

Finsbury Park Reservoir – Restrict Load on Roof Measure

Finsbury Park Service Reservoir, Haringey, London

Thames Water/Skanska, MWH, Balfour Beatty Joint Venture (SMBjv)

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: *Biodiversity Legacy Award*

Project overview

To protect a disused underground reservoir within Finsbury park from heavy vehicles inadvertently driving over the reservoir and damaging the roof, Thames Water contracted SMBjv to put in protection measures by placing boulders around the reservoir. A 1200m² area was to have new flora instead of boulders, thus enhancing biodiversity.

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

The project did not involve any vegetation removal. The top of the reservoir consists of amenity grassland with a variety of trees and shrubs surrounding the reservoir. The park is open to the public and used for various reasons. The baseline biodiversity units using our biodiversity tool was determined to be **0.3426** habitat units based on poor semi-improved grassland. This was based on an area of 0.1713 hectares.

What were the reasons behind this project ?

The project was designed with biodiversity at the forefront. ‘Zero net loss’ is one of our organisation’s environmental KPIs. As large boulders were being laid around the whole reservoir with no vegetation removal required, it was decided that one side of the reservoir would have new flora planted instead of boulders to deter vehicles driving onto the reservoir. As a result, we envisaged an enhancement in biodiversity through design. Early engagement with the Finsbury Park Authority resulted in their buy in and collaboration to develop a landscape design with an approved species list to be planted.



Aerial view of the project location



Area before biodiversity enhancement

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

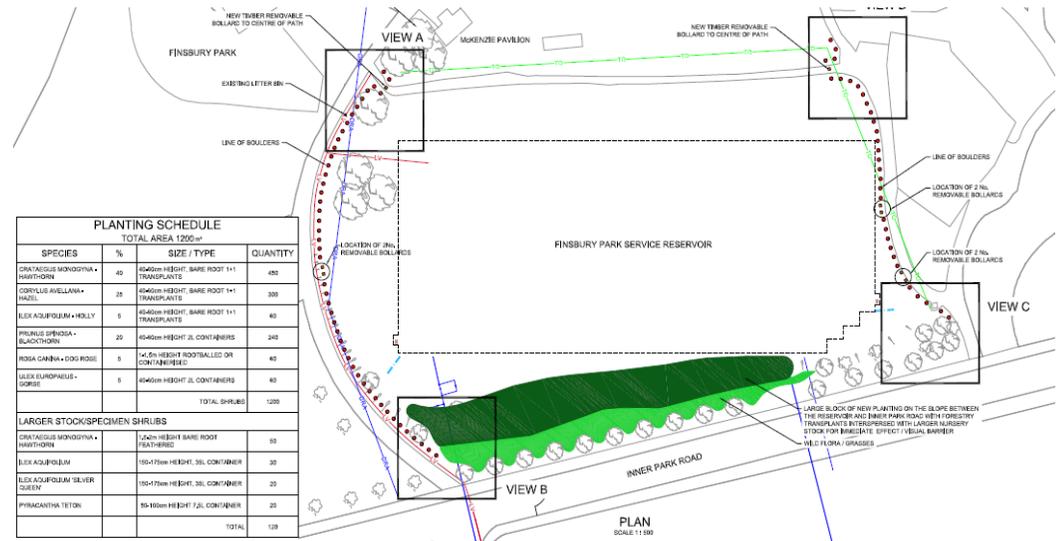
Through collaboration between SMBjv and the Finsbury Park Authority, a definitive plant list and landscape design was created which fit into their ecological criteria and their own maintenance regime. It was agreed that SMBjv would carry out the planting and maintenance for 12 months and then hand over the long term maintenance back to Finsbury Park.

An area of amenity grassland was enhanced to increase its ecological value. This included forestry transplants and wild flora/grass, including 10 different species. This totalled an area of 0.132 ha resulting in a habitat **net gain** of **0.7614** habitat biodiversity units.

A local community group called Friends of Finsbury Park were engaged during the works and were excited to have an ecological habitat created within the park, especially as it would be close to benches where people often sit and relax.

A follow-up visit 12 months on showed the new plants as well as the presence of new fauna. SMBjv have recently showcased this project through various company presentations in a new Biodiversity+ Campaign.

Finsbury Park Reservoir has been one of the flagship biodiversity enhancement projects within SMBjv and has encouraged other projects to follow suit, generating internal competition on which project can achieve higher biodiversity enhancements.



Finsbury Park Landscape Design & Plant List



Panoramic shot of enhanced area 12 months on

Further information

As there was no requirement for any vegetation removal and the fact that this project was within an existing park, the baseline was easily determined and documented by the project ecologist. The project team were instrumental in their early engagement with the Finsbury Park Authority to have an approved design that benefited the park by enhancing its biodiversity allowing the project to achieve net gain within its KPI. A contract was signed with Thames Water's commercial landscapers to cultivate, seed and plant according to the landscape design and plant list. This included monitoring and maintenance for 12 months, eventually handing over to the Finsbury Park Authority for long term management. SMBjv's environmental advisor visited the site 12 months on and evidence of an increase in biodiversity was seen with bees, spiders and lady birds spotted. The short term objectives have been met and our biodiversity units have been approved by the project ecologist. The lessons learnt from this project which can be implemented on other projects is to ensure early engagement with land owners/stake holders as often discussions can cause delays and unnecessary design costs. The long term maintenance must also be agreed early as this can often be neglected, having detrimental affects. This project has not only left a lasting legacy for Finsbury Park, but also for Thames Water. It has helped protect their asset in the long term too.

Project Team

Finsbury Park Authority & Thames Water, SMBjv project team, Friends of Finsbury Park

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

When the project was launched, we saw the opportunity to develop biodiversity into our plans, even though there was no negative impact on biodiversity by this project. We wanted to engage with Finsbury Park Authority and saw this biodiversity enhancement as a great way to give back to them. We also wanted to leave a lasting legacy for Thames Water and use this project as an example of how to do exactly that.



Boulders put in place at the start of new plantation & close-up view of plant variety



Fauna found within the newly planted flora