

Wandle Valley

# Living Wandle

LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP



Living Wandle was the UK's first urban Landscape Partnership scheme funded by the Heritage Lottery.

Between 2013 and 2018 a collection of expert organisations and community partners came together to deliver 28 projects along the River Wandle in south London.

The vision was to create “a vibrant, healthy, sustainable, multi-functional landscape in which people recognise and are inspired by the natural and cultural heritage of the river and its valley.”



The River Wandle is one of only 200 chalk streams in the world. A rare landscape that supports a rich variety of wildlife and interesting cultural heritage.

It flows for 15 miles through four London Boroughs (Croydon, Sutton, Merton and Wandsworth), providing access to open space for c.800, 000 people in a very urban setting.

Clues to the valley's important history, from Roman times to the Industrial Revolution, are embedded in the landscape. Considered by the Victorians as one of the hardest working rivers in the world, it was later declared an open sewer in the 1960s.

More recently, efforts have been made to restore the Wandle back to its pre-industrial quality. It is now one of only a few London Rivers to earn the status of “Good Ecological Potential.”

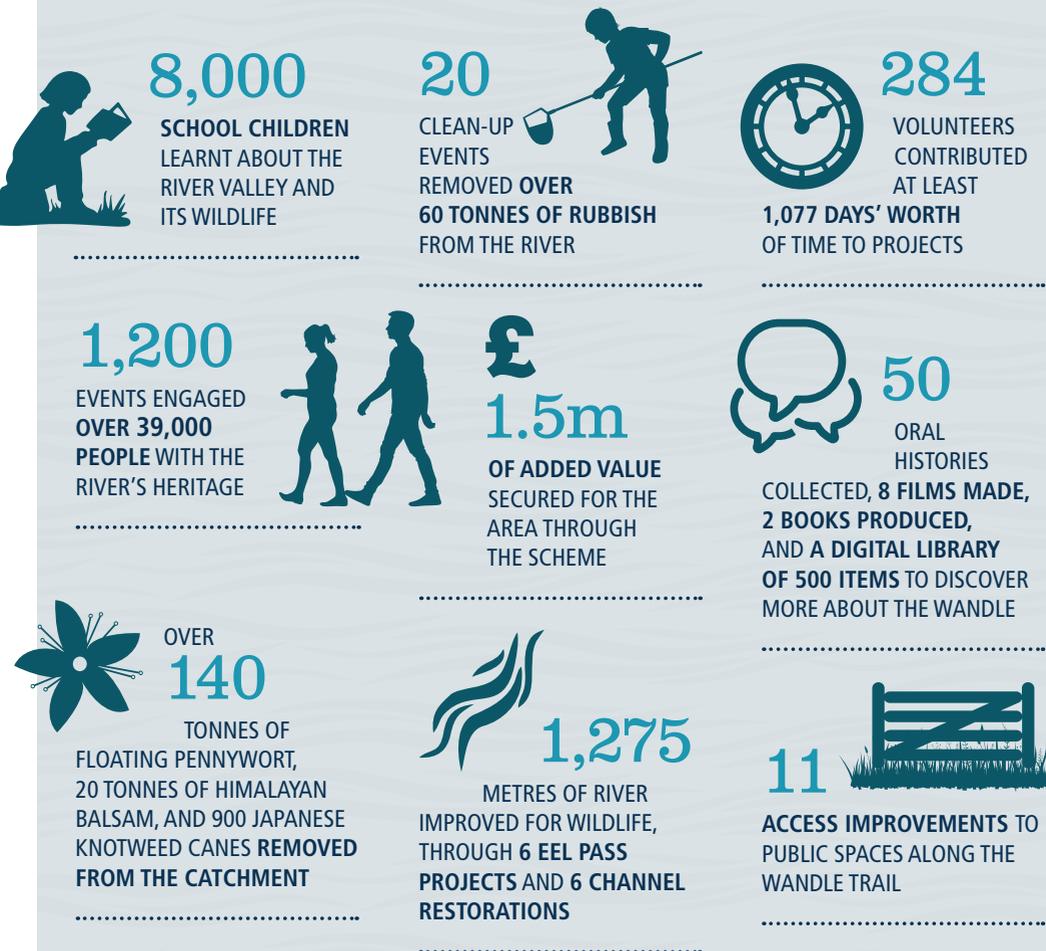
Through partnership working the green-blue network is opening up, from the backs of industrial estates and underground culverts, into natural spaces for people and wildlife to thrive.

