

RSPB London

Bringing House Sparrows Back to London's Parks and Green Spaces

Project Summary

May 2012

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1. Executive Summary

The 'Bringing House Sparrows Back to London's Parks and Green Spaces' project was run by the RSPB between Sept 2008 and May 2012 to find out which of three habitat types was most beneficial to house sparrows.

a) **Purpose of Project:**

- ◆ To ***establish and monitor twenty five trial habitat management plots*** in nineteen parks across London.
- ◆ The aim was to find out ***which of these habitat types was most beneficial to house sparrows***, and to assess practicalities of establishing and managing these habitats in urban parks.
- ◆ The project was run in partnership with eight land management organisations across London (Camden Council, City of London, Islington Council, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, The Royal Parks, Southwark Council, Sutton Council and Wandsworth Council).

b) **Background:**

- ◆ House sparrow populations in Greater London ***declined by 68 % between 1994 and 2009***. Recent research has shown that survival of young house sparrows in urban areas is often low, probably ***due to a lack of invertebrate food***. In this project we tested three different habitat management treatments to assess benefits to invertebrate populations and urban birds - in particular house sparrows. Treatments were: long grass, native wildflower meadows, and a specially designed 'wildlife seed' mix.
- ◆ This project aimed to test the effectiveness of targeted conservation measures for house sparrows in urban parks in London, in partnership with eight urban land management organisations.

c) **Results:**

- ◆ ***All three habitat types proved very beneficial for invertebrates***. The wildlife seed plots were most visited by House Sparrows, but ***all the habitat types would provide benefits for birds by improving local habitat quality and invertebrate numbers***. The wildlife seed plots appeared to be used for gathering invertebrates rather than seed. We think accessibility of long grass or wildflower meadows for birds might be improved by mowing paths through them. This should also increase habitat diversity for invertebrates, and help to channel movements of people, reducing wider trampling of the areas.
- ◆ **Costs:** Management effort and cost were lowest for long grass plots, but despite this, land use pressures affected the number of new long grass areas that could be created. Costs and management effort were high in the first year of wildflower meadow establishment, becoming lower after year one. Costs and management effort for the wildlife seed plots were higher in each year as they are re-established annually and dominant weeds had to be controlled.
- ◆ **Public reaction:** Public reaction to wildlife seed plots was very positive. Reactions to wildflower meadows were mixed in the first year of establishment, but positive once meadows were better established. Reactions to long grass were mixed, however partners felt that the public reaction was improved when reasons for having long grass were explained.

d) **Partner feedback:**

- ◆ **Positive feedback has been received from partners and they are looking to retain the majority of their meadows (subject to funding)**, although some indicated minor changes to the shape, location or management regime of the plots. The main barrier that was identified to retaining the plots was funding and the only other barrier mentioned was invasive weeds (thistle).

e) **Results and Recommendations:**

- ◆ ***All habitat types showed significant benefits for biodiversity. Establishing any of the habitat types will help to improve local habitat quality, and to increase local invertebrate abundance.***
- ◆ The relative benefits of each habitat type in terms of wildlife value, management requirements, financial cost and public reaction need to be weighed up by land managers according to the priorities at their sites, so they can identify the most appropriate meadow. (See page 9 for further details).
- ◆ RSPB will continue to disseminate the project results through advisory work to encourage organisations and the public to take positive actions for house sparrows and other wildlife, through creating meadows.

2. Project Aims and Objectives of Project

- ◆ This project aimed ***to test the effectiveness of targeted conservation measures for house sparrows in urban parks in London***, in partnership with urban land management organisations and park managers.
- ◆ The main practical aim of the project was ***to establish three different types of habitat management in urban parks, and to assess the effectiveness of these in providing invertebrate food for chicks and seed food for adult house sparrows***. Responses of vegetation and invertebrate populations to the trial management were measured. Use of habitat plots by house sparrows and other birds was monitored. Local house sparrow populations were surveyed to detect any likely effect of the habitat management on breeding populations.
- ◆ The project also aimed to ***evaluate the habitat management types in terms of cost, practicality, and stakeholder reaction***, and to influence future management both of the project parks and of the wider land management sector, for house sparrow conservation.
- ◆ There was also a strong ***public engagement*** element to the project. In this we aimed to engage with local residents and 'Friends' groups to inform them about the project and about the decline of the house sparrow, and to encourage local people to carry out wildlife-friendly gardening. We also trained a team of volunteers to assist in the project. Our future advisory work will continue to encourage members of the public to take positive actions for house sparrows and other wildlife.

