

## Lost Effra – led by London Wildlife Trust

*Making London greener and reducing flood risk through enabling community action*



### What is Lost Effra?

Lost Effra is a project led by London Wildlife Trust that empowers communities to use green infrastructure to increase urban resilience whilst improving their neighbourhoods for people and wildlife. The project is based within the catchment of the culverted river Effra that runs through a highly urbanised and socially diverse area of South London, removing concrete and tarmac and creating new green spaces that manage rainwater intelligently. Through working with local people on urban greening projects we are making London more resilient to the changing climate whilst supporting London's biodiversity and empowering people to create and maintain their own urban green spaces. The project is made possible by support from Thames Water, the Greater London Authority and Lambeth Council, as well as input and assistance from a range of local stakeholders, community groups and private sector partners.

### What are the drivers behind Lost Effra's urban greening projects?

**Flood risk:** The project is based in Herne Hill and Brixton, areas along the historic course of the river Effra that are more vulnerable to flash flooding when the river reasserts itself in times of heavy rainfall. The area last flooded in 2004 when 10cm of rain fell in 30 minutes prompting widespread flooding and causing millions of pounds worth of damage to local homes and businesses. Through decreasing the amount of rainwater runoff to enter the sewers using green infrastructure, we are making the area less prone to flooding whilst supporting wildlife and increasing Londoners' access to nature.

**Turning grey to green:** Lost Effra works across a highly diverse area of London working predominantly within Lambeth, one of the 10% most deprived local authority areas in England. The area is highly urbanised and heavily paved with a significant proportion deficient in access to green space. Projects to transform neglected impermeable spaces into high value green space bring improvements in rainwater management, aesthetics, supporting urban nature and encouraging community cohesion.

**Creating a resilient community:** Our overall aim is to leave behind a resilient and independent community entity that is motivated to create urban greenspace and has the skills and knowledge to do so. By showing that SuDS can be accessible and appealing, we are encouraging household scale implementation, shifting peoples' perspectives to see water as a resource rather than a waste product and facilitating small scale implementation that adds up to have a significant impact on the local area.

### How do our green infrastructure schemes fit into an urban space?

- **Green roofs:** we support and enable communities to create household scale green roofs by running group build workshops where a small green roof is built in one day as an educational event to give people the skills and knowledge needed to build their own. We also construct larger green roofs on low rise buildings such as domestic garages and encourage interaction between people and the green space through dynamic interpretation and activities;
- **Depaving:** we work in close partnerships with local people to develop schemes from a simple idea to real world delivery. New gardens are created in line with community priorities in order to encourage and promote community maintenance. Local people become skilled advocates of urban greening and appealing interpretation makes projects valuable demonstrations of community led urban greening;
- **Rain gardens:** we create purpose built gardens to intercept rainwater runoff from buildings and roads. These dual function green spaces reduce the quantity of rainwater runoff whilst improving water quality and creating places for urban flora and fauna to thrive.

### What are the impacts?

Since January 2014 we have engaged with over 2,000 people through a range of activities. We have worked with communities to remove 558m<sup>2</sup> of impermeable surfaces and create 480m<sup>2</sup> of urban greenspace through constructing 5 green roofs, the largest rain garden in Lambeth, a communal garden in an area of high social deprivation and a wildflower forecourt at a community allotments with 80m<sup>3</sup> of floodwater attenuation capacity – amongst other schemes in an ongoing portfolio of urban greening projects. Through these schemes we have delivered 8 inclusive community gardening events and created capacity for 4,400 litres of rainwater harvesting to nourish green spaces. The project is run by one full time member of staff and our urban greening projects are created with small budgets, to show how high impact outcomes can be created through simple and affordable interventions.

## Lost Effra's Urban Greening Projects

**Rosendale Allotments depaving demonstration, SE21** – created 300m<sup>2</sup> of SuDS attenuation and 100m<sup>2</sup> of high value wildflower meadow with 80m<sup>3</sup> of storm water attenuation capacity.

*Photos (left to right): the forecourt before; shortly after; new wildflower areas and community planting day*



Before



After



**Rain gardens on the Cressingham Gardens Estate, SE9** – a 30m long planted border of rain gardens with curved overflows in between to intercept rainwater from a 150m<sup>2</sup> residential building on a social housing estate. All planting and maintenance has been undertaken by the community.

*Photos (left to right): the area before with amenity grass; after planting; community involvement.*



Before



After



**Southwell Road urban greening on social housing estate, SE5** – 330m<sup>2</sup> of disused tarmac was removed and replaced with a multi-functional community garden; 2,200 litres of rainwater harvesting capacity installed; 70m of wildlife friendly hedging planted and a biodiverse green roof created on the adjacent block of garages.

*Photos (left to right): the large tarmac area before; after planting; raised beds; planting the green roofs.*



Before



After

