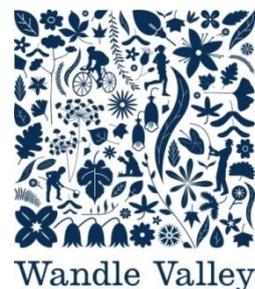


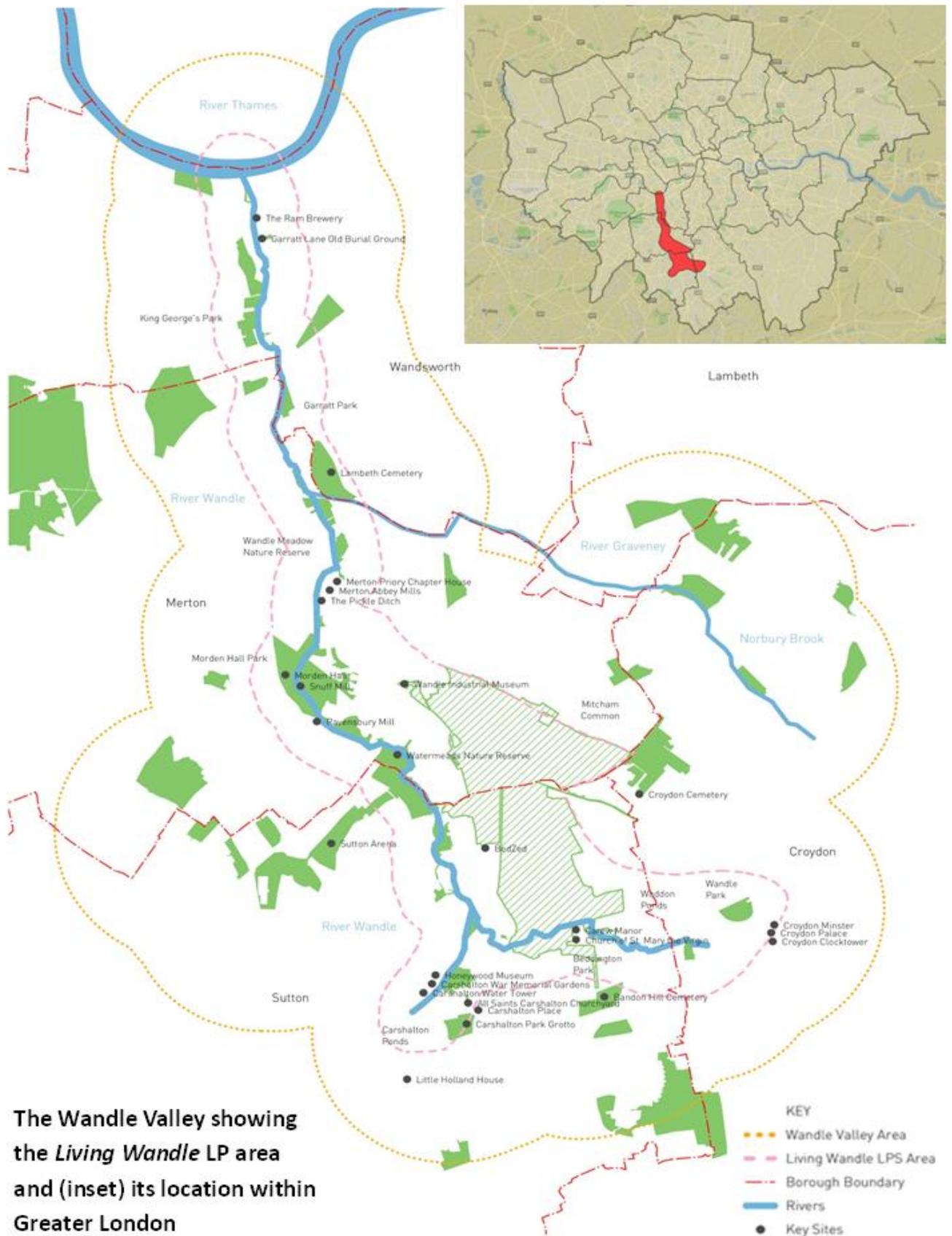
Living Wandle Landscape Partnership



Final Evaluation Summary Report

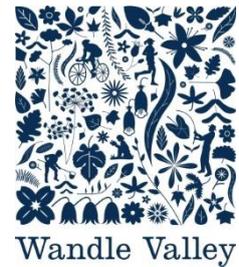
March 2018





The Wandle Valley showing the *Living Wandle* LP area and (inset) its location within Greater London

