



# Heathrow Biodiversity

Celebrating 15 years of  
Heathrow's Biodiversity  
Benchmark Award.

**Heathrow**

# Welcome

**At Heathrow we currently manage around 170 hectares across 13 sites for nature conservation purposes – roughly 14% of the entire airport footprint.**

The airport sits between two large and ecologically important river systems: the River Colne and the River Crane. Our biodiversity sites sit between these, providing habitats for wildlife and creating corridors for species to move naturally between sites across the local landscape.

This connectivity makes Heathrow an important regional site for nature conservation, linking urbanised areas to parts of the wider countryside. We will continue to conserve these green spaces for future generations to enjoy, supporting flora and fauna to thrive around the airport.

Heathrow has operated a comprehensive biodiversity management programme for many years, which is part of our commitment to running the airport responsibly. Our sites include freshwater lakes, reedbeds, grasslands and woodlands. They contain a wealth of wildlife and make an important contribution to local green spaces, with several sites fully or partially open to the public. Our approach varies between sites in order to benefit the specific flora and fauna evident within each. Techniques we use include woodland coppicing, hedgerow management and invasive species control.

# Our Plan

## HEATHROW 2.0: CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLANET

OUR SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Heathrow

**Heathrow 2.0: Connecting People and Planet is the airport's sustainability strategy which launched in February 2022. Building on Heathrow's record of sustainability leadership, it sets out how we will tackle the most material issues for our sector and make a difference this decade.**

Within Heathrow 2.0, "Nature Positive Airport" is a key area of focus and we are working to develop a Nature Positive Plan (NPP) which will consider Heathrow's relationships with nature, and set out actions we will take to reduce impacts and deliver enhancements that benefit the natural environment. The plan will consider Heathrow's key touch points with nature, from a local, national and global perspective, and take account of the outcomes of the UN COP15 Biodiversity Conference and the evolution of the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) to present Heathrow's response to halting and reversing nature loss.

As part of Heathrow 2.0 we will also continue to manage our 13 biodiversity sites. In 2023 we compiled a new five year management plan that will focus on maintaining and improving habitat quality across the sites.

The continued management of these biodiverse areas will help ensure their protection and enhancement which will provide important refuges for wildlife in an urban landscape.



# Challenges we face

**In implementing our plan we face several challenges. The implementation will require dedication and input not only from our entire airport team but also from our partners locally, national and globally.**

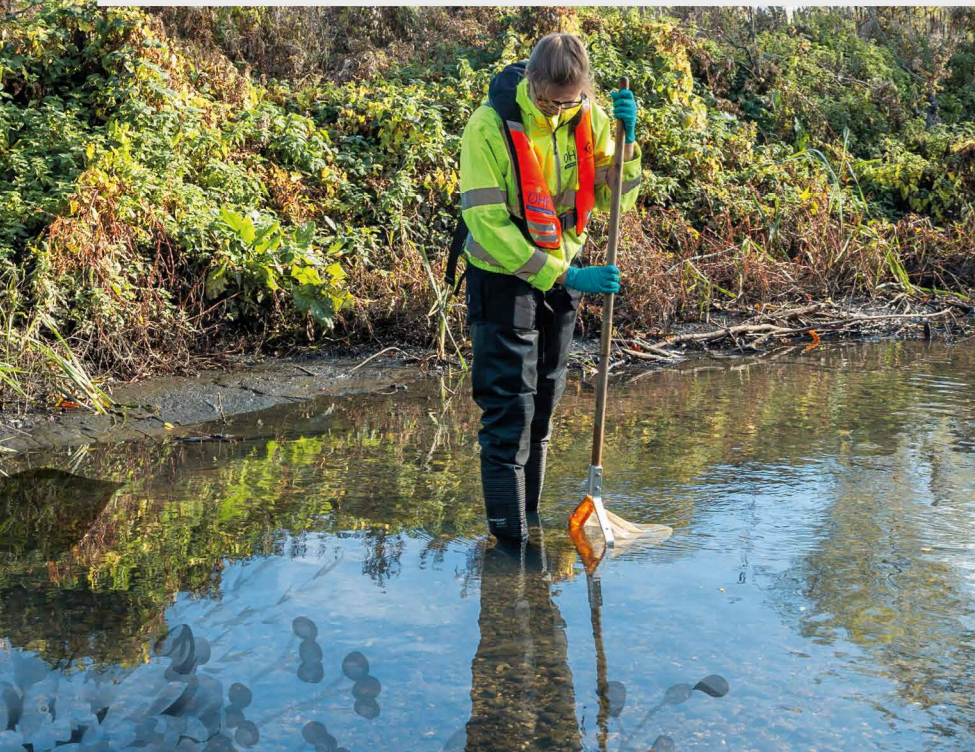
To meet our goals, within the desired timescales, is going to require immediate and in some cases significant action. It can be difficult to change the way we do things, but we believe that we have the necessary dedication and, more importantly, the team to achieve our goals. The climate is changing, and we are already seeing the effects of this with new record temperatures as well as an increase in extreme events such as wildfires and flooding.

