrate the local social and natural heritage from across the Aquadrome site, including industrial origins, unique habitats & species and social use of the site through time.

The map below highlights the locations of signage and interpretation:

- **Major gateway 2no**
with orientation map and regulation signage
25 words max
- **Minor Gateway 4no**
with etching and fun fact story on reverse –
stories to be identified
25 words max
- **Main site interpretation 1no**
1no Tactile map with integrated story graphics:
 - Home for Wildlife – species overview – 75 words
 - Water and Woods – habitat/ diversity, water flow – 75 words
 - Rickmansworth Origins – including timeline – 75 wordsDonor/ NLHF panel and screening of the toilet blocks
- **Interpretive story panel 6no**
 - A. Home for Wildlife – Birds Bury Lake (photos)
 - B. Home for Wildlife – Birds Batchworth Lake (photos)
 - C. Rickmansworth Origins – Gravel pits (photos)
 - D. Water and Woods – Pinetum (tree detail tactile)
 - E. Water and Woods – Colne River (river path tactile)
 - F. Water and Woods – Habitats (simplified tactile habitat map)each 75 words max
- **Wildlife Trail incidentals 10-15no – tbc**
Home for Wildlife – species story to be identified
25 words max



This proposal will be subject to the outcome of a planning application for advertising consent.





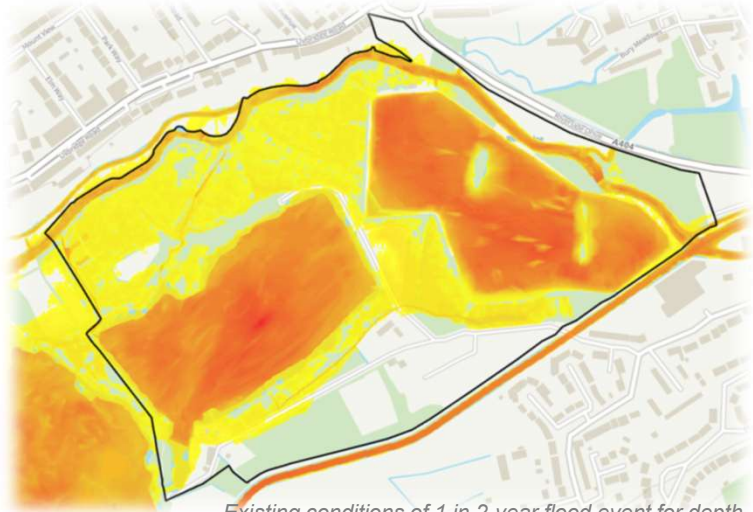
Rickmansworth
Aquadrome

3. River Restoration along the River Colne



 **THREE RIVERS
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

River Restoration



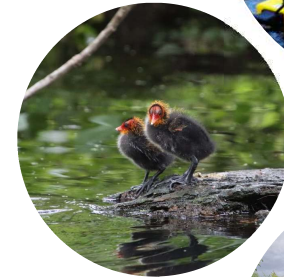
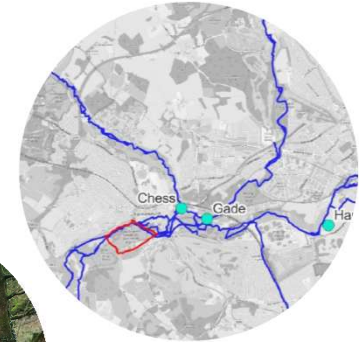
Existing conditions of 1 in 2-year flood event for depth

The River Colne within the Aquadrome has been subject to extensive historical modification, including channel straightening, impoundment, and disconnection from the floodplain. These changes, combined with urbanisation and amenity pressures, have reduced habitat diversity and compromised natural fluvial processes.