Objective	Completed	Page number(s) in main report
◆ To trial the effectiveness of amenity landscape maintenance and management prescriptions in order to increase insect and seed availability for urban house sparrows	✓	22 to 83
◆ Do a baseline survey and/or collate existing data to establish the population and breeding success of house sparrows, and other urban bird species	✓	34, 36
◆ Undertake a baseline survey of the parks' current management and the availability of seed and insect food	✓	Park management: <i>Appendix 9</i> Seed: 28 Insects: 31
◆ Work with greenspace managers and contractors to create three different amenity landscape maintenance and management treatments for sparrows	✓	22 - 27
◆ To test the effectiveness of each management treatment by recording the number and type of insects attracted and amount of seed produced, and compare results against control sites	✓	Seed: 28, 58 Insects: 31, 66
◆ As part of wider park management for house sparrows, provide water and secure existing nesting sites and / or look to increase nest site availability	✓	21
◆ Train a volunteer team to monitor house sparrow use of the management prescriptions	✓	35
◆ Deliver a promotional campaign to borough residents, encouraging them to undertake house sparrow management prescriptions in their own gardens	✓	15, 89
◆ Disseminate the results to other green space managers in London	ongoing	89
◆ If treatments prove successful, to encourage other cities and London boroughs to undertake the effective management prescriptions	ongoing	89

3. Summary of habitat management work and research

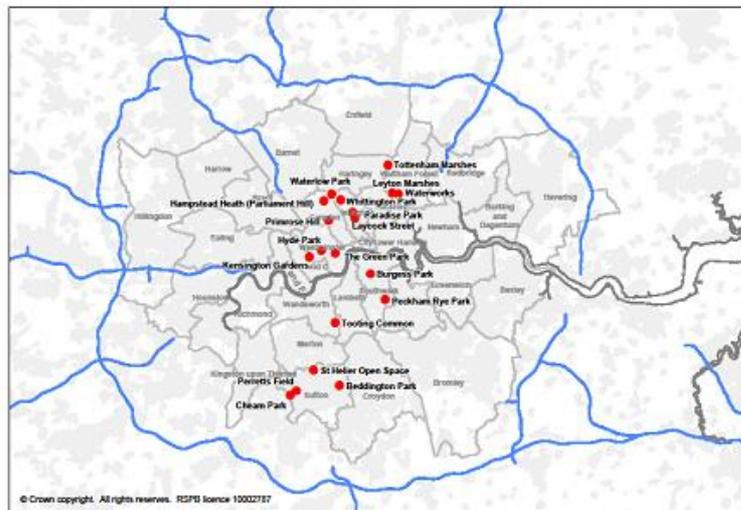
a) Creation of new habitats

- ◆ We worked with eight partners to create meadows at nineteen sites:
 - Camden Council - Waterlow Park
 - City of London - Parliament Hill
 - Islington Council - Laycock Street Green, Paradise Park, Whittington Park
 - Lee Valley Regional Park - Leyton Marshes, Tottenham Marshes, Waterworks Nature Reserve
 - The Royal Parks - Green Park, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, Primrose Hill
 - Southwark Council - Burgess Park, Peckham Rye Park
 - Sutton Council - Beddington Park, Cheam Park, Perrets Field, St. Helier Open Space
 - Wandsworth Council - Tooting Common

- ◆ Twenty five meadows of three different types were created in spring 2009. (See map below)
 - 9 long grass,
 - 8 wildflower meadows and
 - 8 wildlife seed plots (which needed to be re-established annually).

- ◆ In addition, a control plot (short grass area) was designated for comparison with each meadow.

Map of meadows sites across London



For further information on Establishment of trial plots, see Section 7 of main report.

