

AINA CASE STUDY

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Cardiff Bay Wetland Reserve



Cardiff Bay Wetland Reserve is developing as a valuable habitat adjacent to public walkways and a number of visitor attractions

Developing and monitoring a range of waterside habitats

Cardiff Harbour Authority has various statutory requirements placed upon it to protect and enhance the natural environment. Section 14 of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Act states that the Authority shall have regard to the desirability of developing and conserving flora and fauna and seek the views of the Countryside Council for Wales as to ways in which the inland bay may be managed.

In order to meet these obligations, the Harbour Authority has developed a range of monitoring programmes and specific conservation projects include the development of the Cardiff Bay Wetlands Reserve, restoration of a fish nursery on the River Taff, re-instatement of bank side habitats following waterside construction work and edge planting to provide protection for coarse fish within the Bay.

The Wetlands Reserve, previously an area of raised salt marsh, covers approximately ten hectares on the northern shore close to key visitor attractions. Work included development of a large reed-fringed pond, a 'moat' around the full length of the site to separate public open space and wildlife habitat, lagoons, scrapes, islands and floating refuges. A long stone bund was built along the reserve shoreline to prevent wave erosion, and a boom also prevents the wetlands from being inundated with water-borne debris during periods of high water levels. A board-walk allows good public access and management work controls the development of willow and alder carr.

Monitoring the changes to saltwater or freshwater-tolerant vegetation takes place and the Wetlands Management Plan ensures that species are regularly surveyed and recorded. For instance, bird counts take place each month and, with support from local enthusiasts, bat numbers are counted in April, June and October.

The Harbour Authority's Conservation Strategy supplements guidance previously provided by Cardiff County Council, and details work required to protect the new and developing environment. The strategy is seen as the first step towards developing planning guidance, directing the conservation of flora and fauna, and acting as a tool to promote the Bay as an important educational resource.