# Looking Forward

**Moving forward we will finalise and publish the NPP. We will then implement the plan working with our stakeholders to ensure its successful implementation. We will continue to publish regular reports on our progress towards our sustainability goals.**

We will continue with our biodiversity site management and seek to retain the 'Wildlife Trusts' Biodiversity Benchmark Award' each year by conducting an annual surveillance audit with the Wildlife Trusts. We will continue to implement our site management plans conducting the on-site management and conducting regular ecological surveys. Our on-site biodiversity team will ensure the management plans are implemented correctly and the biodiversity management system is kept updated.

Looking forward this is an exciting opportunity for nature management at Heathrow airport. The NPP will help build upon our biodiversity management success and provide measurable benefits at this crucial time for the environment and nature in particular.





**Heathrow looks after more than just terminals and runways – we have a huge interest in ecology and green spaces, and in finding ways to preserve them for future generations to enjoy.**

Heathrow's biodiversity sites support a range of flora and fauna to thrive around the airport and we're delighted to have been recognised for our continued commitment by winning the Wildlife Trusts' Biodiversity Benchmark Award for 15 years in a row. We're committed to operating Heathrow sustainably, now and in the future, and continually building on our success.

**Thomas Woldbye**  
Chief Executive Officer



Our biodiversity work isn't just Heathrow, it's Team Heathrow as we work closely with our partners, Ecology and Habitat Management Ltd (EHM) who drive forward our commitments for biodiversity.

We have been recognised by being awarded Client of the Year and achieved the Legacy Award for the Prince's Lakes site by CIRIA through the Big Biodiversity Challenge. These achievements along with the Wildlife Trust Benchmark Award are great ways to celebrate our projects and the successes of our collaborative work with EHM. Looking ahead we will start to see the impacts of climate change and this work is key to keep a healthy community and planet. I'm very proud of our work and partnership.

**Manuella Pestana**  
Industrial Engineer Environmental

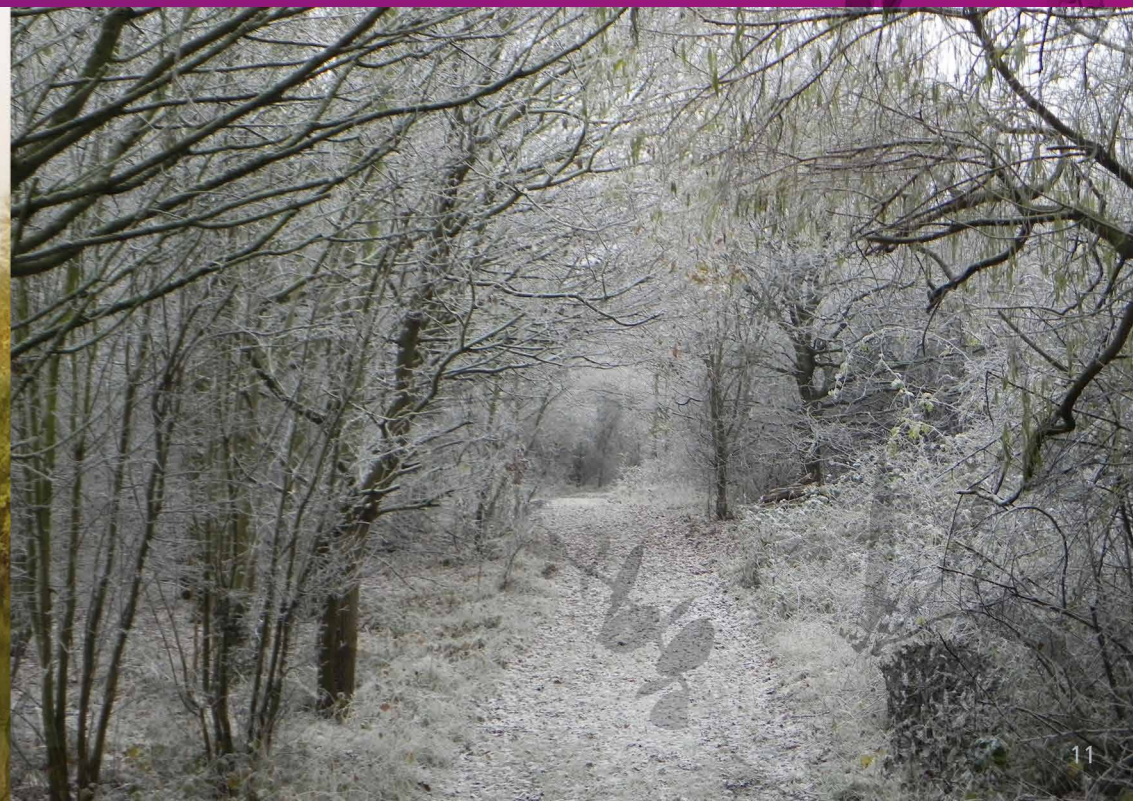
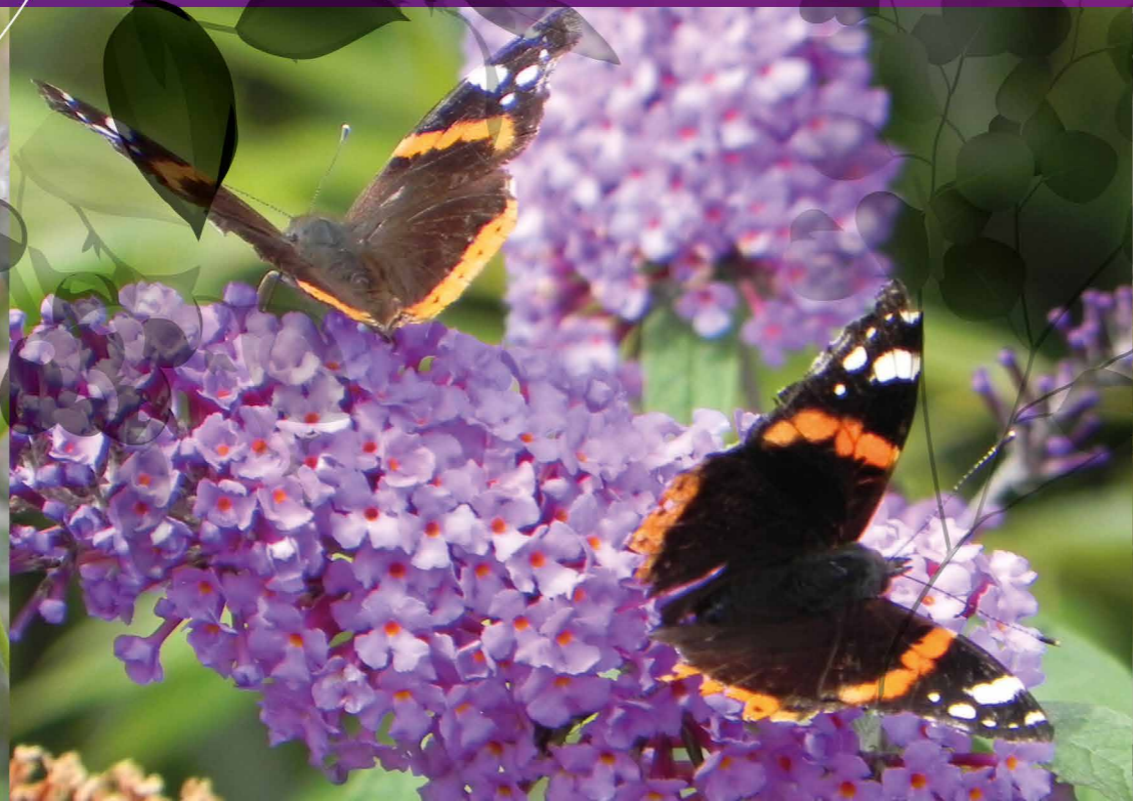


