

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

Chelmer Blackwater Community Reserve

Project Lead

Company/ Organisation	Named Lead	Position
Chelmer Blackwater Community Interest Company	Mark Gallagher, John Buchanan & Simon Wood	Directors

Bluespaces Improved

Year	Claimed	Proposed	Reason For Any Change
Year 3	1km	1km	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	November 2022	N/A	N/A
Water Environment Steering Group (Internal)	November 2022	November 2022	N/A
Water Environment Governance Group (External)	November 2022	November 2022	May 2023

Project Timescales

Candidate Project Approved	Project Initiated	Project Completed
November 2022	January 2022	April 2023

Project Summary and Highlights

Summary

The Chelmer Blackwater Community Interest company has improved 1 km of bluespaces at the 2.2 ha Chelmer Blackwater Community Reserve, bringing the site back into effective conservation management and making the site accessible to the public via a new path, boardwalk and viewing platform.

A historic channel through the reedbed has been restored in partnership with Tesco (the site owners), opening up views from the boardwalk, the viewing platform and allowing species such as kingfisher to feed.

Encroaching scrub has been removed from the grassland according to actions identified in the newly created management plan for the site. Bird boxes and a kestrel box have been installed and events have been held with the local community. There are also plans for the installation of bat boxes and interpretation, and for outdoor educational activities involving the local schools and BioBlitz sessions.

Highlights

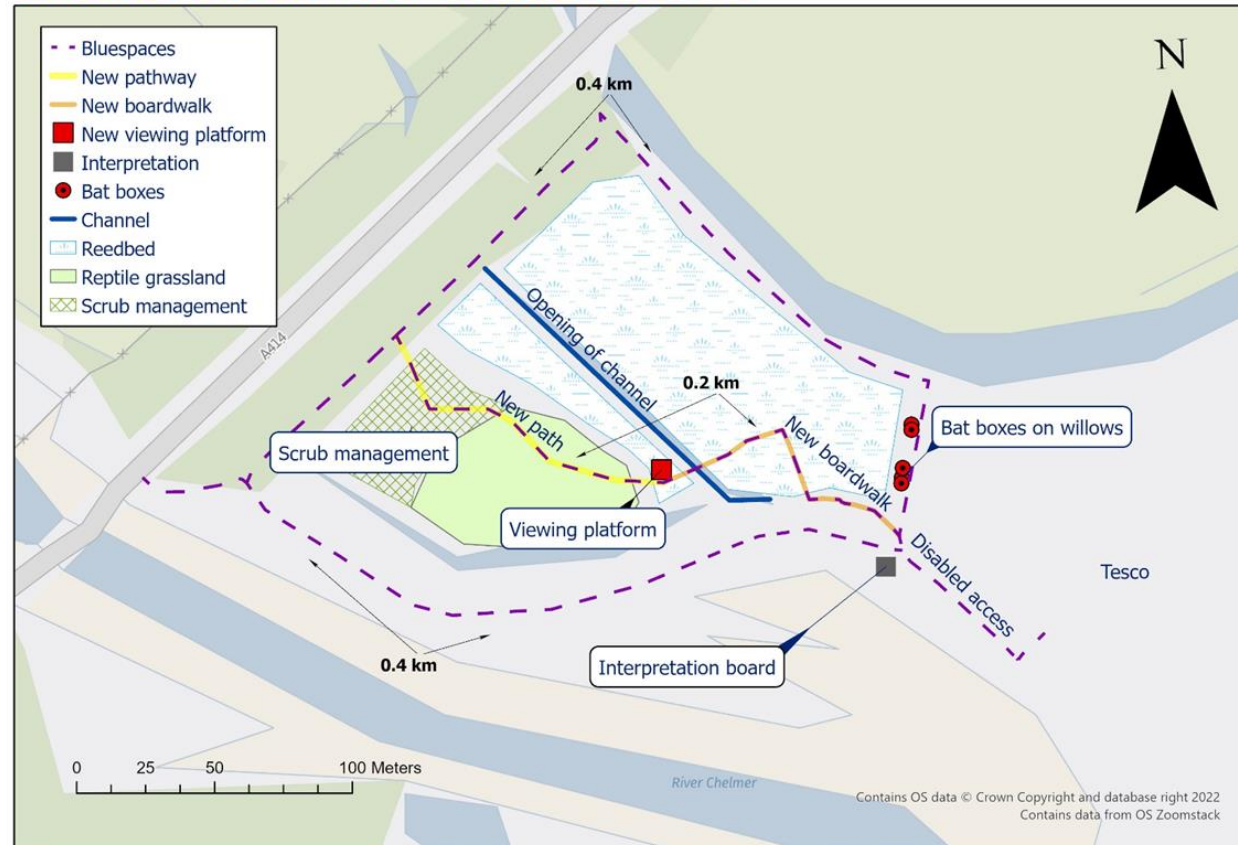
- The viewing platform is all-user friendly and is now connected to the existing public footpath via a ramp to allow wheelchair users access
- A new boardwalk and footpath has been created increasing access, enjoyment and engagement with the water environment
- The historic 'Kings Mere' channel through the reedbed has been restored, opening up views from the boardwalk and the viewing platform and allowing species such as kingfisher to feed