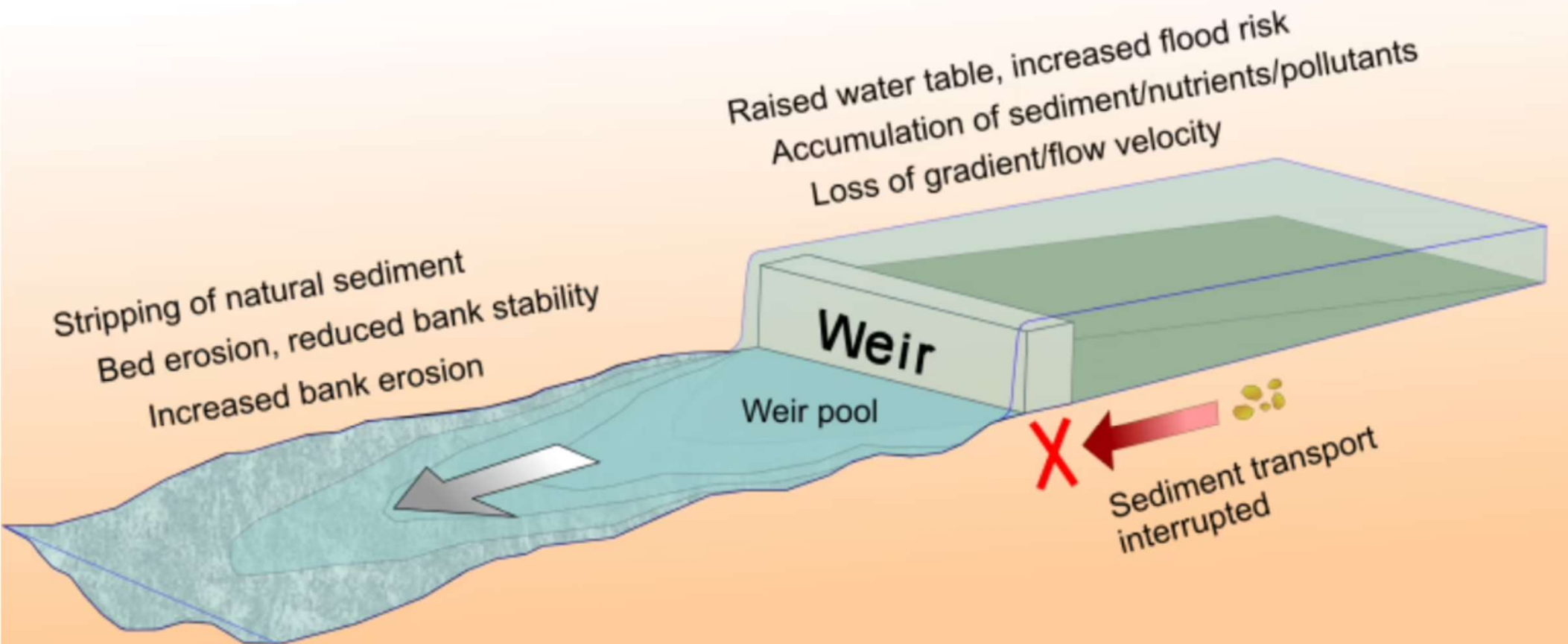
Chalk streams such as the Colne are globally rare and ecologically significant, supporting diverse aquatic species and providing high-quality water resources. Restoration of these systems is a priority under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the wider Colne Catchment Action Plan. At Rickmansworth, interventions will be designed to complement the known hydrology and flood modelled situations, ensuring that proposals for river restoration, lakeside habitat management, and floodplain connectivity are integrated with landscape improvements across the site.



These proposals will be subject to the outcome of a Flood Risk Activity Permit from the Environment Agency.

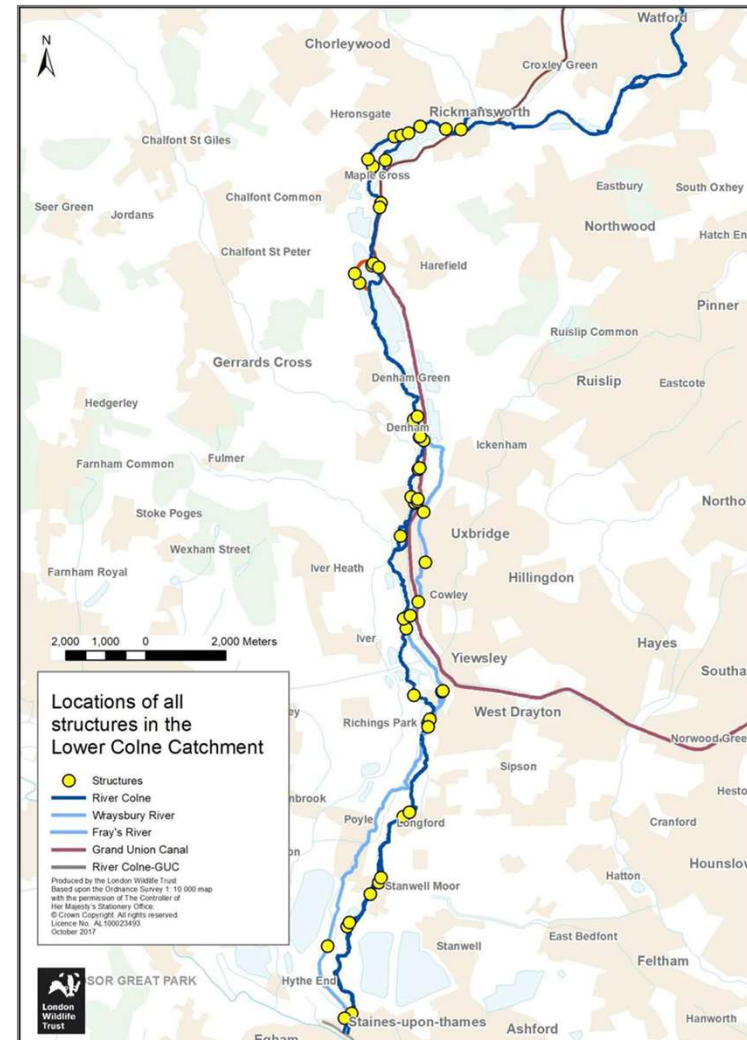


How do weirs work?