Heathrow has shown great commitment to biodiversity and the public park sites over the years and the 15-year benchmark award is testament to our nature positive approach. The clearest testament to this was during the pandemic where we clearly saw the need to keep investing in these sites that enabled our local communities to use them for their daily exercise and wellbeing.

This book celebrates our sites through the seasons and gives the reader a glimpse of the habitat, species, and biodiversity around our airport that passengers rarely see. There is more to Heathrow than you may think.

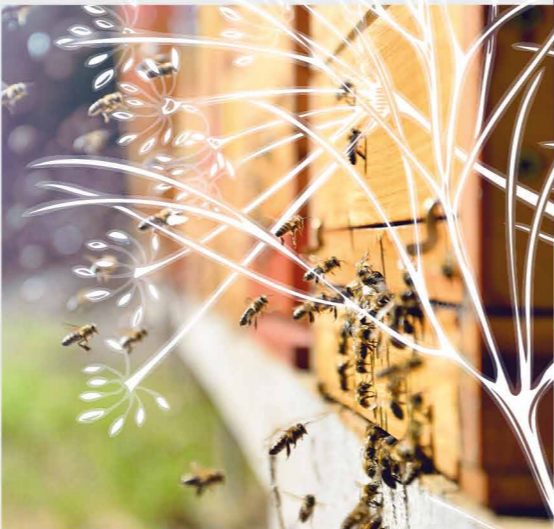
**Gavin Payne**  
Director of Engineering and Baggage

# Seasons



## Spring

Spring is generally a very busy time for biodiversity management at Heathrow. As the multitude of spring flowers bloom across our grasslands, wetlands and woodlands we are busy conducting ecological surveys and assessments. We are also controlling the spread of non-native invasive species where they occur, species such as floating pennywort and giant hogweed. Spring is when we have cattle arrive on some of the sites grazing across a variety of habitats where they help to create a diversity of different micro habitats which in turn helps to encourage different species. We are also busy with our beehives conducting spring inspections to ensure they're all in good health.