Image: Chelmer and Blackwater Nature Reserve

Maps


Chelmer Blackwater Nature Reserve



Total Length of Bluespaces: 1km

Figure 1: Bluespaces improved at Chelmer Blackwater Reserve

Project Outputs, Benefits & Evidence Against Criteria

Access, Facilities & Recreation	
Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creation of a new boardwalk and footpath to open the reserve to the public and increase engagement and enjoyment of the water environment 2. Installation of a disabled access ramp to the new boardwalk to increase access and enjoyment of the reserve 3. Installation of a new viewing platform to increase access and benefit health and wellbeing 4. Installation of an interpretation board to help influence positive environmental behaviours and awareness of the water environment 5. Engagement with local schools, survey work and bioblitz events to raise awareness and promote engagement with the water environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A1: Increases access to, engagement with and enjoyment of the water environment ➤ A2: Benefits health and wellbeing ➤ A3: Influences positive environmental behaviors
Outputs	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A new boardwalk and footpath has been created increasing access, enjoyment and engagement with the water environment 2. A disabled access ramp has been installed allowing access to the reserve from the nearby supermarket and parking area increasing access for wheelchair users and benefiting health and wellbeing 3. A new viewing platform looking over the opened-up water channel and with views over the reedbed increases access to the water environment and extends the amount of time visitors engage with the water environment 4. An interpretation board has been installed raising awareness and influencing positive environmental behaviour 5. Local schools have been engaged, data gathered through ecological surveys and a Bioblitz held with another planned for July 2023 	
Evidence	
	
<p>Viewing Platform under construction</p>	



New disabled ramp from the carpark area, boardwalk and viewing platform



Visitors utilising the new boardwalk, new paths at the site

Wildlife & Biodiversity

Expected Project Outcomes

1. Opening of the channel will improve the quantity and quality of habitat for amphibians and invertebrates and benefit species such as kingfisher (which have recently been seen perching on the new boardwalk)
2. Management of the grassland habitat for reptiles will help improve the abundance and distribution of these species
3. Management of grassland, open channels and scrub will improve the quality of habitat and create a mosaic of habitats to maximise the diversity of species using the site

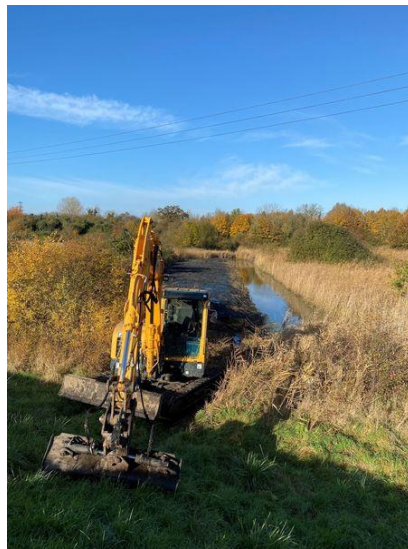
Benefits

- B1: Improves the quantity, quality and connectivity of habitats
- B2: Improves the conservation status and or abundance or distribution of species

Outputs

1. A historic channel 'Kings Mere' through the reedbed has been restored in partnership with Tesco (the site owners), opening up views from the boardwalk, the viewing platform and allowing species such as kingfisher to feed.
2. Bat boxes and longworth traps (for small mammal surveys) have been purchased, Bird boxes including a kestrel box have been installed. A number of volunteer work parties have improved habitats for reptiles by removing scrub from slopes and grassland areas.
3. Volunteer work parties have delivered habitat management to begin the process of restoring species rich grassland on site