Living Wandle Landscape Partnership



Final Evaluation & Completion Report Summary

Introduction: the Wandle and its Landscape Partnership

Living Wandle (LW) is HLF's first urban Landscape Partnership (LP) Scheme. Focused on the catchment of the River Wandle and covering parts of the London Boroughs of Croydon, Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth, its distinctive features include a largely built-up landscape with high population density, diverse communities including areas of social deprivation, but with many public open spaces and a great deal of ongoing activity. LW's vision has been to secure:

"A vibrant healthy, sustainable, multi-functional landscape in which people recognise and are inspired by the natural and cultural heritage of the valley and river".⁽¹⁾

At an overall cost of £2.6m, supported with £1.9m of Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant, LW's 28 delivery partners have delivered a programme of over 30 separately costed projects which together address the four HLF programme aims of heritage conservation, community engagement, access and learning, and training and skills.

The Accountable Body (Lead Partner) for the scheme is the London Borough of Wandsworth (LBW) working through a small Partnership Board and a wider Steering Group (SG) comprising representatives of the nine original core partners. Day-to-day co-ordination is through a small team comprising an LP Manager and two Project Officers.

A successful application for HLF funding in 2010 led to an 18-month development phase involving intensive consultation leading to the production of a Landscape Conservation Action Plan (LCAP) in December 2012. This was submitted with a Stage 2 (delivery) application in February 2013, agreed by HLF in June. The LW scheme was launched in the autumn of 2013 and formally ends with the submission of this report to HLF in March 2018.

The evaluation context

This report provides an independent assessment of what the LW LP scheme has delivered (its outputs), what the benefits (outcomes) have been for heritage and people and what lasting impact LW will have made (its legacy). It celebrates LW's successes and pays tribute to the hard work of volunteers, project leads, partners and the LP team. It also considers what may not have worked so well and the lessons that may be drawn for LW's successor body and for other comparable schemes in the future.

The report represents the conclusion of an ongoing evaluative process commenced in early 2015 with the production of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework 'owned' by the Partnership as a whole. Quantitative information is based primarily on monitoring data supplied by the LP team. Wider evaluation focuses primarily on outcomes and legacy and includes case studies, graphics and other

illustrative material. Methodology has included: desk research; key informant interviews with partner representatives, participants, project leads and the LP team; site visits to all project locations within the LW area; workshops and focus groups; and two online surveys (at mid delivery and towards completion of the LP scheme).

The report fulfils the requirement of HLF for LW to conduct a final evaluation of its work and to embody the results in a completion report to be submitted to HLF at the end of the scheme. But it is intended to do much more than enable HLF to 'sign off' its grant. It is a document for the Partnership as a whole, for partners, participants and for a wider public. The experience of LW should assist future multi-project schemes working at a 'landscape' level, particularly in urban areas, in designing and delivering their work.

Projects and outputs

LW's nineteen initial principal projects are a subset of over 100 proposed or existing projects in the ALGG's 'rolling list'⁽²⁾ adjusted and supplemented with additional smaller projects to address HLF's four programme areas with a distribution over the four London boroughs covering the Wandle's catchment area. Subsequent to LW's launch, further projects were added, supported by underspend or contingency, producing a total of over thirty funded projects, one of which was itself a multi-project mini-grant scheme introduced in the second half of delivery in connection with the annual Wandle Festival/ Fortnight.

Detailed outlines of the first nineteen projects with which the scheme commenced together with the wider strategic context within which they exist are contained within the LW LCAP submitted as the basis for HLF funding. Summaries of all projects are provided in Appendix 2 of the main report.

Headline outputs at a glance:

- 6 physical river enhancements covering 1.2 km of river. A further 7.6 km enhanced for wildlife through 6 eel pass projects and 20 clean ups removing over 60 tonnes of rubbish
- Entire river brought under improved management for INNS
- 1 pond restored, 2 scrapes created and 200m of new hedgerow planted
- 11 access improvements implemented and 10 view points documented
- 284 active volunteers contributing at least 1077 volunteer days equivalent to £105,000 in value
- 8160 school children learnt about the river valley and its wildlife
- 39,571 people including 14,477 young people participating in a total of over 1,192 events
- 155 training courses, delivering 2,383 days of learning to 3,299 people
- 5 festivals. 2,659 participants in the 2017 Wandle Fortnight facilitated by £3,140 of LW grants
- 50 oral histories collected; 8 films and 2 books produced; a public online archive with over 494 items
- £1.5m value added to projects; 16 temporary jobs created
- An audience of at least 1.2m reached online.

Administration, delivery and governance

The LP team, working to the LW Steering Group and to LBW/ELC officers, are to be congratulated on their dedication, commitment and enthusiasm, which has been a major factor in securing delivery despite a number of delays particularly in relation to capital projects. They have applied effective project oversight, and this has been done in a way which has been open and accommodating. This perception is supported by the responses to the online survey and interviews.