Examples of Wildflower meadows created:



Peckham Rye Park, 2010

Photo by Dave Clark, RSPB volunteer



The Green Park, 2011

Photo by Tim Webb, RSPB

Examples of Wildlife Seed meadows created:



Waterlow Park, 2009 Photos by Tim Webb, RSPB

b) Research

The key elements of the research are summarised below. For further information, see section 7-11 of main report).

◆ Bird Surveys:

- Monthly bird surveys were undertaken on the trial and control plots, by staff and volunteers.
- House sparrow breeding surveys were undertaken annually (in April – July).
- In addition, during June-July 2011, detailed foraging watches were carried out on the trial plots where the most use by house sparrows had been recorded over the course of the project.

◆ Invertebrates:

- Invertebrate sampling was undertaken annually (in July - August).
- All invertebrates (over 2mm) which were collected within the samples were identified - **139,446 invertebrates** in total!! Specimens were identified to the most detailed taxonomic level possible, and the number of individuals in each group tallied.

◆ Seed monitoring:

- Seed availability was assessed annually in autumn (October - November in 2009-11) and again in winter (January – February 2010-11).
- In addition, as house sparrows had been observed making regular use of some wildlife seed plots during later summer, it was decided to assess seed availability in wildlife seed plots during late July and early August 2011.

◆ MSc Projects: Four MSc projects were also undertaken in conjunction with the project. The two most relevant were:

- 2011 - Pollinators in wildflower meadows, by Kyle Shackleton at Imperial College, London (see section 7.5 of main report)
- 2011 - Establishment of plants in wildflower meadows by Henry Johnson at Imperial College, London (see section 9.2.5 of main report)

◆ Surveys:

- A feedback questionnaire was sent to each partner to gauge their overall opinion of the trial plots, in Dec 2011.
- An online survey of Friends groups for each park was also set up at the end of the project.

4. Summary of Public Engagement

a) Public engagement events

- ◆ At least **one public engagement event was held with each project partner**, which included highlighting the house sparrow decline to the public. People were encouraged to consider wildlife friendly gardening in their own space, and to visit the RSPB's Homes for Wildlife website for further advice on wildlife gardening. (See Section 5 of the main report for further details.)
- ◆ Other RSPB projects used information on the house sparrow project in their people engagement work. This included **'Date with Nature' public events** across London and the **Wild Place Your Space project**, which used house sparrow plots at the Lee Valley's Waterworks nature reserve to run a schools session on invertebrate sampling and identification.



Lee Valley Spring Wildlife Weekend, 2009

Photo by Tim Webb



Event at Whittington Park, 2009,

Photo by RSPB volunteer

b) Volunteers and Interns

- ◆ **Volunteers:** Over the life of the project, around **40 volunteers gave their support**, mostly in assisting with trial plot monitoring. Volunteers also assisted with public engagement events, delivering leaflets, data entry, invertebrate identification, and education sheet production. Volunteers managed by the partner organisations also helped to carry out land management (e.g. weed pulling and hay raking) on some of the trial plots. RSPB volunteers all went through an induction / training process and annual volunteer gatherings were organised at which volunteers could meet each other, hear updates on the project results to date and receive thanks for their support.
- ◆ **Interns: Five interns were taken on and provided with developmental training during the project.** The internships were for 5-6 months in duration, except one for 5 weeks, and each intern dedicated four full days per week to the project. The interns each carried out data entry, vegetation quadrats, bird monitoring and invertebrate identification, as well as occasional tasks in volunteer support, education or public engagement. The **intern development programme** included training and support from the Project Officer in bird and invertebrate identification, attending RSPB training courses, and mentoring from the RSPB People Engagement Manager. In some cases this included assessing practice job applications and mock interviews to help the interns with future employment applications. Three of the interns have now gone on to paid work in the environmental sector (one of whom is about to start a PhD in urban ecology), and one has gone on to a further internship with another conservation organisation (Bat Conservation Trust).

c) Talks

- ◆ Over the life of the project, The Project Officer gave **24 talks** on the project, including to Friends Groups, local RSPB groups and Wildlife Groups, at internal RSPB meetings and at external events. In addition, other members of RSPB staff gave talks about the project. (See section 5.8 in main report for further details.)

