Walthamstow Wetlands

The opening up of Walthamstow reservoirs to the public has long been a vision of the Walthamstow Wetlands partnership headed by Waltham Forest Council, who last year secured £4.47million of funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

This added to just over £1m already committed by the Council, £1.84m from Thames Water, who own the site, and £750,000 from the Greater London Authority (GLA).

Waltham Forest Council Leader Chris Robbins said, “We’re hugely excited about the Wetlands project. It’s a beautiful corner of the borough that is sadly under-utilised by local people as things stand.

“By opening it up we can not only ensure the long term conservation of a valuable heritage asset, and allow local residents to connect to a place they can enjoy, but we can also encourage more people to use the site to access other boroughs.”

Thames Water Chief Executive, Martin Baggs, said, “The Walthamstow reservoirs are vital in helping us to supply drinking water to millions of customers across London, so it’s fantastic that they can also double-up as a haven for wildlife and a place for people to enjoy the great outdoors.

“These improvements will really boost the wide range of opportunities currently on offer to anglers and the community in Waltham Forest, and benefit the health and wellbeing, and quality of life, of all those who choose to use the facilities in the future."

The London Wildlife Trust will undertake the day-to-day management of the site, enhancing habitats for a wide range of species whilst ensuring that visitor numbers do not adversely affect the site’s important wildlife. The Trust will encourage volunteering and active participation by local communities in the management and conservation of the site, and over 100 schools have expressed interest in visits and educational opportunities.

The works that have now got underway will allow a partial opening next year, with a full opening planned for 2017. There will be four new entrances, a new recreational cycling area and footpath, and free public access during the site’s opening hours. Improved habitats will help nature conservation and the site’s industrial heritage will also be preserved, including restoration of a locally listed pumping station to house a visitor centre, café, exhibition space, viewing terrace and educational space.

Notes for editors

- Over 300,000 people live within two miles of the site, which is located a short walk from Tottenham Hale and Blackhorse Lane stations, enabling access by public transport from across north east London.
- Created by the Victorians, the 200 hectare site is one of the biggest sources of supply for London’s drinking water, is the largest fishery in the city and a site of international importance for the wildlife.
- Walthamstow Wetlands won the 2012 London Planning Awards Best Conceptual Project and Mayor of London Boris Johnson has described it as “London’s best kept secret”.

Further information

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