Evidence



Work restoring the 'King Mere'





Cleared grassland and habitat pile, kestrel box in situ



Volunteer work party clearing scrub from south facing slope and carrying out a litter pick, bird box installation



Buzzard spotted on site, blue tit in residence in the new bird boxes

Water Quality	
Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Management, care and ownership of this previously neglected site will improve the visual appearance and function of the wetland habitat 2. Reedbed is a priority habitat, and its management will improve the state and function of the water environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ C3: Improves state and function of water, including naturalisation, visual appearance, litter and odour
Outputs	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capital works and volunteer activity has significantly improved the quality of the site for visitors and wildlife 2. Following the restoration of the 'Kings Mere' channel further investigation into the hydrology and silt levels to further improve the wetland habitat has begun in 2023 	
Evidence	
<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Paul Greenham ▶ The Chelmer and Blackwater Community Interest Company</p> <p>9 February at 21:04 · 🌐</p> </div> </div> <p>Finally managed to get over to the reserve today for a long overdue visit, and massively impressed with all of the work that has been done to make it more accessible to Joe Public. The walkways are a superb idea and bring you right to the heart of the place. Looking forward to the warmer months when it will be an excellent evening wander. Thank you to everyone that has been involved in the work!</p> <p>16 Likes</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> 👍 Like ➦ Share </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;">Feedback from member of public- February 2023</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;">Investigating water levels and siltation</p>	

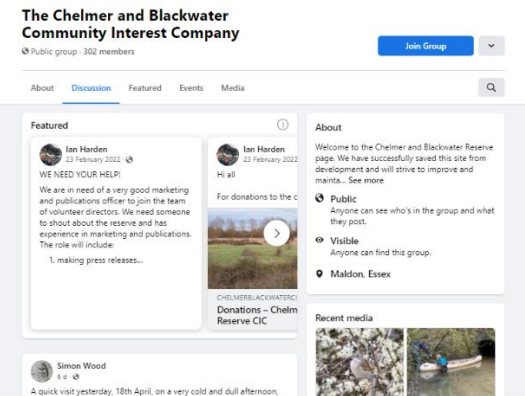
Additional & Secondary Benefits

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The nature reserve is near to the ESW Langford WTW and popular town of Maldon. Supporting a community led project will provide benefits to all – the local population, visitors and to NWG 2. The project will provide support for further development of the reserves community project and help enable engagement and further funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ D2: Provides benefits to local communities, the local economy or NWG

Outputs

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An excellent response from the community and engagement in volunteer work parties has raised the profile of the site 2. Partnership working with Maldon District Council, Essex Field Club, Essex Birdwatching Society, Essex Wildlife Trust and others has developed valuable links and connections for the future. The CIC has begun looking for grants to complete additional access improvements
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Evidence



The Chelmer Blackwater Reserve Community Interest Company



Facebook group and website for community engagement and news

Customer Testimonies & Media



Ian Harden ▶ The Chelmer and Blackwater Community Interest Company

28 November 2022 at 19:38 · 🌐

We have some huge news to share. Stage 1 of the boardwalk and disabled access ramp have been successfully completed by Pearl, and a fabulous job they have done too. See the drone shots provided to us by Simon... [More](#)



19 Likes · 1 comment · 4 shares



Jane Senior ▶ The Chelmer and Blackwater Community Interest Company

31 December 2022 at 10:35 · 🌐

29 December...view of the reserve and 5 minutes later a Kingfisher flew up the Kings Mere! Good things to come.



👍 Like

➦ Share

Commenting has been turned off for this post.



Ian Harden

Awesome, yet to see the kingfisher! Good spot.

4 mths Like Report



Jane Senior ▶ The Chelmer and Blackwater Community Interest Company

28 February at 09:10 · 🌐

Kings Mere and reserve looked good yesterday



📶 📶 📶 67% 🔋 12:20



👍 Like

➦ Share

Commenting has been turned off for this post.