d) **Education and activity sheets**

- ◆ Through discussion with project partners it was decided that an education sheet would be produced, based around the house sparrow decline, for distribution to education staff linked to each of the partners. This developed into an education sheet and associated children's activity sheet linked to the Key Stage 1 and 2 school curriculum (see Appendix 8 of main report). The sheets were produced and distributed to partners by the end of the project, having gained input from RSPB staff and volunteers, including staff of the RSPB-Lee Valley social inclusion partnership 'Wild Place Your Space', and education staff at the City of London. The education and activity sheets will be used by the RSPB and partners as part of their ongoing conservation and education work. The RSPB will also look at creating a lesson plan for teachers.

e) **Media**

- ◆ The Project Officer was interviewed for a Radio 4 nature programme named 'Who killed the Cockney sparrer', and for the BBC's Springwatch programme. The radio programme was aired on 18 March 2009. The project made a brief appearance on Springwatch on 16 June 2010.
- ◆ Press releases were put out about the project (see Appendix 7 of the main report). A series of press releases and public awareness raising events will be undertaken in the future as follow-up to this project, in conjunction with other projects (see page 89).

f) **Publicity and Communications**

- ◆ **RSPB Publications:** Articles on the project appeared twice in the RSPB's 'Birds' magazine, and four times in 'Involve', the RSPB's volunteering newsletter. An article also appeared in the RSPB's 'Fellows' News' magazine. (See Appendix 6 of main report).
- ◆ **Leaflets:** Two thousand leaflets were printed containing basic information about the house sparrow project, specific to each park project park. These were delivered in 2009 and 2010 during the course of house sparrow breeding populations surveys, to households in streets directly adjoining the project parks. Each leaflet was delivered along with a flyer for the RSPB's Homes for Wildlife website, featuring a house sparrow on the front.
- ◆ **Newsletters** A project newsletter was produced in each year of the project and sent to the project volunteers, and to the project partners to forward to associated Friends groups and community groups. Some parks had community centres in which the newsletters were made available and project posters were displayed.
- ◆ **Posters:** Posters were designed for display at each of the trial plots, to inform passers-by about the house sparrow decline, the house sparrow project's aims, and the purpose of the trial plot. Posters were tailored to each park and each project partner, displaying the SITA Trust logo, RSPB logo and each partner's logo. They provided a web address for the RSPB's wildlife gardening web page, Homes for Wildlife, at www.rspb.org.uk/HfW and contact details for the RSPB London office, should people require further information. The poster template was supplied to each project partner, and displayed by them at the trial plots. (See *Appendix 4* of the main report.)
- ◆ **Project website and blog:** A project website was set up to provide information about the project, at www.rspb.org.uk/londonsparrows This was updated regularly, and encouraged gardening for wildlife through a link to the RSPB's Homes for Wildlife page, www.rspb.org.uk/HfW The project website resulted in a number of phone calls to the Project Officer, both asking for information and volunteering local information about house sparrows. It also provided a source of enquirers about volunteering with the project, which helped to replace existing volunteers who moved away or were otherwise unable to continue with their volunteering. Project updates were provided for partner organisation websites. Throughout the project, the Project Officer worked with the RSPB London Communications manager to inform the RSPB London blog (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/community/getinvolved/b/london/default.aspx>) and press releases on the project.

5. Key findings and recommendations

a) Overall outcome

- ◆ Overall **there was a benefit to biodiversity of creating all three of the trial habitat types** – long grass areas, wildflower meadows and 'wildlife seed plots', compared with short grass. All of these habitat types increased the abundance and diversity of invertebrates and the amount of seed available for birds.
- ◆ **Instating any of the habitat types will help to improve local habitat quality, and to increase local invertebrate abundance.** The habitat surrounding our trial plots, especially proximity of long grass, affected abundance of pollinator species (bees, butterflies and hoverflies in wildflower meadows) and bugs (hoppers, aphids and 'true bugs' in all plots), demonstrating the importance of wider habitat quality and connectivity for wildlife in the urban landscape.

b) Bird use of plots

- ◆ The greatest numbers of the invertebrates that are eaten by birds were recorded in wildflower meadows. However wildlife seed plots were used most by house sparrows. These plots were used mainly during the breeding season – the time at which invertebrates are needed for feeding young. It is therefore suspected that wildlife seed plots may have been used most because the structure of the vegetation allowed birds easier access to the invertebrates.

