Project description:

Background

Industrial activity in the West Midlands dates back to the 1800s. Since 1980, however, the region has experienced steady industrial decline, which has led to significant land-use changes. The focus of the SMURF project is the River Tame basin which is 73% urban industrial and home to 1.8 million people. River water quality across the basin is among the poorest in the UK. Of the 140kms of river in the basin, 75% are classed as poor or very poor under the “General Quality Assessment” scheme used by the Environment Agency (England and Wales) to test and rank the aesthetic quality of rivers. Such a very large urban area developed over relatively small capacity rivers creates tremendous environmental pressure on the water resources. Under the European Water Framework Directive, Member States are required to bring waters up to “good ecological status”.

Objectives

The SMURF project aimed to reduce pollution and flooding on the River Tame. Methods and technologies used in the project could possibly be adapted and applied to other places in the UK and the rest of Europe. The project’s specific objectives were to: • Implement a sustainable land-use and water management plan in the urban floodplain; • Improve of the amenity, ecological status and sustainable drainage of the river basin; • Involve local citizens in the planning and urban river basin; • Establish ecological objectives for the river system and a transferable sustainable indicators set; • Develop a detailed land-use planning model to govern future redevelopment in the floodplain; and • Demonstrate how small-scale modifications can significantly improve a heavily modified waterway.
Results

The project involved the local community, setting up focus groups, to define the targets for renovation of a stretch of the River Tame at Perry Hall playing fields. Measures taken at this demonstration site included making the river more accessible, clearing away undergrowth and planting bulbs and shrubs. As part of this initiative to make the river a feature of the park, a path was created alongside the river banks with benches and rubbish bins. Parts of the river were also reconstructed in order to allow the river to pursue a more natural course.

The community were kept informed and engaged in the activities of the project, and school groups have visited the site. The overall legacy of the project is hard to quantify, as the organisers believe its influence will be far-reaching. Since the project closed, the local council has provided Perry Hall site with a park ranger, an appointment that could have resulted from the heightened awareness the project generated. The innovative river modelling aspect of the project is continuing to be evaluated. The system used during the project was the Geographical Information System (GIS), which manages and analyses the environment by linking recorded data to geographic information such as maps. While difficulties remain in applying this technology, the organisers say that the project demonstrated new aspects of the technology and made improvements.

A full version of the system was delivered to the main project partners and requires specialist software, but two other versions – a CD-Rom and an online version – were made available to everyone. SMURF has been held up as a case study of how public participation can be used to implement the Water Framework Directive. More information about the project was made available on the project’s award-winning website. The user-friendly innovations of the site were recognised with a prize from the Royal National Institute of the Blind. This project has been selected as one of the 22 "Best" LIFE Environment projects in 2006-2007.

Top

Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Water - River basin management
Biodiversity issues - Urban biodiversity
Habitats - Freshwater

Keywords

urban area, industrial area, flood protection, land use planning, river management

Natura 2000 sites
Beneficiaries:

Coordinator: Environment Agency
Type of organisation: Public enterprise
Description: The Environment Agency is the public body for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. It is responsible for safeguarding air, land and water.

Partners: Birmingham City Council, United Kingdom H R Wallingford, United Kingdom Severn Trent Water, United Kingdom Staatliches Umweltamt Herten, Germany

Administrative data:

Project reference: LIFE02 ENV/UK/000144
Duration: 01-AUG-2002 to 31-JUL -2005
Total budget: 2,020,691.50 €
EU contribution: 1,010,345.75 €
Project location: West Midlands(United Kingdom)

Read more:

Project web site: Project's website
Publication: Article-Paper
Title: "Monitoring Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-BatrachionVegetation Communities. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers." Monitoring Series No. 11 (1.242 KB) Year: 2003
Editor: English Nature No of pages: 33

Publication: Case study
Publication: Case study  

Publication: Case study  
Title: "Monitoring the Atlantic Salmon. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers." Monitoring Series No. 7 Author: Cowx IG, Fraser D Year: 2003 Editor: English Nature No of pages: 39

Publication: Case study  
Title: "Ecology of the Allis and Twaite Shad. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers." Ecology Series No. 3 (1.492 KB) Author: Peter S. Maitland, Tristan W. Hatton-Ellis Year: 2003 Editor: English Nature No of pages: 32

Publication: Case study  

Publication: Case study  

Publication: Case study  

Publication: Case study  

Publication: Case study  
Title: "The River Borgie cSAC Conservation Strategy" (2.239 KB) Author: Kjersti Birkeland Year: 2003 Editor: Scottish Natural Heritage No of pages: 59

Publication: Case study  
Title: "The River Avon cSAC Conservation Strategy" (6.551 KB) Author: Jenny Wheeldon Year: 2003 Editor: English Nature No of pages: 196

Publication: Layman report  
Title: Layman report Year: 2005 No of pages: 14

Publication: Technical report  
Title: "Monitoring the Bullhead. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers. Monitoring Series No. 4" (493 KB) Author: IG Cowx, JP Harvey Year: 2003 Editor: English Nature No of pages: 30
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<td>Publication: Technical report</td>
<td>Title: &quot;The Endrick Water cSAC Conservation Strategy&quot; (1.637 KB) Author: Louise Bond Year: 2003 Editor: Scottish Natural Heritage No of pages: 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publication: Technical report</td>
<td>Title: &quot;The River Kerry cSAC Conservation Strategy&quot; (3.031 KB) Author: Kjersti Birkeland Editor: Scottish Natural Heritage No of pages: 56</td>
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<td>Publication: Technical report</td>
<td>Title: &quot;The River Moidart cSAC Conservation Strategy&quot; (2.385 KB) Author: Kjersti Birkeland Year: 2003 Editor: Scottish Natural Heritage No of pages: 48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publication: Technical report</td>
<td>Title: &quot;The Afon Teifi cSAC Conservation Strategy&quot; (1.067 KB) Author: Stuart Davis Year: 2003 Editor: Countryside Council for Wales No of pages: 46</td>
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