Office procedures have worked well with some exemplary features. Modified during the first phase of the evaluation these include project summary sheets incorporating updated targets and anticipated outcomes, partner reporting of progress against targets together with quarterly claim forms, and end-of-project evaluations requiring outcome evidence with the final claim.

The team and the Partnership as a whole are to be commended in particular on their concern with legacy.ⁱ All major projects have produced their own legacy plan and these have fed in to *LW*'s own whole-scheme Legacy Plan which identifies not only the lasting benefits that *LW* has achieved but also how these can be carried forward within the framework of an overall vision for the area and with the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust (WVRPT) as *LW*'s legacy body.

LW was not initially conceived as a community-based scheme (though community initiatives have featured strongly in its programme) and the Partnership has been led by established organisations with a significant presence in the area. Half of total scheme costs are allocated to just three projects focused on capital works and catchment management, and over a quarter have been delivered through a single organisation. This has advantages for some projects in terms of facilitating delivery and securing continuity, as well as in arrangements for those projects' legacy. At the same time all partner organisations have seen participation as much more than an opportunity to progress their own institutional priorities. A genuine partnership has been established which is expected to continue beyond the life of the *LW* scheme.

Smaller 'people' projects (river 'clean-ups', INNS control, historical recording, oral testimony, outdoor and classroom based education) have all led to significant community and volunteer engagement. They were joined in the second half of delivery by a programme of community micro-grants which have provided a small but significant 'bottom-up' element to the scheme (and should help to secure the continuation of the annual Wandle Fortnight).

Outcomes and legacy

At the time of compiling this report, works to Merton Priory Chapter House, the most costly project, accounting for over 20% of total HLF grant are at an early stage. The delay has meant that it is difficult to do more than predict the long-term benefits that will accrue, and associated community-based activities (some *LW* funded including a teachers' pack and educational film) will take place after the end of the LP scheme.

Another capital project in the *LW* programme and potentially one of the most significant in relation to its longer-term ambitions in contributing to an integrated vision for the area is Wandle Gateways, though this is also one of the least developed in the LCAP. Issues of branding and permissions have meant that delivery of all Gateways has been significantly delayed but seven Gateways will have been completed within the lifetime of the scheme. The Gateways project is vitally connected to other green infrastructure improvements —not all of which are part of *LW*— which have already brought noticeable improvements. Together other *LW* projects, in particular Wandle Vistas, these should provide a stimulus to further initiatives aimed at improving amenity and physical access.

Physical conservation management works to the area's natural heritage are largely complete. All focus appropriately on the river and its riparian and associated wetland habitats and take place amongst a good deal of related activity. Ongoing monitoring and management will be required if biodiversity and

ⁱ *LW*'s Legacy Planning page can be inspected on <https://wandlevalleypark.co.uk/projects/livingwandlelegacy/>

environmental benefits are to be maintained. The continued engagement of partner bodies seems likely to ensure that this will be the case for example in Catchment Plan Delivery and INNS control, supplemented by the activities of volunteers and local organisations in the case of Morden Hall Park, Ravensbury Park and elsewhere, though there has been a lack of local support in Waddon Ponds.

Partners and the *LW* team have done well to secure engagement from volunteers and the public. Participant testimony both in relation to major ongoing activities such as habitat management (including river 'clean-ups') as well as local infrastructure works such as the MHP Boardwalk suggest that there has been good community 'buy-in'. Participants in one-off 'people' activities such as the three Industrial Heritage Recording projects all report positively on their experience and personal testimony indicates that there has been a lasting personal benefit to a significant number of individuals. The outputs of some projects, such as Wandle Vistas could be of significant benefit in furthering local knowledge of and commitment to, the area's special features, potentially influencing planning policy.

Most projects and much of *LW*'s volunteer and community-related activity include an element of skills acquisition, from film-making/ acting and oral history to reed bed management and freshwater invertebrate identification. Some physical conservation projects have involved professional accreditation, principally in relation to pesticide use.

LW projects exist amongst, and complement numerous other projects and initiatives promoted both by *LW* partners and by other bodies in the area. Locations for *LW* funded activities have inevitably been to some degree opportunistic and while the outcomes and legacy of individual projects are important, their significance in relation to the *LW*'s aims, as embodied in its LCAP is as part of a wider mosaic of activities.

Conclusions

Living Wandle, on completion of outstanding projects, is expected to have amply fulfilled its commitments to delivery beyond those targets laid down in the LCAP. This can be attributed in no small measure to several factors. The first is the motivation and enthusiasm of project leads and volunteers who have delivered many of the project outputs identified above. Another is the energy and focus of the LP team which has been well beyond the call of duty, the support provided by LBW and the commitment and dedication of partners represented on the Steering Group who have overseen project delivery. Finally the openness of all involved to working together over a set of common aims has meant that HLF funding has produced genuine 'value added' and has not been seen merely as another funding stream to progress institutional priorities.