c) Management requirements and public response

- ◆ **Long grass:** In terms of ease of management, long grass areas require the least effort of the three habitat types. They are also the cheapest to create. However public reaction to these areas is less positive than to the other, more colourful habitat types, and due to other park use pressures it can be difficult for park managers to justify instating new areas of long grass. The results of this project demonstrate that long grass has significant positive results for wildlife in urban areas, and we hope this will help park managers to justify increasing areas of long grass in their parks.
- ◆ **Wildflower meadows:** Wildflower meadows required the highest up-front financial input and a high level of initial management to establish. The techniques used in cultivation and sowing wildflower meadows had an important effect on their establishment – more so initially than soil conditions at the sites (although low nutrient levels in soils likely become much more important as the meadows mature). After this initial input, both the management requirements and financial costs of wildflower meadows decreased significantly. Weed control can be an issue in the first year of establishment, but this also reduces as the meadows become established. Siting meadows away from areas of dominant grasses or thistles should help avoid dominant weeds encroaching. Sowing wildflower meadows in autumn may help improve their establishment by avoiding dry spring weather. In the first year of establishment, wildflower meadows contained much bare ground, and received mixed public reaction. As the meadows became more established the amount of bare ground was reduced and public reaction was positive. Therefore over the longer term the benefits of this habitat type will exceed those of long grass. Partners agreed that mowing paths through both wildflower meadows and long grass areas may channel movements of people away from the wider plot area. This should also benefit invertebrates - the results of the project show that increased habitat diversity within the plots (e.g. having some areas of open ground) benefitted some invertebrate groups. We suspect this might also help birds to access the invertebrates in the plots.
- ◆ **Wildlife seed plots:** Wildlife seed plots also required a high up-front financial input. As these plots were re-established each year, annual cost remained high. As the plots are re-cultivated each spring, annual weeds and poor germination in dry weather can require remedial action (e.g. weeding, watering or re-sowing plots). However these plots were the best-used by house sparrows, and where they established well received an extremely positive public response. They were overall slightly less beneficial for invertebrates than the other trial plot types, but we suspect the vegetation structure may have allowed better access to invertebrates for birds. Plot establishment each year should be improved by application of fertiliser to the centre of the plots. Considerations when instating habitats may include whether all native plant species are desired (as the wildlife seed plots contain some non-native plants).

d) Lessons learned

- ◆ Ongoing communication with and training for contractors and the staff who carry out work on these habitats is essential, especially as staff turnover in contractor organisations is high. Provision of information and interpretation to the public about the purpose of any of these habitats is important, especially at the time of wildflower meadow and wildlife seed plot establishment. However vandalism of fence posts and signage can be a problem. We recommend keeping these areas un-fenced to increase public appreciation and acceptance. (Though during meadow establishment, some partners preferred to have a fence, especially in heavily used areas.) Excess trampling was not a problem for most of our trial plots, and some trampling may even be beneficial by increasing diversity of sward structure, which we suspect may allow better access for birds. However regular replacement of signs may be necessary.

e) Summary table of considerations for each plot type

- ◆ The overall pros and cons of each plot type are summarised in the table below.

Habitat type	Benefits for invertebrates	Benefits for birds	Management requirements	Financial cost	Public reaction
Long grass	Very high	Indirect benefits high (through increasing invertebrate numbers) Direct use low, but bird access may be improved by mowing paths through	Low maintenance Staff / contractors need ongoing contact to avoid accidental cutting	Low	Mixed
Wildflower meadow	Highest	Indirect benefits high (through increasing invertebrate numbers) Direct use low, but bird access may be improved by mowing paths through	High level of effort needed for instatement and initial management Becoming relatively low maintenance after year one	High to begin with - medium to low after first year	Mixed in year one, then positive
Wildlife seed	High	Indirect benefits high (through increasing invertebrate numbers) Direct use by house sparrows highest	High level of effort needed to instate and maintain in each year Contains some non-native plants	High cost in each year	Very positive
All types	High	All have benefits	Interpretation for public important, although vandalism may require replacement of signage Ongoing contact with staff / contractors essential	See above	See above

