

CANAL PARK IMPROVES BIODIVERSITY

In 2019, the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust initiated a major project to improve the biodiversity along the line of its canal, including the 4-acre Shrivenham Canal Park it owns.

The project aims to establish the park, which is adjacent to the canal, as a community and environmental asset. It hopes to increase the number and type of habitats to attract species back into the park, while implementing a maintenance strategy that preserves and encourages biodiversity gains. Visitors will learn about biodiversity and habitat creation through community engagement events.

The work was supported with a £14,000 grant from IWA, which enabled studies of the flora and fauna, and plans to be drawn up.

Among steps taken to improve biodiversity in the park are leaving areas of longer grass, sowing wildflowers and planting for species attraction, bird and bat boxes, bug “hotels”, habitat refuges within the copse, sanctuary zones and natural fencing.

Information panels, signage and seating will all help to make the park a place people want to visit. A key feature will also include re-watering the 125-metre section of canal, enabling canoes and paddleboards to be launched from the existing slipway.

This project is a small part of the long-term plan for the eventual reopening of the 70-mile canal across Oxfordshire and Wiltshire.