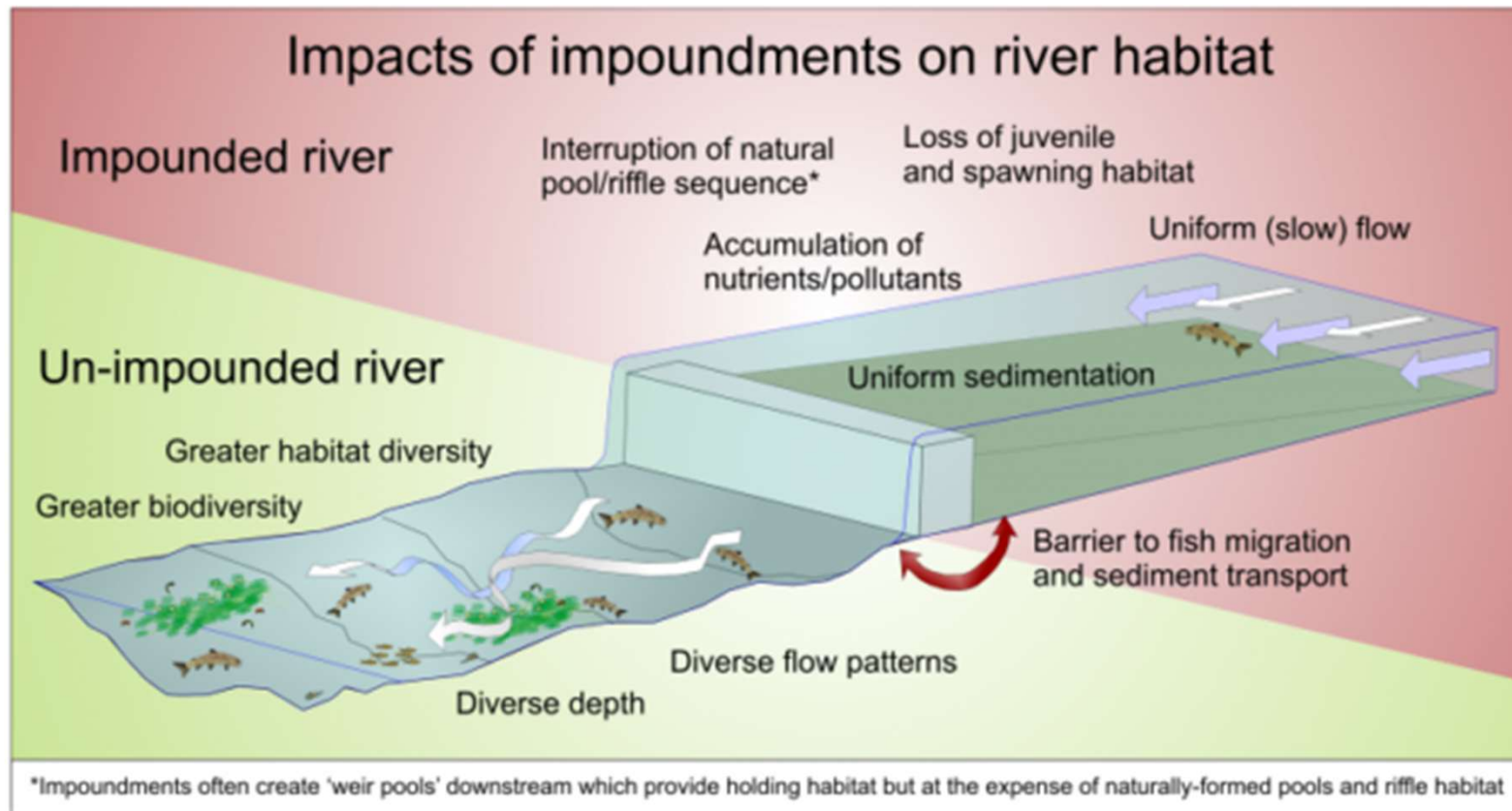


Barriers in the River Colne

**33 major obstacles in the
River Colne between
River Thames and
Rickmansworth**



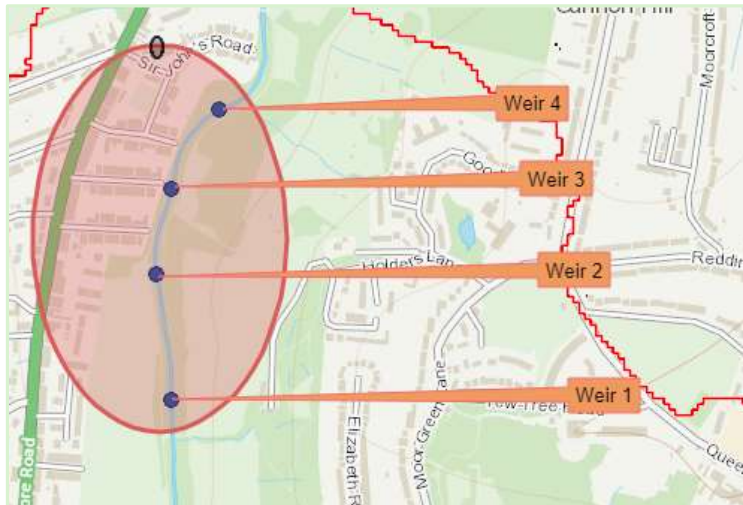
How do weirs impact the river?



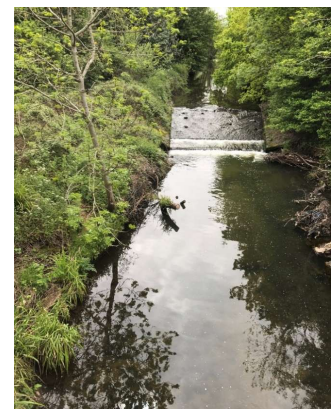
Case study: River Rea, Birmingham



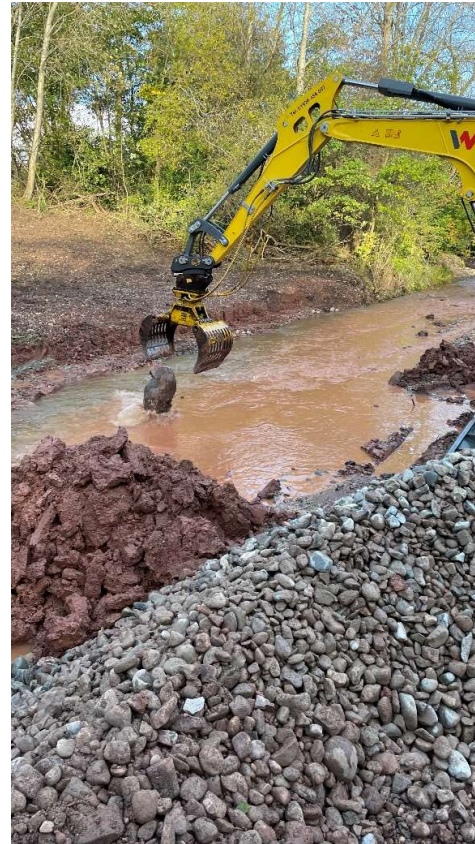
Four weirs considered for removal



- Four weirs only 500m apart
- Weirs posed flooding risk to properties
- Combined 5.5m head drop



