

THE CREEKSIDE DISCOVERY CENTRE

CONSERVING AND HELPING PEOPLE CONNECT WITH LONDON'S WATERWAYS

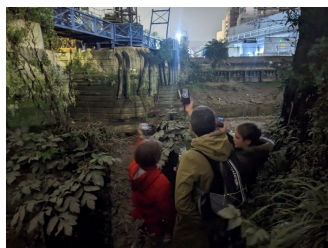
The Creekside Discovery Centre is an oasis of nature amid high-rise buildings and is one of the most biodiverse spaces for its size in London. More than 350 wildflower species have been recorded on site since 2014. The soft riverbank edges of Deptford Creek provide a great habitat for plants, invertebrates, fish and bird life.



Creekside is situated between Tideway's Greenwich and Deptford sites and the partnership supports Tideway's legacy aims to bring communities together and reconnect Londoners with the Thames. Tideway's work required half of the Creek to be closed off, which restricted Creekside's access to habitats and highlights the sensitivity of the partnership.

The centre offers low tide walks, talks and hands-on learning activities which are aimed at schools, the local community, Londoners and development professionals. Tideway provided Creekside with a two-year grant to deliver new activities, including:

- surveying local plant and wildlife with community volunteers
- a new Science Club for 11 to 16-year-olds
- family learning and activities targeting disadvantaged families
- community walks and talks.



Tideway provided £20,000 of the grant unrestricted to support Creekside through the pandemic. It also supported Creekside in engaging new audiences, supporting them in mapping their visitors' postcodes against the indices of deprivation to help them target more deprived areas.

In 2023 Tideway gave a further grant to continue wildlife surveying activities so more people could get a better understanding of the wildlife in the local area. The 'Discover your Wilderhood' walks highlighted the local flora, fauna and wildlife, with findings recorded and added to the Creekside Centre database. Events included a night walk to record the local bat population (pictured left, with Tideway's Greenwich site in the background). The 2023 grant also supported a water cycle learning programme for schools and families. This school outreach programme gave children a fun, interactive experience learning about careers that protect our precious water resources, including engineers, scientists and ecologists.

PARTNERSHIP IMPACT

The activities attracted 1,954 new visitors to the centre between 2020 and early 2024, about two thirds of them from the most deprived postcodes in the local area. Almost all (97%) of those surveyed said they would return and recommend the centre to others. The water cycle programme engaged a further 120 schoolchildren on outreach visits to local schools.

Insights from the partnership activities revealed that for some visitors the opportunity to visit the Creek and walk within a river was a completely new experience. Creekside staff and volunteers described how for some, the engagement with the centre was life-changing.

This collaboration supported Creekside sustainability – it has enabled the charity to expand its output to help local people and communities connect with the river and the natural environment. The charity has been able to develop activities and resources, funded through the partnership, which are now part of their core offer and new projects in the pipeline. The Creekside team reports that educational visitor numbers in 2024 are likely to exceed its pre-Pandemic levels of 2019.

It has also allowed them to explore new models. Paddy Hayes of Creekside said: "The Water Cycle Outreach has had a really positive impact on our educational offering by developing a module which can be delivered independently in a variety of settings, both here and off-site in schools."

"Thank you so much for offering such an amazing activity for families. I loved being able to catch and identify bugs with my 3-year-old son." Family learning day

"It has been a great partnership. The project sustained our charity at a time when the public were not able to visit and strengthened our activities to welcome them back." Lucy Harrigan of Creekside Centre

THE CREEKSIDE DISCOVERY CENTRE

CONSERVING AND HELPING PEOPLE CONNECT WITH LONDON'S WATERWAYS

There were many benefits to the partnership for Tideway. Site teams have supported Creekside open days, giving them the opportunity to tell their story: widening people's understanding of the construction industry and sharing the project's benefits for the river, the environment and local people. An art installation using recycled items from Tideway sites adds to the centre's richness and gives educational opportunities to tell the Tideway story.

"It is like being on Spring Watch episode. The experts have tremendous knowledge. You can't help but be touched by that." Tideway Employee