1 share



John Buchanan

Now the piles of cleared shrub have been removed it was great to see how much extra rough grassland has been opened up by the efforts of recent work parties. Hopefully this will prove to be great habitat for meadow flowers, butterflies, meadow ants, grasshoppers, voles etc.

6 mths Like Report



Lynne Maureen

Excellent work guys. Wish I'd been there, love a bonfire 🍷

6 mths Like Report



Simon Wood replied · 1 reply

Discover the Chelmer & Blackwater Nature Reserve in Maldon

18th February

ESSEX LIFE LIFESTYLE SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT THINGS TO DO WILDLIFE

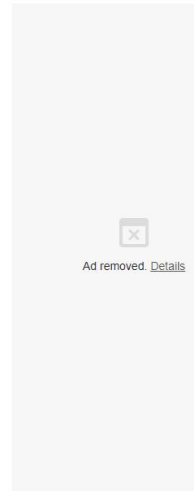


The Chelmer & Blackwater Nature Reserve is now a flourishing habitat (Image: Chelmer & Blackwater Nature Reserve)

By Patrick Forsyth

Share Comments

Uniquely wild, unusually accessible



Article in Great British Life:

<https://www.greatbritishlife.co.uk/things-to-do/23170159.discover-chelmer-blackwater-nature-reserve-maldon/>

Chelmer Blackwater Reserve Testimonial – 3rd May 202

“To whom it may concern,

I have been following the progress of the C&BR with interest for some time now and am pleased to have recently become more involved, taking on the role of ‘School Liaison’ for the Reserve.

I have lived in Maldon for the past 20 years and this area has always been included as a favourite part of my dog walking itinerary.

The boardwalk is an especially lovely place to visit, both with family and friends and my three year old grandson has taken particular pleasure in looking for aquatic invertebrates in the dyke and seeking out ant hills.

My eldest (autistic) son is part of a local SEN (Special Educational Needs) group for young people, and we have recently enjoyed a trip to the reserve to see how much wildlife we could spot and identify. Both they and their carers were surprised and delighted by the great variety of species that we found and everyone was thrilled to see lizards basking in the sunshine. The boardwalk certainly made a difference in our ability to access the site, as one of our members has difficulty in walking. Indeed, the visit was such a success that the group have agreed that they will plan to visit regularly to watch and observe the changing of the seasons at the reserve and to see what else we can add to our species list.

I look forward to watching this little gem of a nature reserve grow and becoming established in the hearts of our local community.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Henson-Webb”

Lead Partner Quotes & Testimonials

“Our first year has been rather a whirlwind!

From a standing start we have achieved far more than we ever imagined. The financial and capital works side of matters has been referred to in the annual report attached, so I will deal with what we have been able to carry out in respect of the management for wildlife.

The grant from Essex and Suffolk Water has helped with the target of improving access to the site which in turn is helping with access to carry out our management work on the site and increase the Reserve’s biodiversity.

When we first took the site over, it had clearly been abandoned, although the vestiges of the now broken up boardwalks etc could be discerned. Access was difficult, although not impossible but made management that much harder. The grass meadows which accounts for half of the total site area was beginning to scrub over at the west end and with the help of six work parties involving 15-25 volunteers at a time, most but not all, has been cleared to give the grassland at the edge of the reserve the chance to recover. The northern slope of the borrowdyke has also been cleared of scrub for about 75% of its length and will provide excellent habitat, on loose, gravelly slopes, for invertebrates. Regular litter picking has removed much of the accumulated debris. Nests boxes for Kestrel and tits have been provided.

The E & SW grant has therefore assisted in achieving our goals for the first year of the management plan. Thank you. “

Simon Wood, Director, 3rd May 2023

Other Supporting Evidence



John Buchanan ▶ The Chelmer and Blackwater Community Interest Company

4 April at 17:31 · 🌐

Enjoyable morning yesterday with Patrick Ellum and Simon Wood meeting the Essex Wildlife Trust's Wilder Communities team and taking them round the reserve. And for once the sun shone! Great to see lots of... More



26 Likes · 2 comments



Simon Wood ▶ The Chelmer and Blackwater Community Interest Company

7 April at 17:21 · 🌐

We have some interest in one of our newly installed nest boxes! Let's hope it comes to something...

A brief walk through the site today also produced **Brimstone, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell** butterflies.



27 Likes



Aerial shot of the new footpaths, board walks and viewing platform