

Awards For All Glassmill Restoration and Enhancement Project

Glassmill pond is situated close to the town centre of Bromley in the London Borough of Bromley. Initially a working mill used to grind corn; it was later used as a paper mill and then finally a glass mill. As well as being of historical importance to the local community, Glassmill pond is an important green space where nesting birds colonise the island and banks of the pond in spring.

The project originated through concerns from local residents and members of the Friends of Bromley Town Parks and Gardens group about the increased degradation of the site. Unmanaged vegetation and increased issues with littering and fly tipping has created an ecological eyesore and a decline in the local community's usage and enjoyment of the pond.

The aim of the project is to improve the site and access to it for local people through community volunteer days that will focus on managing the vegetation, planting native species and reducing the impact of invasive plant species on the site. There will be 2 weekday and 2 weekend volunteer sessions run every month for the entirety of the 12 month project. The project costs are for native plants, tools, structures such as a bird hide and contractor time to run volunteer sessions.

To empower and oversee the volunteers we plan to engage an experienced river/water-based contractor to deliver the work. Friends of Bromley Town Parks and Gardens have previously delivered other projects in the area and hold a fortnightly walk which includes Glassmill Pond located in Church House Gardens.

Glassmill pond has been unmanaged for a number of years and this has had a limiting effect on the potential of the site both aesthetically and ecologically.

The islands, overrun with vegetation, are a concern to local people worried about reeds and willows growing uncontrolled and dominating the area. This stops other plants from colonising the area, further limiting biodiversity. Misuse of this habitat has also led to increased amounts of rubbish being caught in the overhanging vegetation and a decline in the local community's usage and enjoyment of the habitat.

Over the years, there have been many complaints and an environmental charity that works with communities to improve their waterways were asked if anything could be done.

From the outset, the Environment Agency were also involved and very supportive of the prospect of improving the river through the millpond and are providing finance and technical expertise to get the project to delivery status. River restoration and habitat improvements are the Environment Agency's targets locally and nationally.

The environmental waterways charity carried out a number of public consultation/open days to ask the community what they wanted for the pond. These were well attended by locals who had a vested interest in seeing the Glassmill pond habitat improved. Many of the responses were to restore the pond for the enjoyment of the local community and visitors, improve access and habitat as well as manage vegetation and the quality of the environment for wildlife.

Glassmill pond is highlighted by The London's Downlands Area Framework 7.2.1 Enhancing Bromley town centre parks and greenspace Area Action Plan.

7.2 Ravensbourne Valley

The project also supports the Council's sustainable community strategy – Building A Better Bromley - 2020 Vision under the Quality Environment theme.

Promotion of the project will be achieved through our preferred water-based contractor Thames 21, the Friends Forum website and Bromley Council website. Regularly updated posters will be displayed around the mill pond and on local community centre noticeboards. The database of members of the 'Friends' group and residents association will receive emails updating them on volunteer days and project progress.

Local press will be invited to take pictures and interview volunteers, inviting/encouraging more volunteers to take part. The funder's logo will appear on all publications.

This project will provide volunteer opportunities to the wider community with the potential to gain certified training skills that could lead to other voluntary work and employment.

The Glassmill pond project will provide volunteers with certified training and development opportunities in habitat management from the Environment Agency. With this training, there is potential for it to lead on to job opportunities and other voluntary work in similar fields. With hands-on experience, the volunteers will also gain an on-going sense of achievement, pride and responsibility to maintain the pond for the enjoyment of the local community and the benefit of local wildlife.

The restoration of the pond and inclusivity of the project will help offer the opportunity for residents to work together towards achieving a common goal. Planting and managing this green space will bring local people together and build on community cohesion. Working outdoors will mean positive and direct health benefits for the volunteers.

Restoring and enhancing Glassmill pond, an important wildlife habitat close to the town centre of Bromley, will have a positive impact on the local community including residents, schools and even employees of Bromley town centre looking to access and enjoy a rural ideal in an urban setting. Installation of a bird hide will offer opportunities for educational activities to school groups and will have a positive impact on bringing people closer to nature.

Thames 21, our preferred water-based contractor who will be leading and training on the volunteer sessions, meets these requirements. During the volunteer sessions, children will stay with their parents and any community groups with their own supervisors.

Friends of Bromley Town Parks and Gardens is affiliated to Bromley Friend's Forum the overarching organisation that supports Friends of Parks Groups in the London Borough of Bromley.