

# Water Environment Improvements Project Evidence Form

## Scope & Purpose

This form is to be used by the external Water Environment Governance Group (WEGG), to review, validate and formally approve the length of bluespaces improved for the Water Environment Improvements ODI. The form will be completed by the Water Environment Team with support from project partners and presented to the WEGG. After formal approval, the km of water environment improved will be recorded against the ODI and projects will be marked as completed on the Water Environment Scorecard and illustrated as delivered in the Bluespaces Mapping Portals.

## Project Name

Gores Brook Community Action

## Project Lead

Company/ Organisation	Named Lead	Position
Thames21	Will Oliver	Catchment Partnership Development Manager

## Bluespaces Improved

Year	Claimed	Proposed	Reason For Any Change
5	2.5 km	2.5 km	N/A

## Water Environment Assurance

This project has been reviewed internally to ensure it has delivered benefits above and beyond our baseline and regulatory obligations to improve the water environment accessible to customers across at least two out of three aspects. Following our assurance process, the project was approved by both our internal and external groups for review before delivery. This form presents evidence of project completion and the outputs achieved, to request project sign off.

Level	Project Acceptance Date	Project Approval Date	Completed Project Sign Off Date
Project Team	August 2024	N/A	N/A
Water Environment Steering Group (Internal)	September 2024	September 2024	N/A
Water Environment Governance Group (External)	October 2024	October 2024	May 2025

## Project Timescales

Candidate Project Approved	Project Initiated	Project Completed
October 2024	October 2024	March 2025

## Project Summary and Highlights

### Summary

Thames21 and NWG have delivered a Bluespaces project, working with partners to deliver 2.5 km of water environment improvements at Gores Brook in the Roding, Beam and Ingrebourne catchment.

The Gores Brook is a small (3.3km) WFD classified stream that flows through Dagenham in East London. The stream is heavily modified and is impacted by misconceptions, litter and invasive species. 900 m of the upstream extent of the stream flows through an area of allotments, and the publicly accessible Goresbrook Park. In recent years, local people have complained about the state of the Gores Brook, saying that rubbish, unpleasant smells and dense vegetation (largely made up of nettles and invasive Himalayan balsam) has discouraged public access and restricted viewpoints to the water. A partnership between Barking & Dagenham Park Rangers Team, Thames21 and local community members has been established to address these issues, an improvements undertaken through community activity to remove invasive species, clear waste and identify and monitor pollution sources.

Bluespaces funding allowed the partners to deliver community action days on the brook and neighbouring allotments clearing rubbish, the invasive Himalayan Balsam and other dominant vegetation, and planting the newly cleared spaces with native marginal plug plants and wildflower seeds. A real-time water quality sensor that will be maintained by volunteers will be installed shortly after this Bluespaces project. The purchase of this water quality sensor has been delayed due to complexities in sourcing a sensor that is easy enough to be maintained and collaborated by volunteers, but capable of collecting accurate data from a shallow stream. The sensor will collect accurate data used to support wider ambitions to de-culvert and restore the water environment through Goresbrook Park.

### Highlights

- 100 members of the public and 49 individual volunteers who committed over 190 work hours, were engaged over 10 events
- Access to the Gores Brook has reduced anti-social behavior and encouraged positive environmental behaviour.
- Two tons of invasive Himalayan Balsam removal, dominant vegetation clearance, rubbish collection and native plug planting have improved the quality of the Gores Brook, the state of the water and views of the brook. This has also helped reduce anti-social behaviour on site.



## Maps

### Gores Brook Community Action











Total Length of Accessible Water Environment: 2.5 km

Figure 1: Bluespaces improved at Gores Brook





## Project Outputs, Benefits & Evidence Against Criteria

Access, Facilities & Recreation	
Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access and enjoyment of the water environment will be enhanced through the improved views of the river and increasing opportunities to interact with the Gores Brook, and community river action days to undertake project activities.</li> <li>2. Encouraging the community to take part in these activities and use the area more will benefit physical and mental wellbeing through practical volunteering, and provision of an enhanced water environment for all to enjoy.</li> <li>3. Engagement and enjoyment of the river will influence positive future environmental behaviors and help develop a sense of stewardship for the water environment.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A1: Increases access to, engagement with and enjoyment of the water environment</li> <li>➤ A2: Benefits health and wellbeing through:</li> <li>➤ A3: Influences positive environmental behaviors</li> </ul>
Outputs	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ten community river action days took place across the timeframe of this Bluespaces funding. Views of the Gores Brook were improved through Himalayan Balsam removal.</li> <li>2. Positive feedback on the wellbeing benefits of the volunteer days was received from multiple volunteers (see Customer Testimonies section). Feedback stated the community enjoyment of activities, particularly through their part in dramatically improving the park and visual aesthetics in seeing the brook, and in improved safety.</li> <li>3. Five volunteers that attended a community river action day returned to events for regular engagement with the river. One volunteer engaged through this project has gone on to complete Thames21's Leading Action for Healthy Rivers training course, allowing him to form his own river action group, and gain paid work with Thames21 as an event support coordinator.</li> </ol>	
Evidence	
 	 
Enhanced view of the Gores Brook after Himalayan Balsam removal and litter picking	Volunteers taking part in Himalayan Balsam Removal at a community river action day