Weir removal using excavators



Stages of weir removal



- Weir height – 1.88m
- Weir length – 20m
- Weir width – 6m

Stages of weir removal



Restored river



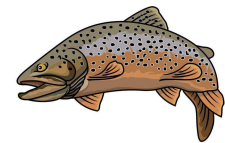
Ecological recovery



**Bullheads found
upstream**

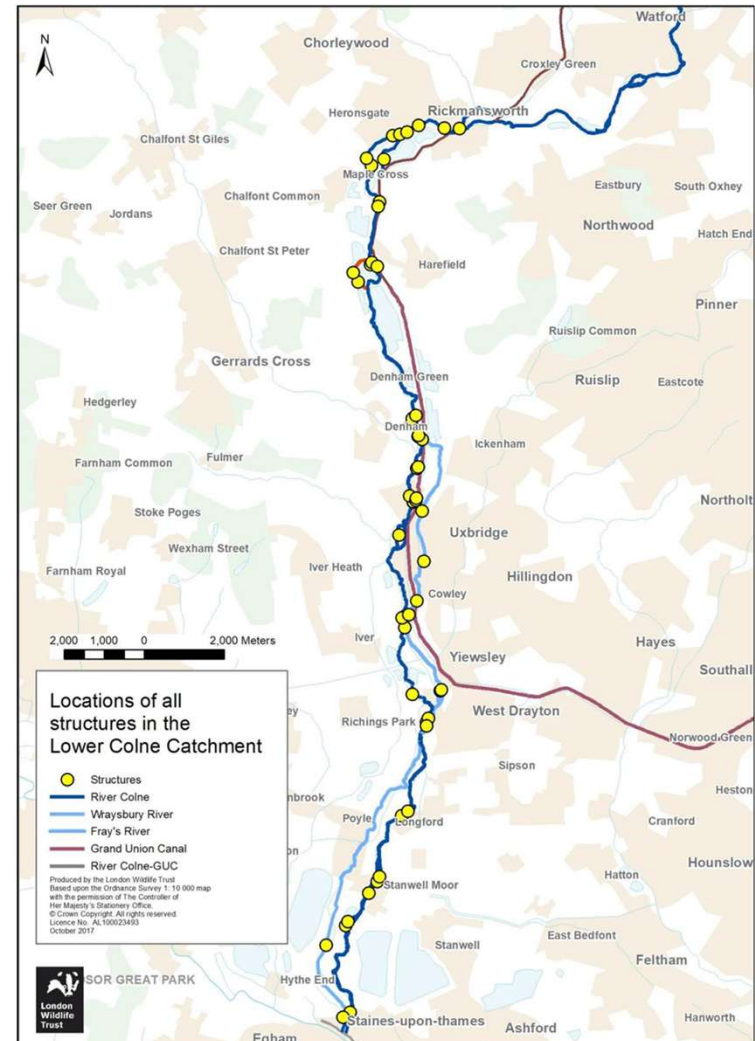
**22 new riffles
had formed in
channel**

**Biodiversity value in
river up by 47%
Brown trout expected
to return**



Status of River Colne

- Fish populations in strong decline
- Not achieving good ecological status
- Physical modifications such as weirs are a major factor

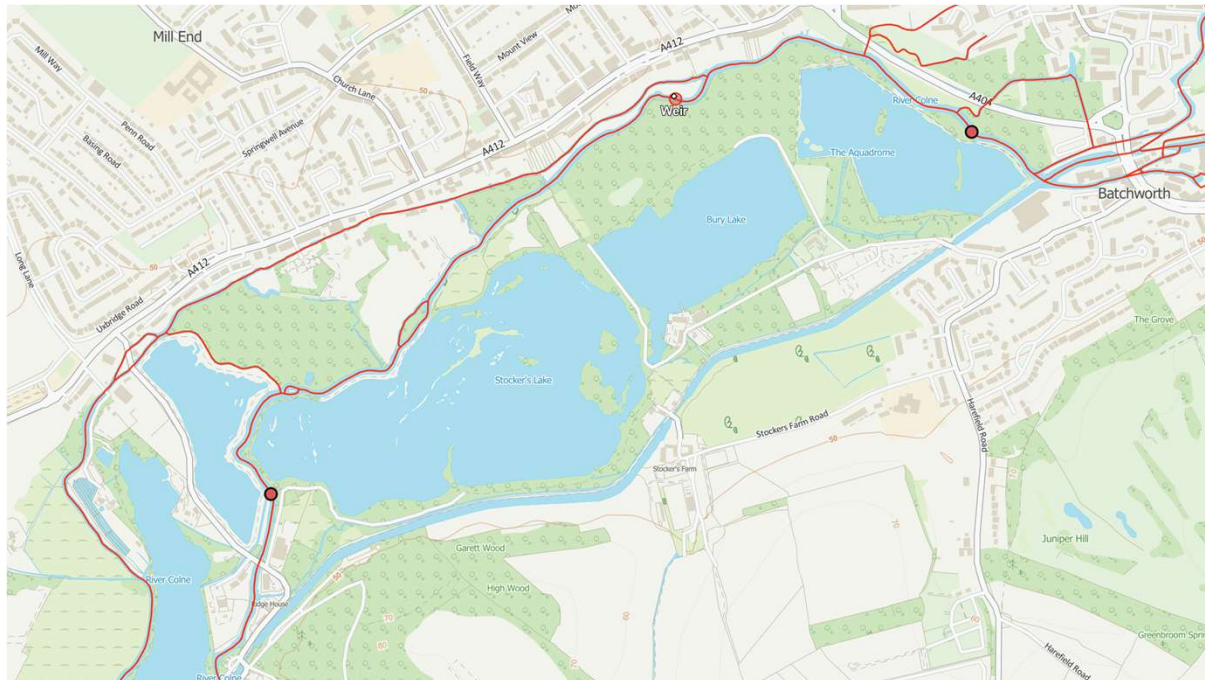


Aquadrome weir

- Originally installed to power paper mill and later water cress beds
- In poor and deteriorating condition
- Preferred option is safe removal and regrading river bed
- No residential flooding risk



Aquadrome weir



- Weir removal to open up >2km of river to support more resilient fish population
- People of Rickmansworth can enjoy a healthier river in active recovery

River Restoration

6. Through the final section of the river within the Aquadrome there are further opportunities for river connection points supporting the wet woodland habitat and the creation of further berms. The function of these berms will be to narrow the channel encouraging a variety in the flow of water, establishing marginal vegetation and other chalk stream characteristics.