The ambitious £2.6m scheme, supported by £1.85m from the Heritage Lottery Fund, was made possible through the dedicated work of organisations and enthusiasm of local people – all united to see the River Wandle become more accessible and healthy.

Working at landscape-scale across political and landowner boundaries brought genuine added value to the Wandle Valley, its people and wildlife. It has ensured the legacy of Living Wandle remains greater than the sum of its individual projects.



## Key Highlights of the Partnership...



## Working for Landscape

### LEARNING AND LESSONS

Over the course of Living Wandle some key points were learned along the way. We hope these will provide insight and inspiration for others looking to develop or deliver projects at landscape-scale.



Have flexibility to deviate from a set plan

This can refresh a programme with new initiatives, and build unity between partners through new working relationships.

Keep a separate budget to deliver training activities

These events provide good opportunities for networking and skills sharing between teams.

Finding a shared vision and unifying partners with different priorities can be tricky!

Make time to communicate openly and find common objectives before developing a set of projects.

Host regular networking events for partners, volunteers and wider stakeholders

This helps embed knowledge of wider activities, reinforces links between projects and groups, and boosts coherent promotion of a scheme.



Include a small-grants fund to root projects in the community and local landscape

It can bring about lasting legacy and long term buy-in to aims for the area.

Balance 'top-down' projects led by established organisations with 'bottom-up' grassroots initiatives

To help generate buy-in at all levels of the community.

# Project Summaries



## Conservation

-  **Catchment Plan Delivery** – river restorations with volunteers to re-naturalise the Wandle. *Partner: Wandle Trust*
-  **Waddon Ponds** – naturalisation and biodiversity improvements to the ponds. *Partner: Croydon Council*
-  **Invasive Species Removal** – control of invasive non-native plant species along the catchment. *Partner: The Wandle Trust*
-  **Wandle Eels** – installation and monitoring of eel passes on weirs. *Partner: Wandle Trust and Environment Agency*
-  **Fish Habitat Improvement** – channel enhancements for fish and invertebrates. *Partner: Environment Agency*
-  **River and Wetlands Toolkit** – motor boat and equipment to assist waterway management. *Partner: National Trust*

-  **Wandle Rain Gardens** – building rain gardens and installing SuDS with local residents. *Partner: London Wildlife Trust*
-  **River Guardians** – river clean-up events and volunteer training to respond to pollution incidents. *Partner: The Wandle Trust*



## Infrastructure

-  **Merton Priory Chapter House** – access improvements and services installation at a community museum. *Partner: Merton Priory Trust, Merton Council and Marcus Beale Architects*
-  **Morden Hall Park Wetlands** – installation of a wetland boardwalk plus park and river enhancements. *Partner: National Trust*
-  **Wandle Gateways** – installation of a wetland boardwalk plus park and river enhancements. *Partner: National Trust*
-  **Wandle Vistas** – analysis of valley views and recommendations to protect and enhance viewpoints. *Partner: Untitled Practice and Fiona Fyfe Associates*
-  **Ravensbury Pond Platform** – wildlife viewing platform upgrades in a local park *Partner: Merton Council and Friends of Ravensbury Park*

## Heritage and Culture

-  **Confluence: The River Speaks** – river-inspired audio-visual art workshops and installation. *Partner: Enable Leisure & Culture*
-  **Wandle Flowing Through Time** – capturing oral histories and stories from the valley. *Partner: Groundwork London*
-  **Discovering The Source** – exploration of the Wandle's sources translated into guided walks and touring exhibition. *Partner: The Wandle Trust*
-  **Vandalis** – volunteer-produced film dramatising the history of the Wandle. *Partner: Groundwork London and Wheelhouse Productions*
-  **River Celebrations** – annual programme of community-led events. *Partner: Wandle Valley Forum*
-  **Industrial Heritage Recording** – three separate projects documenting Wandle industry:
  - History Beneath Our Feet** – volunteer-created film on the story of Merton Priory Chapter House. *Partner: Groundwork London*
  - Wandle Treasures** – commission of a hand-drawn map detailing iconic heritage features. *Partner: The Building Exploratory*
  - Mapping The Mills** – documenting the river's mills in self-guided trail maps. *Partner: The Building Exploratory*



