New learning centre for landmark London nature



Family pond dipping at Camley Street Natural Park London Wildlife Trust

A London nature reserve is set to become a world-class nature and learning hub, thanks to support from National Lottery players.

Camley Street Natural Park, which is just an eight-minute walk from King's Cross station, attracts up to 20,000 visitors a year seeking the chance to see wildlife in the heart of London.

Now London Wildlife Trust (LWT) has been awarded development funding of £77,300 to progress plans to build a new learning centre and enhance biodiversity, access and interpretation at the park, as well as implement an activity programme to inspire the next generation of urban nature conservationists and activists.

From coal drop to coal tit

From 1860 to the late 1960s, Camley Street was the Western Coal Drop, where coal coming into the city from King's Cross was bagged to transport to London businesses. Just over 30 years ago the site was saved from development by local campaigners and opened to the public as an inner city nature reserve.

Gordon Scorer, Chief Executive of LWT said: “The creation of Camley Street Natural Park was a cutting-edge concept in the early 1980s. Urban nature reserves can now be found around the world, a movement that has grown from UK roots. We thank HLF for supporting the Trust as we work towards creating this important new visitor and learning hub, a place that will enlighten, educate and inspire for many decades to come.”

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Updated interpretation will pay tribute to the park's industrial heritage, while also introducing new technology, including webcams revealing birds rearing their young in nearby nest boxes and the underwater life of the nearby canal.

A green gem

Roughly the size of a football pitch, Camley Street Natural Park supports a range of habitats including woodland, grassland, ponds and reedbeds, and is home to species like the kingfisher, reed warbler, and bats that hunt for night-flying insects and moths.

Stuart Hobley, Head of HLF London, said: “Camley Street is a green gem in the heart of King’s Cross, and provides incredible access to nature for local people of all ages. This project is a fantastic demonstration of how natural heritage can exist and thrive alongside urban redevelopment, and we are delighted that National Lottery players are able to support it.”