4. Along the woodland walk, is where opportunities begin to connect the river to the wet woodland by lowering the riverbank in specific locations. These connection points will give water a route to travel as it leaves the river and feeds directly into the wet woodland supporting this habitat also.

3. The river winds around the Aquadrome to Ebury Play area and under the Aquadrome bridge. The thick canopies of trees over the river make the channel dark and prevent vegetation from growing. A combination of targeted removal of trees or tree limbs will allow light into the river promoting vegetation establishment, trapping fine sediment which encourages natural channel narrowing. This will be balanced to ensure enough shading is retained to maintain cooler water temperatures.

2. The river then reaches Batchworth Weir which supports the Canal; however, it prevents fish and other wildlife from swimming up and down the river. Therefore, a bypass channel will form a small river channel around the weir which joins the existing Taylors Cut, wildlife can pass up and down. – the construction of this is very carefully controlled to ensure the right amount of water goes the right way. As this bypass channel rejoins the river Colne, berms will be placed to protect the bank from the additional flow of water coming down Taylors Cut.

1. The river Colne enters the Aquadrome from the canal; the riverbank is eroded due to the speed of water and the impact of waterbirds leaving the river to feed. The installation of berms here will protect the bank from future erosion, marginal vegetation will be encouraged, and fencing will protect this area while establishing.

5. Bury Weir historically would have been used to control water levels for the Mill and the watercress beds. By removing this weir, it will restore natural river processes and improve ecological connectivity. The removal will be paired with regrading of the riverbed, installation of bank protection and fencing to protect it. Together this will restore the section of the river and support the flow and ecology of the millstream.

Together the suite of river restoration improvements will support the river Colne's ecology and hydrology. It will be able to support more biodiversity, it will be resilient to the climate (including flood & drought), and it will continue to be beautiful place to visit.

These proposals will be subject to the outcome of a Flood Risk Activity Permit from the Environment Agency.