6. Feedback on project

a) Project feedback:

- ◆ **Positive feedback on the project was received from the partner organisations** throughout the project and at partner meetings.
- ◆ Some comments included:
 - **'The meadows themselves are a lovely legacy'**
 - **Great to be involved and have the opportunity to work with other organisations such as RSPB. The chosen staff loved it. Is there going to be more of this type of partnership?'**
 - **'Unbelievably positive response. Very popular mix. Public art classes, photographs and positive comments.'** (Partner comments on public reaction to Wildlife seed plots.)
 - **'Consultative committee loved it. London in Bloom judges impressed. Positive comments from public.'** (Partner comments on wildflower meadows once established).

b) End of project partner feedback questionnaires re land management:

At the end of the land maintenance and monitoring section of the project (December 2011), a feedback questionnaire was sent to each partner to gauge their overall opinion of the trial plots. The partners were asked to give a score from Low (1-3), Medium (4-7) or High (8-10) or answer Yes / No to a number of questions. The key results are summarised below.

- ◆ Most partners gave **high scores when asked whether existing trial plots would be retained**, although some indicated minor changes to the shape, location or management regime of the plots. The main barrier that was identified to retaining the plots was funding and the only other barrier mentioned was invasive weeds (thistle).
- ◆ All returns gave **high scores as to how likely partners were to retain the useful habitat features near their trial plots** (e.g. shrubs and nest sites for house sparrows).
- ◆ **Eleven out of twelve returns stated that the project partners would advise other park managers to create similar features in their parks.** Reasons given were the aesthetic and wildlife benefits, including benefits for house sparrows.
- ◆ **No low scores were received for feedback received by the project partners from park users, for any plot type.** Long grass plots received medium scores, while wildflower meadows received medium to high scores, and wildlife seed plots received high scores.
- ◆ Five out of ten returns stated that the partner would like a site visit by a member of RSPB staff to discuss specific management issues.

c) Friends group feedback:

- ◆ An online survey of Friends groups for each park was also set up at the end of the project, using the website survey.monkey.com.
- ◆ Feedback from Friends groups was very encouraging, **with unanimous agreement on the value of wildlife areas in parks.** Comments from Friends groups highlighted the need for sensitivity to the needs of individual parks, and the need for keeping people informed.

7. Wider benefits of the project

a) Wider use of project seed mixes by partners and RSPB

- ◆ The seed mixes used in the wildflower meadow and wildlife seed plots were well received by partners, who received good public feedback in many cases. As a result of the project, two of the partners started using the trial seed mixes on their wider landholdings. These were Southwark Council and Camden Council.
- ◆ Findings to date have been disseminated internally and two RSPB reserves have asked us for information about our wildlife seed mix, with a view to using it in their public gardens. The RSPB - Lee Valley Wild Place Your Space project also used a seed mix based on the project's wildlife seed plots in their newly established wildlife garden in 2012.
- ◆ Following discussions with Transport for London, TfL are now trialling the seed mixes on some of their sidings.
- ◆ The City of London are also creating new meadows on Hamsptead Heath based on the success of their trial meadows through this project.

b) Other habitat benefits on partners' landholdings

- ◆ Through their experience gained in managing grassland during this project and the resulting enhancement of remnant acid grassland in the trial plot at the Primrose Hill site, two project partners (Camden Council and The Royal Parks) gained confidence to apply for a SITA Trust grant to enhance a wider acid grassland area. Two hectares of acid grassland will now be restored at this site as a direct result of the project.

