



## Case study River Quaggy makes a comeback

Sutcliffe Park, Lewisham  
2003–2004

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**Developers**  
Environment Agency  
Halcrow  
Alfred McAlpine

**Benefits**  
Underground ‘culverted’ river restored to its natural state; green space created for the local community; new habitats created for wildlife; risk of flooding reduced.

### Site background

Running from Bromley to Lewisham, the Quaggy River has suffered considerable flooding problems over the years – caused primarily by development on the natural floodplain. The entire section of the river running through Sutcliffe Park was hidden underground. Managing flood risk in this way used to be seen as good practice. However it meant valuable floodplain was lost, together with vital natural habitats.

### The scheme

The main focus of the project was to return the ‘culverted’ river back to its natural state. In the process, the opportunity was taken to turn the bare, uninteresting park into a popular green space.

A flood storage area was constructed that can hold up to 85,000m<sup>3</sup> of flood water – equating to approximately 35 Olympic-size swimming pools. It now protects 600 homes and businesses from flooding.

Restoration has played a huge role in this project. Boardwalks, bridges and footpaths have been installed, avenues of trees and wildflower meadows planted, and an outdoor classroom created. There are new seating areas throughout the park, some of which have been purchased from MENCAP Riverwood, a voluntary group supporting the employment of people with learning disabilities. These unique pieces of furniture were recycled from timber found in the River Thames. →

1. Sutcliffe Park is now a popular green space used regularly by members of the local community. Since opening in 2004, visits to the park have increased by 73 per cent.



Now the park is a rolling environment of streams, boardwalks and viewing platforms. It includes a host of new habitats for wildlife and provides a greater level of flood protection for Greenwich and Lewisham.

**1. Before:** Prior to the scheme, the park was hardly used and was seen as bare and uninteresting.

**2. After:** Now it is a rolling environment of streams and boardwalks.

**3.** The flood storage area can hold approximately 35 Olympic-size swimming pools of floodwater. It protects 600 homes and businesses from flooding.



### Friends of Sutcliffe Park

The local community took an active role in transforming what is essentially their park. A 'Friends of Sutcliffe Park' group was set-up by Greenwich Parks to encourage the community to get

involved with the project. Local schools are using it for lessons as part of their curriculum. There are many opportunities for more community projects throughout the park.