4. Refreshments and Networking



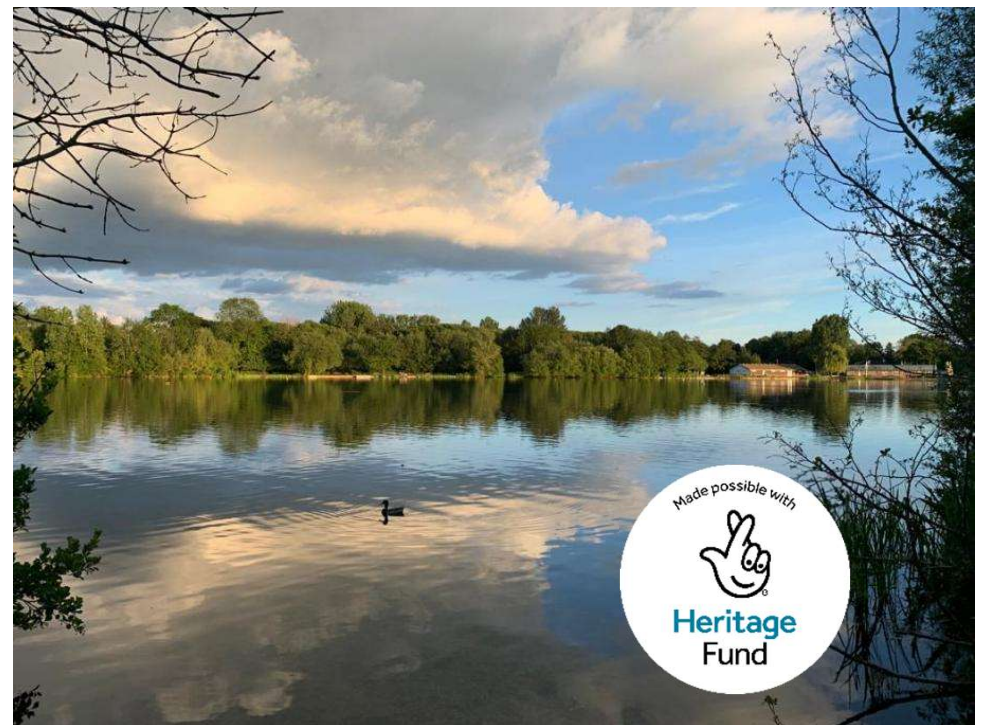


5. Update from the Colne Valley Regional Park

Michelle Jones, Colne Valley Regional Park

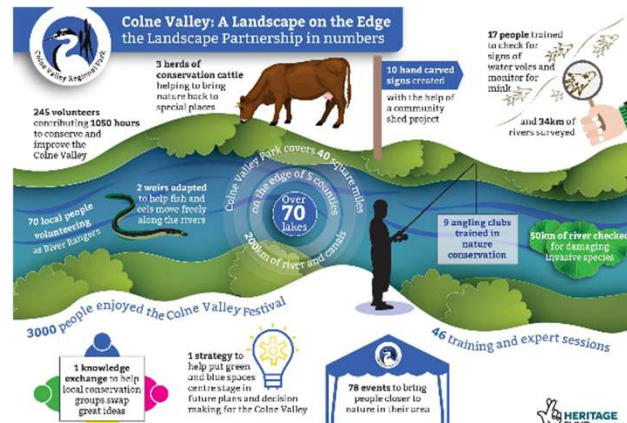
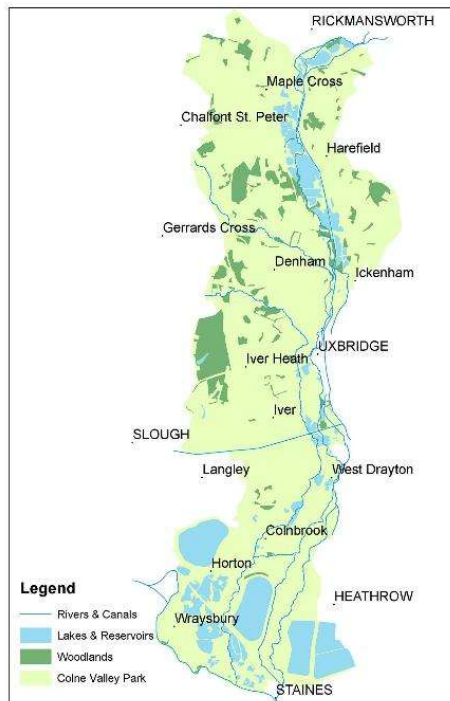


Colne Connections:
Development Round



Colne Connections: Development Round

Project Background



June 2024

Expression of Interest Submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund

Feb 2025

Round 1 Application submitted

October 2025

Colne Connections Development Round

May 2026

Bid Submission to The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Project Value £5.1m

Colne Connections: Development Round **Colne Connections Themes**

Action for Heritage: Includes large scale projects to open new areas/ public routes to explore

Connecting the Colne: Improving whole landscape connectivity and connecting communities with nature

Planning with Nature: Strengthening partnership amongst stakeholders to manage CVRP's present/future.

