

The Arrowhead

Urban areas host some of our most vulnerable habitats, and their biodiversity has been greatly affected by both historical and present-day man-made threats. The more plant, insect and animal species there are in one area the greater the biodiversity and the healthier the ecosystem. All urban green infrastructure, including parks, gardens, green roofs, and areas like the Arrowhead, are potentially important biodiversity habitats.

Habitat restoration as planned and carried out by the project is designed to encourage biodiversity, its riverside position rendering the Arrowhead particularly valuable. Water is vital to the lifestyle of much of our wildlife, with the river itself providing a wildlife corridor linking it to other areas for a range of animals from fish to bats.

Since May 2008 bats have been officially recognised by the Government as bioindicators of the health of the environment. As our wildlife continues to struggle against many threats, it is vital to have indicators of whether current conservation efforts are working, so on-going bat surveys are included in future plans, helping to gain a greater understanding of how our wildlife is faring."

Multiple studies also show the positive links between biodiversity-rich environments and health and well-being. It is now generally acknowledged that access to nature is vital for good mental and physical health at all ages. More and more initiatives are using nature for green exercise and therapeutic purposes. Studies have suggested that exposure to greenspace has an effect on reducing stress, physical recovery from illness and enhanced mental and physical wellbeing amongst other things. It is increasingly obvious that urban 'greenspace' can be as important as open country, whether by providing opportunities for physical activity, play and leisure, or less directly by enhancing neighbourhood aesthetics, reducing the fear of crime, with improvements ranging from better mental health outcomes, to associations with increased healthy behaviours.

I believe that providing access to this valuable site, as well as offering a range of nature based activities as planned by the project, will benefit not only the wildlife but also the wellbeing of the community, through emotional, social and psychological benefits.