Wildlife & Biodiversity		
Expected Project Outcomes		Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The quality of the habitat will be improved by managing dominant vegetation types and planting native marginal plug plants with wildflower seeds, and through litter picks.</li> <li>2. Removal of invasive non-native species Himalayan Balsam which is already underway by concerted volunteer effort will be further supported through this project, with the aim to eradicate Balsam from the entire publicly accessible stretch of the Gores Brook.</li> </ol>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ B1: Improves the quantity, quality and connectivity of habitats</li> <li>➤ B3: Reduces risk or impact of invasive non-native species (INNS)</li> </ul>
Outputs		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dominant vegetation has been managed along the marginal banks of the river. Native plants were assessed before plug planting took place and appropriate species were chosen for plug planting, these were key species and plants that are known to help support bank erosion.  Litter picking took place along the Gores Brook, including through some unique litter picking events, but litter picking was always undertaken throughout the project activities when doing other tasks.</li> <li>2. Two tons of Himalayan Balsam from the upstream point of the brook to the midpoint of the Bluespaces project was removed by local volunteers. This was where the worst of the balsam was located, and by tackling it in an upstream to downstream way, Thames21 hope to have minimised regrowth from the publicly accessible stretch of the brook.</li> </ol>		
Evidence		
<div>   </div> <div> <p>Before and after the Himalayan Balsam at the most upstream patch</p> </div> <div>   </div> <div> <p>Volunteers, the Bluespaces Delivery Manager and the Thames21 Engagement Officer planting native plug plants</p> </div>		



Water Quality	
Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evidence gathered from a real time water quality monitoring sonde to be installed in the Gores Brook through this project will allow focus on the sources of pollutants entering the watercourse, to inform actions which can be followed up to work towards improved Water Framework Directive waterbody status.</li> <li>2. The visual appearance of the brook will be improved through the removal of invasive species and litter and the planting of native plug plants.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ C2: Contributes towards improved status or no deterioration of rivers or bathing waters or protecting drinking water</li> <li>➤ C3: Improves state and function of water, including naturalization, visual appearance, litter and odor.</li> </ul>
Outputs	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Thames21 team are in the process of purchasing a new Seneye real time water quality sensor that will be installed in the northern end of the Gores Brook. Purchasing and installation of the device was delayed due to sourcing a supplier of a real time water quality monitoring sonde that could be easily calibrated and used by citizen scientists, and would collect accurate data. The new sensor will be easy for volunteers to use, and can be calibrated and maintained by the group.</li> </ol> <p>Water quality data will be collected in 2026 and a report will be shared with the Bluespaces team after one year of monitoring.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Litter picks visually improved the brook, alongside the removal of significant amounts of Himalayan balsam, working through a strategic upstream to downstream approach. Volunteers have planted native plug plants within cleared areas of the banks to stabilize the river bank and increase the biodiversity and natural beauty of this watercourse.</li> </ol>	
Evidence	
<div>  <p>Fly tipped waste being cleaned up from Gores Brook</p> </div> <div>  <p>Volunteers plug planting after litter picking the riverbank</p> </div>	

## Additional & Secondary Benefits

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The local community will benefit from this project directly as the work will help address issues of flytipping, littering and dense vegetation that have been a source of complaints to the local council over the last two years.</li> <li>2. The Gores Brook Community Action project aims to develop interest and support for improving the Gores Brook in preparation for a larger project to deculvert the Gores Brook through Parsloes Park (upstream of this location) which is currently in development (see links to other projects section).</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ D2: Provides benefits to local communities, the local economy or NWG</li> <li>➤ D3: Supports strategic project or investment into strategic partnership or landscape/regional activity</li> </ul>

## Outputs

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There has been a notable decline in complaints directed at the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham about the condition of the Gores Brook since this project began. Community members have commented positively on the improved condition and visual aesthetic of the Gores Brook.</li> <li>2. <b>Work on preparing a larger project to deculvert the Gores Brook is underway. The larger project is called <a href="#">Gores Brook Living Landscapes</a>. Thames21 have delivered development work on this funded through the GLA (Greater London Authority) and currently are exploring options for capital funding to deliver this works with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.</b></li> </ol>
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## Evidence

See sections above and Customer Testimonies and Media below



## Customer Testimonies & Media

*Thank you for what you are doing, it's good to see the park improve!*

### Local site user

*Great job you're doing, we used to get a lot of unsavoury people hanging around taking drugs, because they could hide in the bushes, I haven't see them hanging around for a while now. Keep it up.*

### Local site user

*I've now completed Thames21's Leading Action for Healthy Rivers course so I look forward to using what I have learned to do the best I can supporting Thames21, also working to raise awareness and support for improving the Gores Brook in my local area.*

### Local volunteer



The image above is of a local regular volunteer and allotment holder, this allotment straddles the brook and forms the current boundary line for the public part of the river. They now attend almost every event.

*I have been waiting for years to see this brook get some attention and investment, it was under loved and a depressing river to walk past. Now it is getting some much needed attention and I couldn't be happier or more excited! More pleased!*

### Local site user

*It's great to be able to see across the park, before with the screen of vegetation you couldn't see into the park or across the river and it was a scary place, now you can see right across the park and it feels more inviting.*

### Local student



## Lead Partner Quotes & Testimonials

*Through The Gores Brook Community Action project the Barking and Dagenham ranger service has worked alongside Thames21 and the local community to bring great improvement to the condition of the Gores Brook.*

**LBD Ranger Service Member**

*Before we started this project, large amounts of rubbish had accumulated in the brook, with dense margins of invasive Himalayan Balsam blocking views and access. This project has allowed us to clear the brook of rubbish and begin a coordinated approach to reducing Himalayan Balsam, greatly improving the brook for people and wildlife alike.*

**Will Oliver, Thames21**