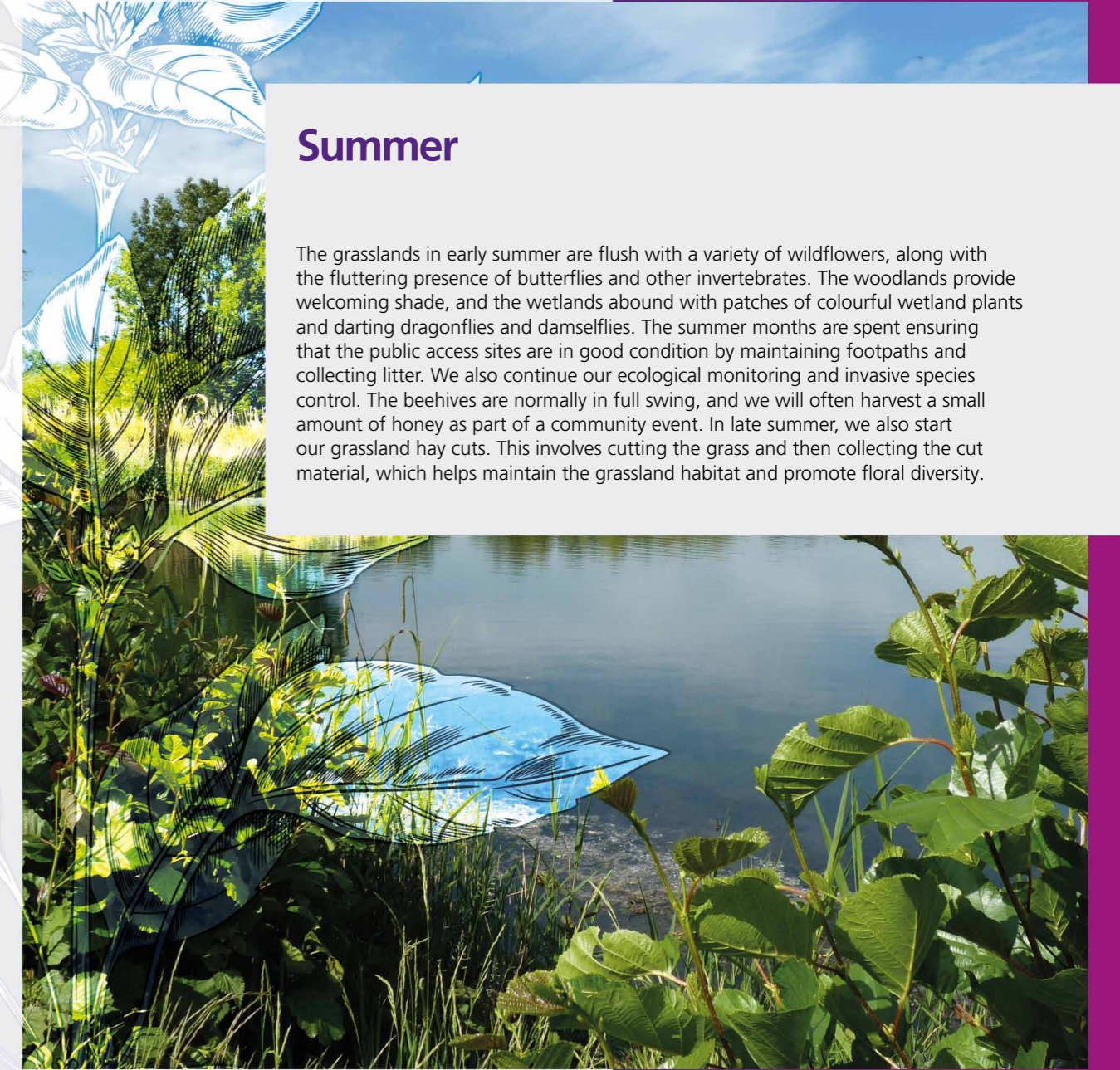
*From you have I been absent in the spring,  
When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,  
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,  
That heavy Saturn laughed and leaped with him.  
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell  
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,  
Could make me any summer's story tell,  
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:  
Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,  
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;  
They were but sweet, but figures of delight  
Drawn after you, – you pattern of all those.  
Yet seem'd it winter still, and, you away,  
As with your shadow I with these did play.*

Sonnet 98: From you have I been absent in the spring.  
By William Shakespeare



*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate.  
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date.  
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed;  
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
 By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed.  
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade  
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;  
 Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,  
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,  
 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*