c) Advice to other organisations

- ◆ Through contacts made in the context of the project, both in London and more widely, the Project Officer, RSPB Urban Advisor, and members of the RSPB London team have given **land management advice**, including site visits, to a number of other organisations. These have included:
 - London Wildlife Trust, for their 'Cockney Sparrow Project' working with social housing estates to engage residents and encourage wildlife-friendly grounds management;
 - Avon Wildlife Trust
 - Blackdown Greenroofs
 - Connect Plus (the consortium contracted to run and manage the M25 for the Highways Agency over the next 30 years); and
 - Dawoodi Bohra Mosque in north west London, where garden management advice and positive actions people could undertake for house sparrows was disseminated during their bird feeder giveaway
- ◆ **Site visits** were mostly by the Urban Advisor, and occasionally by the Project Officer. These comprised looking at one or several sites under the management of the respective authority or community group. Advice given was primarily verbal, and where necessary providing advisory materials, and / or reporting on opportunities for improvement. Organisations for which site visits were undertaken were:
 - Redbridge Council
 - Islington Council
 - Camden Council
 - Southwark Council
 - Lienster Square - London
 - Connault Square - London
 - Lincoln's Inn Field - London
 - Transport for London
 - The Royal Palaces
 - Trinity Square / Seething Lane - London, and
 - Channel Four

d) **Training workshops for land managers and contractors**

- ◆ **Training workshops** linked to the house sparrow project were held by the Urban Advisor. These comprised one-day sessions tailored to meet the needs of the respective audience. Audiences included contracts managers, site operatives and community groups from the following organisations:
 - Camden Council
 - Southwark Council (two workshops)
 - Community Gardeners, and
 - Winners of an RSPB - Transport for London photography competition
- ◆ **Advice and training workshops** were also provided outside London, all with relevance to the project. This included for Bupa Care Homes, Kier Group, various local authorities and trusts, and workshops for community groups.

8. Future work

- ◆ **Conferences:** A conference on meadow creation in urban areas will be organised in London by RSPB, aimed at disseminating the results of the project to the Parks and green space management sector. The aim of the conference will be to encourage meadow creation in urban spaces and management of urban land for biodiversity. Current plans are to hold this conference in autumn 2012, after completion of the Olympic Games. The Project Officer will attend the conference and present the results of the project to encourage others to take up this kind of managements in their parks.
- ◆ **Advisory materials and advice:** Results of the current project will feed into RSPB's ongoing conservation advice, through production of advisory materials and direct advice to land managers. Advisory material to be produced will include advisory sheets, web based Technical Information and Advice notes, and training courses. In addition, the results will be used to further inform our advisory work to organisations (e.g. TfL and BUPA) and also members of the public through the RSPB's Homes for Wildlife web page at www.rspb.org.uk/HFW
- ◆ **Publications:** Consultation with project partners has been carried out at partners' meetings to determine the best channels for publication of project results in order to influence parks and greenspace managers. We plan to place articles in well-known land management and horticultural journals and magazines, highlighting the headline results of this work. The articles will direct readers to the RSPB website and advisory materials (above).
- ◆ **Press releases:** A series of press releases are planned following completion of the project. These will help disseminate the key results of the project and encourage the public to take action for wildlife in their own outdoor spaces. They will be timed appropriately, to avoid competing with publicity around the Olympic Games, and to tie in with: a) appropriate seasons for carrying out wildlife gardening / planting wild flowers, and b) other publicity events planned by RSPB, including the Cockney Sparrow Count (see below).
- ◆ **The Cockney Sparrow Count:** This will be a London-wide online census of house sparrows between mid June and mid July 2012, achieved through asking Londoners to record house sparrows in their garden or local area. A questionnaire census of London house sparrows was carried out in 2002 by the London Biodiversity Partnership, with a lead role taken by RSPB. The new census will be 10 years on from the 2002 survey. Once the data has been collated, participants will be sent information on house sparrow conservation. We are also hoping to send packets of wildflower seeds to participants to plant in their own outdoor spaces. The seed mix used will be based on recommendations developed through this SITA-funded project.

9. Conclusion

- ◆ This project has been successful, demonstrating that ***the establishment any of the tested habitat types will help to improve local habitat quality, and to increase local invertebrate abundance***, compared with short amenity grass.
- ◆ Positive feedback has been received from partners and they are looking to maintain the majority of their meadows (subject to funding), although some indicated minor changes to the shape, location or management regime of the plots.
- ◆ The people engagement work has highlighted the plight of house sparrows and the positive actions members of the public and green space managers can undertake for house sparrows and other wildlife.
- ◆ RSPB will continue to disseminate the results of this project through advisory work to encourage organisations and members of the public to take positive actions for house sparrows and other wildlife, through creating different kinds of habitats for invertebrates i.e. long grass, wildflower meadows or wildlife seed plots.

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