



tcpa

**PERFECT**  
Interreg Europe



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

## PERFECT: Study Tour 2 learning report – Rainham Marshes and Dagenham Washlands

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017

### Attendance list

Country	Organisation	Individuals	
		Partners	Stakeholders
UK	TCPA	Jessie Fieth Henry Smith	
	Natural England		Martin Moss
Austria	STMK	Christine Schwabeger	Johannes Leitner
The Netherlands	City of Amsterdam	Rob Bakker Age Niels Holstein Imke van Moorselaar	Michaela Schönenberger Geertje Wijten
Slovenia	RDA Ljubljana	Gaja Trbizan	
	Urban Institute of Ljubljana		Sergej Hiti
Slovakia	Bratislava Karlova Ves	Zuzana Hudekova Lucia Lickova	Michal Sutriepka
Italy	Municipality of Ferrara	Antonio Barillari Silvia Mazzanti	Roberta Fusari
	Emilia-Romagna Region		Luisa Ravanello

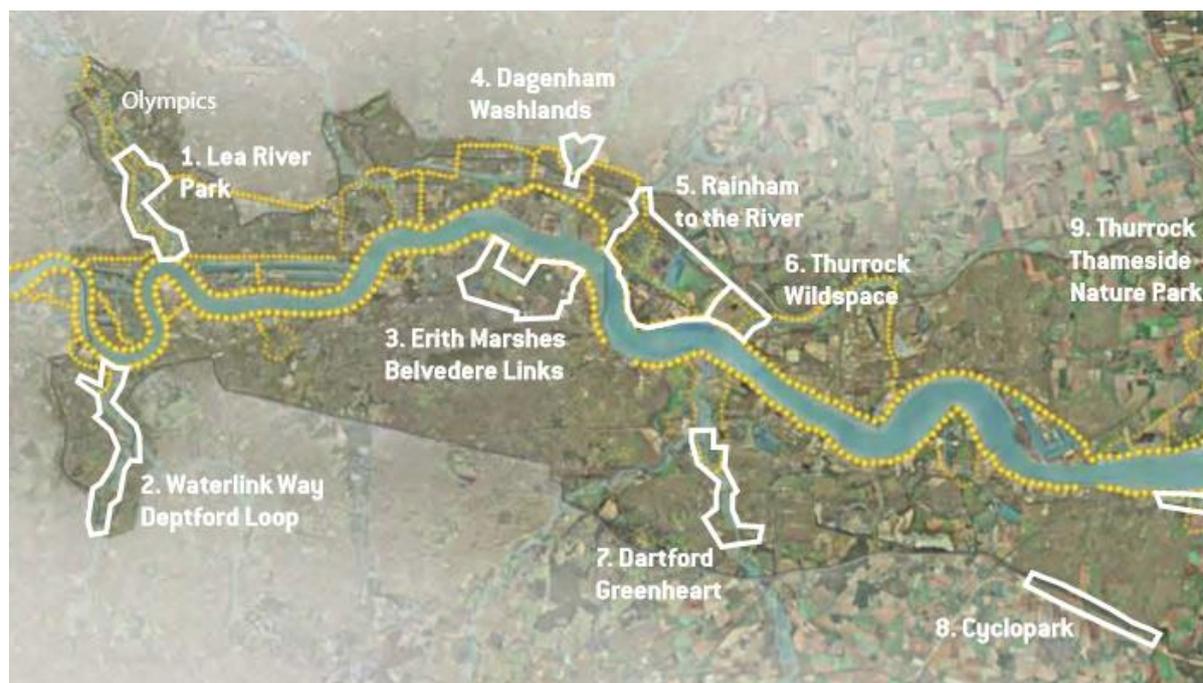
### Agenda

- 09.00** Partners meet at the TCPA office to travel by coach to the Royal Society of Birds (RSPB) site at Rainham Marshes
- 10.30** **RSPB Rainham Marshes** Tea and coffee, followed by tour of site  
**Andrew Gouldstone, Site Manager, RSPB**  
**Robert Flindall, Senior Projects and Programme Manager, L B Havering**
- 12.30** **Lunch**  
Willow Farm Table, New Road, Wennington, Rainham, RM13 9ED
- 13.30** **Travel to Dagenham Washlands by coach**
- 13.45** **Tour of Dagenham Washlands**  
**Simon Pile, Estates Manager, The Land Trust**
- 15.00** Coach returns to London
- 16.30** Partners arrive back at the TCPA office

**Site visit 1: Rainham Marshes RSPB site and EDRF site – Andrew Gouldstone, Site Manager, RSPB and Robert Flindall, Senior Projects and Programme Manager, London Borough of Havering**

**About the site**

This 479 ha ancient marshland landscape was used by the Ministry of Defence as a firing range until the 1990s, and the RSPB acquired their 411 ha portion of the site in 2000 and have since developed it into a nature reserve<sup>1</sup>. It now provides access to green space for the surrounding communities by granting free entry to the reserve for residents of Havering and Thurrock. It aims to encourage interest in local and general conservation, and create a broader understanding of the work of the RSPB.



Map source: [http://parklands.greengrid.co.uk/images/uploads/files/ParklandsUpdate.AW\\_.pdf](http://parklands.greengrid.co.uk/images/uploads/files/ParklandsUpdate.AW_.pdf)

The project has improved the biodiversity of the area, with regular sightings of birds of prey and other rare birds, as well as water voles, grass snakes and dragonflies. It is an international stop over for thousands of migratory birds, as they navigate along the Thames Estuary each year. The reserve hosts an abundance of breeding wading birds in spring and summer, and large flocks of wild ducks in winter.