Strengthen our Story: Activities strengthening CVRP's heritage evidence base – Surveys, Citizen Science, Heritage Stories

Trust in the Future: Building legacy through developing skills to support CVRP now/in future with opportunities for skills, volunteering and employment



Colne Connections: Development Round



Pilot Projects:

- Future Guardians: Geology Days
- Communications Boards
- Colne Connections Forum
- Nature Recovery
- What's Your Colne Valley?

New Vision for the Colne Valley

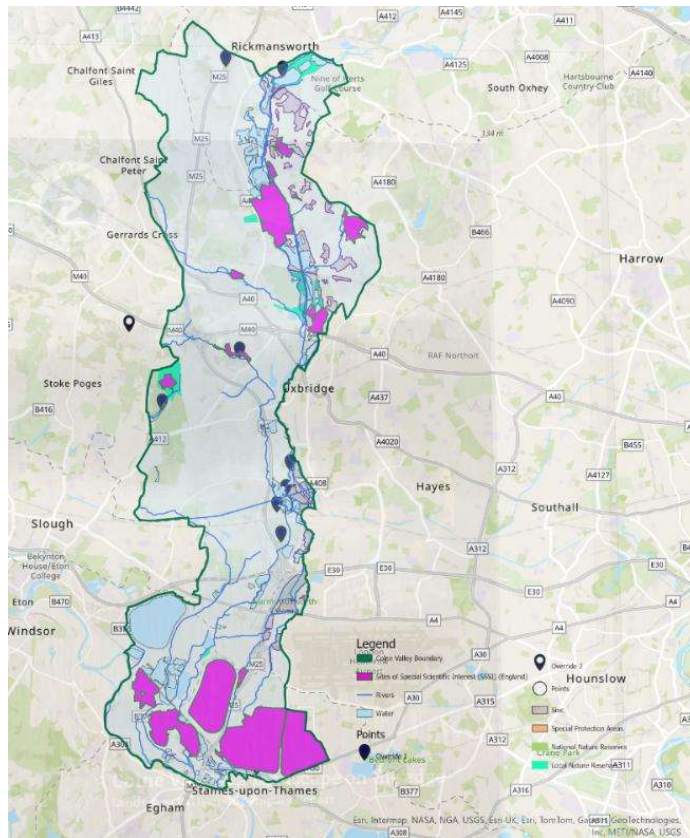
Review of Audience & Interpretation Strategy

Design of Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy

Project Review from first stage application

Colne Connections: Development Round

Programme Outline – The Plan So Far



- A holistic approach to improving our natural and historic landscape.
- A portfolio of integrated projects that work together to reinvigorate our landscape
- Aim of reviving, conserving, repairing and enhancing the distinct character and heritage of the Colne Valley
- Part of the wider vision that stimulates further activity and leaves a legacy.