Sonnet 18: Shall I Compare Thee To A Summer's Day?  
 By William Shakespeare



## Summer

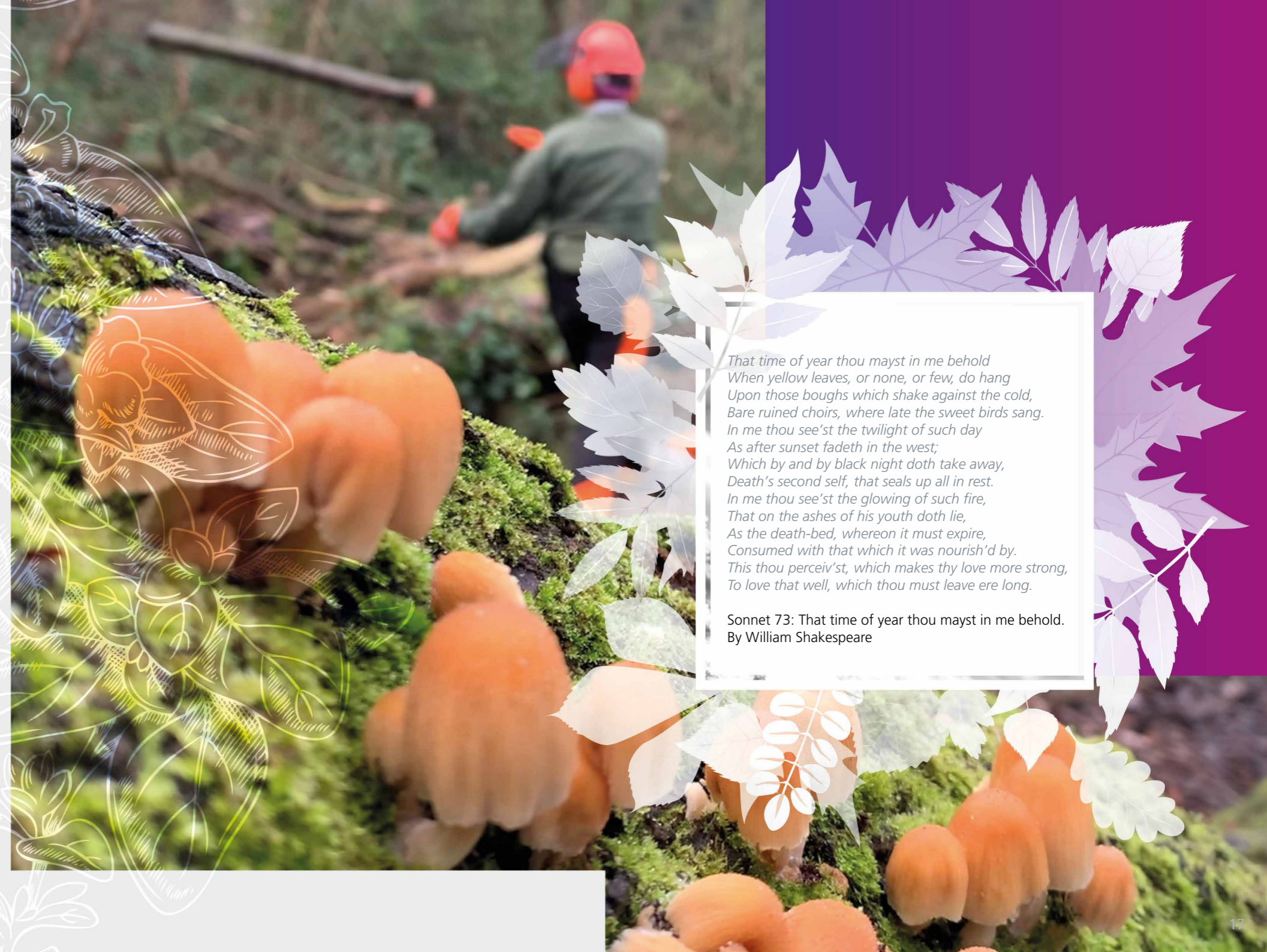
The grasslands in early summer are flush with a variety of wildflowers, along with the fluttering presence of butterflies and other invertebrates. The woodlands provide welcoming shade, and the wetlands abound with patches of colourful wetland plants and darting dragonflies and damselflies. The summer months are spent ensuring that the public access sites are in good condition by maintaining footpaths and collecting litter. We also continue our ecological monitoring and invasive species control. The beehives are normally in full swing, and we will often harvest a small amount of honey as part of a community event. In late summer, we also start our grassland hay cuts. This involves cutting the grass and then collecting the cut material, which helps maintain the grassland habitat and promote floral diversity.





## Autumn

In the autumn the biodiversity sites blaze with colour. The grasslands put on their last flush of green whilst the woodlands are resplendent in reds, browns and oranges. The woodlands also support a variety of fungi including species that are new to science. Once autumn begins we start some of the heavy vegetation works such as woodland coppicing. This is an ancient woodland management technique that helps promote structural diversity which creates different habitat niches that attract different species. We provide a late treatment to some of the invasive plant species such as Japanese knotweed. The beehives are checked and monitored in preparation for the winter months.



*That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.  
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west;  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.  
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed, whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.  
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,  
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.*