The reserve is a centre for environmental and outdoor education, and delivers curriculum-linked courses for all age school groups, and fun days out for others such as scouting groups, youth groups and adult groups. On-site activities include pond dipping, climbing and cycling.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/find-a-reserve/reserves-a-z/reserves-by-name/r/rainhammarshes/index.aspx>



*Rainham Marshes RSPB reserve, with a view of the environmentally-friendly visitor centre*

**PERFECT experience and key lessons**

The PERFECT Partners heard about the socio-economic benefits that the reserve has given to the wider area, and how various funding streams were combined and incorporated into projects with a wider place making agenda. Partners learnt about how the investment in GI in the Rainham Marshes scheme has improved the local economy and benefited the local people.



*The PERFECT partners at Rainham Marshes RSPB reserve, hearing from Andrew Gouldstone and Robert Flindall*



*Inside one of the bird hides, hearing from Andrew Gouldstone and Robert Flindall*



*In the visitors centre*



*The view of Rainham Marshes RSPB reserve from the bird hide*



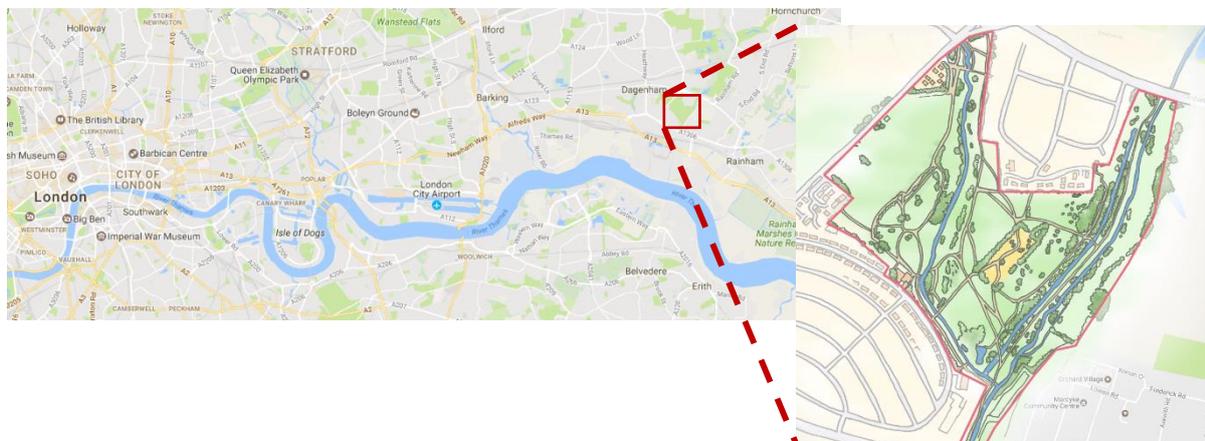
*The view of Rainham Marshes RSPB reserve from the visitor centre*

The Wildspace project, which is adjacent to the RSPB site, was delivered by the LB Havering, and was eligible for £1.4m of ERDF funds which contributed to ensuring the viability of the scheme<sup>2</sup>. The PERFECT partners learnt from Robert Flindall about the process that was undertaken to secure these funds and also about the benefits and challenges which included the economic recession and the impact on the financing of the scheme. This project is becoming a regional visitor destination and links Rainham village with the wider area. It has also facilitated the formation of new partnerships with businesses. A mobile phone app has been produced to help people interact with the project and engage with the multiple benefits of green infrastructure in the area<sup>3</sup>. The Wildspace project will feature in the MAGIC Matrix.

<sup>2</sup> <http://discoverwildspace.co.uk/about/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://discoverwildspace.co.uk/about/>

## Site visit 2: Dagenham Washlands – Simon Pile, Estates Manager, The Land Trust



Map source: <http://www.beamparklands.co.uk/map/#>



*The PERFECT partners walking through Rainham Marshes RSPB reserve*

### **About the site**

Opened to the public in July 2011, this 53 ha park is a multifunctional community asset<sup>4</sup>, which combines its role as a flood defence with providing nearby communities, some of the most deprived in the country, with access to the natural environment. The project builds upon a £4.5 million FCRM scheme by creating an additional 30,000m<sup>3</sup> of water storage, thereby reducing the flood risk to over 570 homes, 90 businesses and major infrastructure such as Barking power station.

It has also increased the biodiversity of the area by adding 12 ha of ponds, lowland fen and wet woodland habitat, as well as eight kilometres of pathways and some natural play facilities. It connects the River Beam to surrounding green spaces through wildlife-rich corridors, therefore contributing to the delivery of the London Thames Gateway Green Grid.

The project has won the following awards:

- Green Flag Award;
- CIWEM Living Wetlands Award;

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.beamparklands.co.uk/>

- CIWEM Best use of Brownfield Award;
- Royal Town Planning Institute's (RTPI) 2012-13 Award for Planning Excellence in the "Leading the way in planning for the community" category.



### PERFECT experience and key lessons

Simon explained how EDRF funds have been spent on Beam Parklands, where problems around high levels of deprivation and flood risk have been tackled by investing in the GI. The social and economic profile of the area has benefited from the investment and levels of crime previously reported have reduced.

The PERFECT partners learnt valuable lessons about how GI can be used as an economic driver, and how this can be used to unlock investment (including securing ERDF financing) in new commercial developments by, for example, using GI to reduce the flood risk of an area. The contributions that GI can make to tackling the social problems in an area were also made clear.



*Beam Parklands*

This can be taken forward by partners as they seek to influence key stakeholders in the next stages of the project, and when identifying strengths and weakness in their current GI by carrying out audits and baseline surveys. The example of Dagenham Washlands will feature in the MAGIC Matrix.



*Simon Pile from The Land Trust explaining the project to the PERFECT partners*



*One of the areas of natural play equipment*



*The park has eight kilometres of pathways*