Colne Connections: Development Round

Connectivity & Links to the Aquadrome

- Colne Valley Regional Park & Groundwork South
- Colne CAN
- Local Partners: HMWT, Affinity Water, Thames Water, CVFC, Maple Lodge, Woodoaks Farm, Batchworth Community Council, Three Rivers Council, Three Rivers Museum
- Colne Connections projects include:

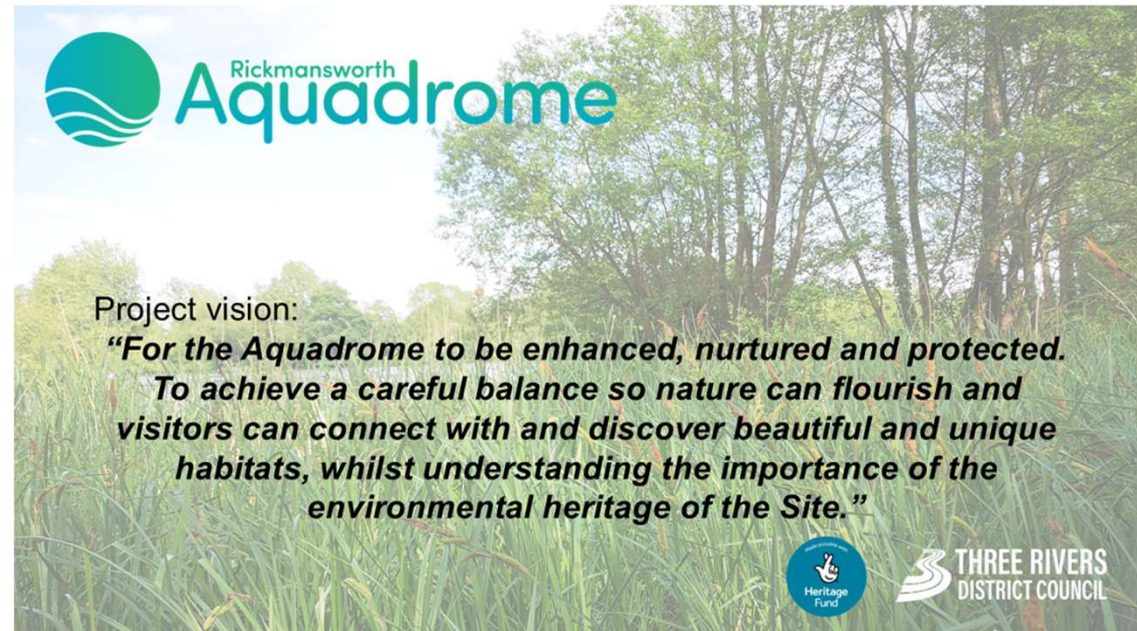
Works near the 'Mill End Loop', Woodoaks Farm, Wetland Mammal Survey, Litter Blitz, Circular Walks, Waterbirds surveys, Citizen Science, Future Guardians Project, Training & Skills, Maple Lodge



Colne Connections: Development Round

Connectivity & Links to the Aquadrome

- Rickmansworth Aquadrome is an important part of the network of visitor and nature sites in the Colne Valley.
- Exciting potential for both the Aquadrome and the wider Colne Valley to receive much needed investment from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.



6. Partner Updates





6. Next Steps



Next Project Milestones

- RIBA Stage 4 Hydrological Detailed Designs: **September 2026**
- RIBA Stage 4 tender packages: **September 2026**
- Updated Rickmansworth Aquadrome Management and Conservation Plan, including future Maintenance of the site: **September 2026**
- RIBA Stage 3 Masterplan and Landscape Design Package – planning submission documentation: **September/October 2026**
- Flood Risk Activity Permit Submissions: **September/October 2026**
- Development Phase Completion: **October 2026**
- Delivery Phase Funding Application Submission: **November 2026**
 - Approx. £5million
- Outcome of Delivery Phase Funding Application: **March 2027**
- Capital Works on site: from **April 2027** (*subject to outcome of funding bid*)
- Delivery Phase completion: **March 2030**

7. Development Phase Video





So as you can see, the council has undertaken significant preparation for the physical works in the coming years to restore, improve and safeguard the Aquadrome.

**Thank you for your continued
support**