Sonnet 73: That time of year thou mayst in me behold.  
By William Shakespeare



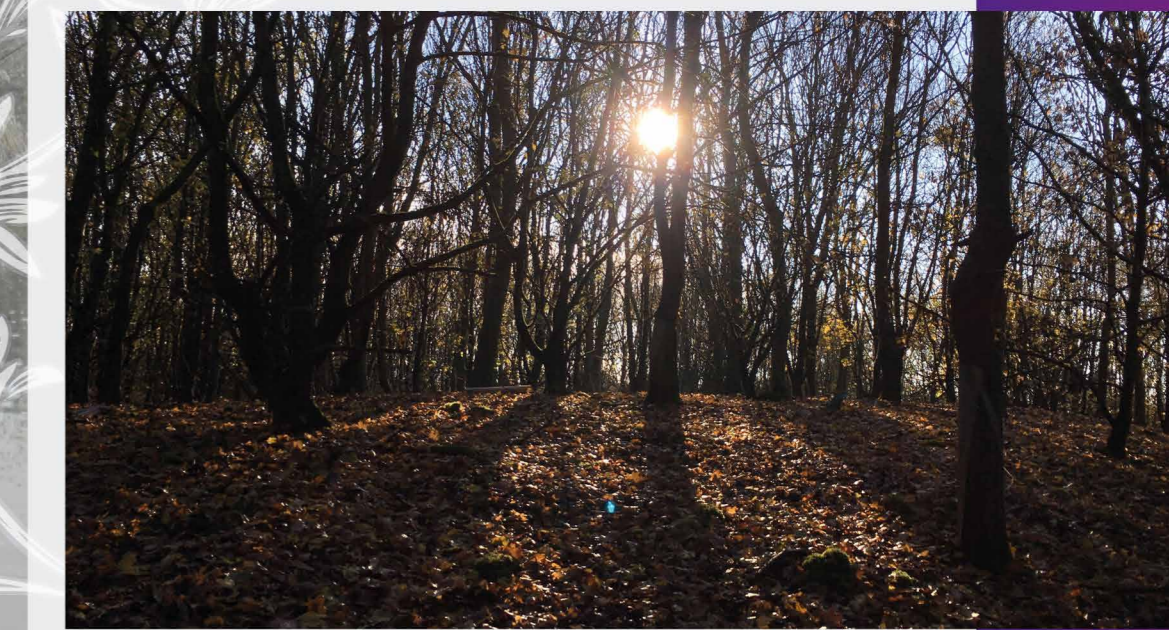
*How like a winter hath my absence been  
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!  
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!  
What old December's bareness everywhere!  
And yet this time remov'd was summer's time,  
The teeming autumn, big with rich increase,  
Bearing the wanton burthen of the prime,  
Like widow'd wombs after their lords' decease:  
Yet this abundant issue seem'd to me  
But hope of orphans and unfather'd fruit;  
For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,  
And thou away, the very birds are mute;  
Or if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer  
That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.*

Sonnet 97: How like a winter hath my absence been.  
By William Shakespeare



## Winter

The winter months bring a bleak beauty to the biodiversity sites and though the number of active species is reduced the wetland habitats attract several wintering waterfowl including the nationally rare Smew. It is still a busy period where we continue with habitat management works across the sites. This includes continuing the coppicing works as well as scrub control, reedbed management and any tree planting. The beehives are monitored but are generally quiet through the cold weather. In late winter we also trim back some of our established hedgerows, only cutting back a section of the hedgerow at a time to promote structural diversity.



# Awards



## Biodiversity Benchmark Award

The Wildlife Trusts' Biodiversity Benchmark is the only standard that certifies management of a business landholdings for wildlife. The Biodiversity Benchmark is rigorously assessed on an annual basis and is designed to complement ISO14001. The award tests the design and implementation of a business's management systems to achieve continual biodiversity

enhancement and protection on their landholdings. Heathrow is one of only 13 organisations to hold the award and was the first airport to be certified.

Heathrow first obtained the award in 2008 and has retained it every year since. We continuously demonstrate biodiversity enhancements and have received praise from the Wildlife Trust auditors. We even achieved two consecutive audits without any negative observations, a first for the benchmark award. Working towards retaining the benchmark over the years has formed the basis of our biodiversity management and helped drive our ambition of biodiversity enhancement.

Orchard Farm, Twin Diverted Rivers, Oaks Road, Mayfield Farm, Princes Lakes, Clockhouse Lane Pit, Two Bridges Farm, Cains Lane, Camp 4 and Causeway Nature Reserve have all met the Benchmark Award assessment criteria, which demonstrates Heathrow's continuing commitment to improving biodiversity on its sites through its land management practices since 2008.



## CIRIA Awards

CIRIA provides an annual award called the Big Biodiversity Challenge to recognise projects that 'do one thing' to enhance biodiversity. This award has several categories with the application process involving compiling detailed submissions. In 2019, we won the Biodiversity Legacy Award for our management of the Princes Lakes site. In 2021, we won the client award for our management of the biodiversity sites. The judges were impressed by the long-term commitment and high levels of enthusiasm for ecological mitigation and management at scale.

