

Habitat Creation on Grand Union Canal



Grass snake making the most of the new habitat

The project aim was to restore a wetland area on the banks of the Grand Union Canal for the benefit of wildlife and the fishery.

The scheme design ensured that no material was taken off site and that particular focus was on creating suitable habitat for Water Voles and amphibian species such as Newts.

The design provided for newly created islands and on-line ponds of variable depths fringed with native plants. Leaf matter and sediment was removed to create these ponds with the sediment being re-used to create the islands with a shallow area on the eastern side of the canal. This area provided an adult fish spawning habitat with gently



Site prior to works with no standing water

Products Used

- **Pre-planted Coir Pallets**
- **Wetland plants**
- **Brushwood faggots**

sloping sides having emergent vegetation and shallow non-vegetated fry shelves. Rotting vegetation was used to replicate a natural compost bin which is highly attractive to grass snakes.

The new islands were also successful in delivering a high value area for habitat and wetland plants combining to encourage the presence of water voles that have recently declined to only two known sites in the Colne Valley Park area.

Post construction, an ecological survey was carried out in May 2011 by Alder Ecology. Alder's report showed that the general area had a greater biomass and diversity of invertebrates after completion of the works.

In addition, the newly created islands' vertically cut banks contained holes that could be used by kingfishers for nesting. Positively, kingfisher passes were observed over the backwater and islands during the survey.



Site during construction



Pre-planted Coir Pallets with native mix



Completed site with wetland planting