## Learning and Skills

-  **Project Kingfisher** – river education programme inside and outside the classroom. *Partner: The Wandle Trust*
-  **Learning in the Wetlands** – engaging schools and park visitors with wildlife of Morden Hall Park wetlands. *Partner: National Trust*
-  **Social Landlords** – river-themed activities for residents of registered housing providers *Partner: London Wildlife Trust*
-  **Wandle Watchers** – developing public interpretation and supporting wildlife recording. *Partner: Living Wandle Team*
-  **Piscators Youth Section** – junior angling sessions, coach training and creation of an angling guide. *Partner: Wandle Piscators*
-  **Mitcham Community Orchard & Gardens** – interpretation and equipment to support schools education. *Partner: Mitcham Community Orchard & Gardens*
-  **Wandle Volunteers** – community fund for training, resource development and skills building. *Partner: Living Wandle Team*
-  **Living River** – promenade performances by local young people (16 – 24). *Partner: Battersea Arts Centre*



# Looking Beyond

THE LIFETIME OF LIVING WANDLE...

The Wandle Valley has a rich culture of creativity and forward-thinking; illustrated by securing the UK's first urban Landscape Partnership scheme and creating London's newest Regional Park – The Wandle Valley Regional Park.

Both ambitions grew in parallel and complemented one another. Living Wandle supported the vision for a Regional Park; bringing partners together to deliver practical projects – boosting investment and infrastructure in the area. And the Regional Park secures the scheme's legacy; maintaining partnership working and building on projects into the future.

The Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust (WVRPT) champions delivery of the Regional Park. As a key member of the Living Wandle Partnership, they worked collaboratively with partners to align the scheme's legacy outcomes with the strategic aims of the Regional Park.

The next stage of delivering the Regional Park is underway thanks to a successful bid to HLF for Resilient Heritage funding in late 2017. The focus is to secure a sustainable future for WVRPT and support delivery of exciting new projects in the valley.

To read the full legacy plan for the Living Wandle Landscape Partnership visit [WandleValleyPark.co.uk/Projects/LivingWandleLegacy](http://WandleValleyPark.co.uk/Projects/LivingWandleLegacy)



What will YOU do to ensure the Wandle continues to thrive?

---

## DISCOVER YOUR OWN WONDER FOR THE WANDLE

Go online to explore films, maps, books and more interesting resources.

Plan your adventure, hit the Wandle Trail and find new places to go and things to do.

---

## LEND A HELPING HAND

Volunteer with a local organisation or community group.

Discover a range of activities, build new skills and get hooked on helping the Wandle!

---

## BECOME A PARTNER OF THE WANDLE VALLEY

Whether you're a local business, interest group or a big fish new to the Wandle – come join the network.

Get in touch with your ideas and be part of bringing the Wandle Valley Regional Park to life.

---

For more information, visit:  
[WandleValleyPark.co.uk](http://WandleValleyPark.co.uk)

# Living Wandle Projects Map



## Conservation – Project Highlight

### ‘Tiling’ the way for Wand-Eels

The Wandle is an Eel Index River for London – monitoring data feeds into a London-wide understanding of how the critically endangered European Eel is faring throughout the Thames catchment.

Eels are elusive creatures – their epic 5,000km migration, from UK Rivers to the Sargasso Sea, is still not fully understood by scientists. But closer to home on the Wandle, we know their route upstream from the Thames is challenging; filled with obstructions (weirs and culverts) and artificial habitats (concrete river beds and wooden toe-boarding.)

This project was all about easing the way for eels and other migratory fish, to access upstream habitats which they need for different stages of their life. Six weirs were adapted to make them eel and fish friendly, with specialised eel tiles, bristles and passes installed to help them navigate up and over river-obstructions.



## Access – Project Highlight

### Wandle Vistas: A View to the Future

Within the Wandle Valley there are many places from which to appreciate wonderful views – or ‘vistas’ – that connect us with the wider landscape of which we are part.

Looking outwards from the River Wandle, this project aimed to tell the story of the Wandle Valley’s evolution through its views and build context to better understand the landscape as a whole.

The ‘Wandle Vistas Guide’ is a way-finding trail map, created to help you explore the viewpoints using public transport, cycling and walking routes. A short film capturing the special quality of the vistas was also created, to inspire you to discover them for yourself!

Watch the film or download a guide at: [wandlevalleypark.co.uk/projects/wandle-vistas](http://wandlevalleypark.co.uk/projects/wandle-vistas)





FRIENDS OF RAVENSBUARY PARK

Soundford



The Building Exploratory



To find out more about the Living Wandle Partnership or the Wandle Valley Regional Park, visit our website: [wandlevalleypark.co.uk/the-living-wandle-partnership](http://wandlevalleypark.co.uk/the-living-wandle-partnership)