### More info;

Legacy award 2019



Client award 2021



# Community and Sustainability

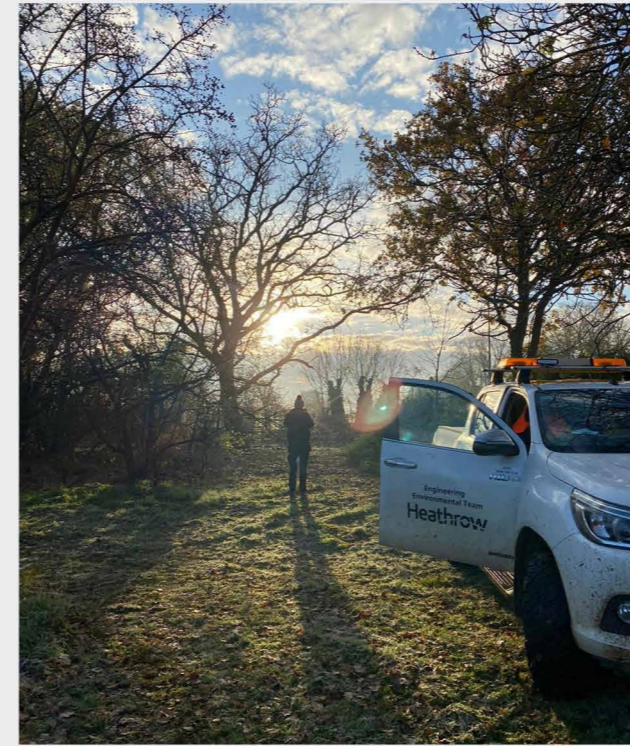


**At Heathrow, colleagues are our greatest strength, with many of them local residents and active members of local communities already. They go above and beyond to make Heathrow a great place to live and work, leading on projects to support their neighbourhoods through initiatives like primary school reading and volunteering, maintaining the flora and fauna at our biodiversity sites and supporting community gardens, to name a few.**

We are proud to connect our colleagues with the great outdoors and local communities, to ensure younger generations appreciate the unique and natural beauty of their local habitats and have access to vital outdoor opportunities.

Our volunteer and connecting communities' initiatives form part of the Giving Back Programme, pledging to support more than one million local people by 2030. More information on the programme can be found here:





# Location of Biodiversity Sites

Heathrow manages 13 sites covering approximately 170 hectares. The sites in blue are the sites that have been awarded the Biodiversity Benchmark Award.

**These are:** Orchard Farm (2), Twin Diverted Rivers (3), Oaks Road (6), Mayfield Farm (7), Princes Lakes (8), Clockhouse Lane Pit (9), Two Bridges Farm (10), Cains Lane (11), Camp 4 (12) and Causeway Nature Reserve (13), have all met the Benchmark Award assessment criteria, which demonstrates Heathrow's continuing commitment to improving biodiversity on its sites through its land management practices since 2008.

- |                               |                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Colne Valley         | <b>8</b> Princes Lakes            |
| <b>2</b> Orchard farm         | <b>9</b> Clockhouse Lane Pit      |
| <b>3</b> Twin Diverted Rivers | <b>10</b> Two Bridges Farm        |
| <b>4</b> Robb's Nursery       | <b>11</b> Cains Lane              |
| <b>5</b> Spout Lane           | <b>12</b> Camp 4                  |
| <b>6</b> Oaks Road            | <b>13</b> Causeway Nature Reserve |
| <b>7</b> Mayfield Farm        |                                   |





## 1 Colne Valley

Created from the inert waste from the Terminal 5 development, the hilly meadows sit between the River Colne and M25. Although a young site the species rich meadows here have been found to hold rare species of spiders and beetles, including some not previously recorded in Greater London before. In late summer hundreds of butterflies can be found drinking nectar from the flowers.



## 2 Orchard Farm

A small plot of land that was moved from the site where Terminal 5 now sits to its current location. This was done principally because of some rare plant species present, including Water Avens, a plant thought to occur nowhere else in the wild in Greater London. Other species of interest here include Grass Snake, Banded Demoiselle and rare spiders and beetles.



## 3 Twin Diverted Rivers

The Longford River (which supplies water to Hampton Court Palace's fountains) and Duke of Northumberland River (which supplies water to Syon Park) wind their way round the airport in concrete channels from the northwest corner, anti-clockwise to the southern side of the airport. They were diverted as part of the Terminal 5 project. The rivers hold large populations of fish, including Eels, and an array of aquatic wildflowers, such as Marsh Woundwort, that were planted and have since spread along the man-made in-river features that were designed to create refugia for wildlife. Reed Warblers and Reed Buntings nest in the reedbeds and Kingfishers can often be seen fishing from a favoured perch. The species-rich grasslands present alongside the rivers contain orchids, and are the haunt of insects such as Burnet Moths, Small Heath butterflies and grasshoppers.



## 4 Robb's Nursery

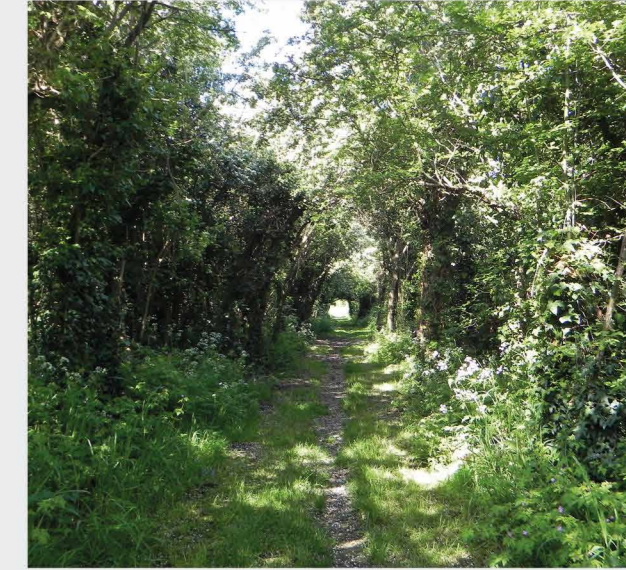
A recently reconditioned site from a former contractor's yard back into an area of floodplain alongside the River Crane. Though only a couple of years old this site already hosts many plant species including the rare Native Black Poplar and interesting fauna including, Kingfisher, Harvest Mouse and Barn Owl.