Beyond this, *LW* has helped to generate a common purpose within and beyond the Partnership capable of ensuring that the scheme's legacy is greater than the sum of individual project outcomes. Particularly significant in this respect are:

- A wider understanding of the river and its catchment on the part of local organisations and the wider community
- A significant boost to river management / INNS control beyond the formal responsibilities of riparian landowners, through the agency of the Wandle Trust
- A greater sense amongst residents and communities of local identity focused on the river, its historical associations and its recreational and amenity potential.

To the degree that, beyond the immediate benefits to the areas natural and cultural heritage, for its communities and to individual participants, *LW* has contributed to a synergism between grass-roots activism and institutional collaboration it will have more than proved its worth.

Ambitions to create a Wandle Valley Regional Park predate *LW* and go back at least to 2005 with the formation of the Wandle Trust (now part of the South-East Rivers Trust), the Wandle Valley Forum and a Wandle Valley Regional Park Board, whose 2008 Vision Document⁽³⁾ was supported by all three organisations. The award to the WVRPT of an HLF Resilient Heritage Grant recognises the potential for taking these ambitions forward and continuing some of the activities initiated by *LW*, thus securing an effective legacy for the partnership's activities over the past four years.

Learning points

Key learning points, arising mainly from what has worked well as well but some also from what has not worked so well, offered to future multi-project, multi-partner schemes working at a landscape scale, particularly in urban areas, include:

- Think seriously about evaluation in the development phase and include an outline of what you propose in your funding proposals. Produce a monitoring and evaluation framework, 'owned' by the Partnership as a whole, early in delivery, keep this under review and revise it as required. Embed evaluation – especially of 'intangibles' - in project delivery. Include a thorough interim evaluation/ mid-term review of the scheme as a whole. Consider carefully how you might best use external/ independent consultants.
- Get your biggest projects, especially those involving physical works, underway from the start. This will help to demonstrate achievement and provide momentum to smaller projects and to the scheme as a whole. Reduce risk by sorting permissions and practicalities for key physical works in the development phase; don't leave this until you start delivery.
- Use third party contracted delivery, especially of 'people' projects, with care. This may relieve your team of administration, but does add another layer of overheads, and can prove inflexible, especially when linked to capital works which may be delayed. Local delivery can help secure community 'buy-in' even if it carries more risk.
- Incorporate 'grass roots' projects or a community initiatives (small grant) fund in your application to HLF. Promote it widely from the start of delivery, administered by a committee working alongside your steering group (perhaps chaired by an independent person). This will help root your scheme in the community and landscape, providing a 'bottom up' element to balance 'top down' capital projects or those led by established institutional partners.
- Retain financial flexibility for activities like volunteer training by having a single budget 'pot' rather than separate training allocations for individual projects.
- 'Branding' is important. HLF's insistence on a distinctive profile for its funded schemes is understandable but where a legacy body (which can be separate from the scheme's Accountable Body) is already in place there may be strong reasons for adopting a recognisable title to avoid public confusion and secure commitment to the future.
- Don't skimp on communications. A good website is essential from day 1. An interactive map will help people relate to the landscape as a whole. Use a variety of social media. Ensure contact details of all project participants and volunteers are retained and circulate regular newsletters, centrally and via partners. This will help your scheme to establish an identity against the 'noise' of other activities in the area and to secure 'buy-in' to its wider aims beyond individual projects.

- Publicise and praise completed projects and acknowledge the effort of individuals involved.
- Work closely with your HLF Monitor and Case Officer to adapt your scheme to changing circumstances and respond to new opportunities as they arise. Use underspend or contingency monies creatively. Have some projects ready 'on the shelf'. Even if they cannot be launched within the life of the scheme they will help demonstrate continuing need and possible additional funding opportunities.
- Alongside tight financial procedures conforming to the practices of your Accountable Body, be flexible about governance arrangements, for example by co-opting Steering Group representation beyond initial delivery partners and by development of stronger institutional or community links.
- Make sure that you retain the copyright on all the media and other products arising from funded projects so that they may be made available online or transferred to a successor/ legacy body with public access retained.
- Begin to secure clarity (and build consensus) around shared legacy aspirations for your scheme at an early stage; make this an ongoing focus of work from mid-delivery onwards.

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The full report can be accessed together with appendices on the Living Wandle web pages;
<http://wandlevalleypark.co.uk/the-living-wandle-partnership/>