## 5 Spout Lane

A small site comprised mainly of dry grassland surrounding a raised reservoir.

Wildlife interest is principally in its wildflowers and variety of insects present.



## 6 Oaks Road

One of the public sites, this former agricultural plot now hosts areas of dry grassland with an area of mixed woodland and a block of mature hawthorns, which contains Bluebells and Sweet Violets. This site is particularly good for a variety of bees, butterflies and hoverflies. This is one of the few sites where we have found rare Stag Beetles at the airport.





## 7 Mayfield Farm

Heathrow's constructed wetlands area is a unique water management site that uses floating reedbeds as part of the process in cleaning water from the airport. The reedbeds are home to warblers, buntings, moths and dragonflies.

The outflow pond is home to newts and other amphibians, warblers and wintering Water Rail. The main part of the site is surrounded by species-rich grasslands and hedgerows. We have tried to get the rare Water Avens plant to grow here with some initial success.



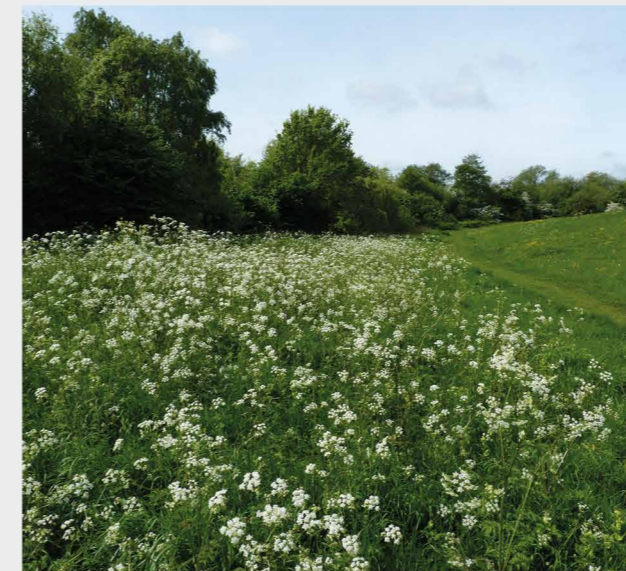
## 8 Princes Lakes

Newest and largest of our biodiversity sites, this former water-sports centre is mostly lakes and associated aquatic vegetation including reedbeds and marginal plantlife. There are also dry grasslands that hold; Orchids, Wasp Spiders, bush-crickets and flowers not found elsewhere at the airport, such as Corn Parsley. Scattered woodland contain native bluebells and we have erected bat boxes to encourage the native species known to use this site, which includes the rare Nathusius' Pipistrelle. The site is nationally important for wintering Smew, a small white and black duck and also holds important wintering numbers of Gadwall and Shoveler ducks.



## 9 Clockhouse Lane Pit

A small site contiguous with Princes Lakes, this site contains a small lake surrounded by a strip of willow woodland with an area of grassland and blocks of planted native trees and a boundary hedge. Like Princes Lakes many bats use this site, mainly for hunting. Though not rare, this site has a rich mix of grassland flora for a small area, including Vipers Bugloss, Lady's Bedstraw and Musk Mallow.



## 10 Two Bridges Farm

A public site created from the development of Terminal 4, this site contains meadows and trees on a south facing hill and a pond surrounded by both wet and mixed woodland. The site also sits alongside the Duke of Northumberland River.



## 11 Cains Lane

Another public site that was formerly allotments, this site is now mainly dry grassland interspersed with hawthorn and fruit trees. The eastern side of the site is more thorn woodland with bramble scrub. The north boundary is lined with Hornbeam trees, while the west one holds an old mixed species hedgerow that was laid by hand in 2013 to strengthen it and in-fill any gaps. This site also holds Stag Beetles.



## 12 13 Camp 4 & Causeway Nature Reserve

Camp 4 & Causeway Nature Reserve - These sites form part of the River Crane Corridor Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. Both sites contain large reservoirs, which are surrounded by a mixture of habitats. Most importantly these include reedbeds and wet woodland for their national rarity and for the associated wildlife they contain such as bats, Reed Bunting, Wainscot moths and Goat Moth. Both sites also have mixed woodland, grasslands and scrub.

The Causeway Nature Reserve also sits right beside the River Crane, where it is possible to see Kingfisher. Both sites are excellent for dragonflies and moths, and Grass Snakes are regularly seen. Camp 4 contains the best example of wet woodland at the airport while Causeway holds some old oak trees and rare Wild Service Trees.





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All images have been supplied by a member of the team at Heathrow

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