

Solihull Habitat and Nature Improvements

A programme of woodland, grassland, wetland and water quality improvements

Watercourse enhancements have focused on the River Cole and its tributaries the Kingshurst Brook, Hatchford Brook and Low Brook

Meriden Park Wetland Improvements

The old lake

Kingshurst Brook flows through Meriden Park before it joins with the River Cole. In the 1970s a weir was built alongside the footbridge over the brook to form a lake. However the weir became an obstacle to the movement of aquatic life and the lake gradually collected sediment which left poor water quality and an ongoing requirement to remove the silt.



The lake prior to the weir being removed

Nature improvements

In 2019 works were carried out to make the park a healthier habitat for wildlife and a better space for local people. This involved removing the weir and allowing the brook to flow naturally through Meriden Park. With the water level dropped, parts of the former lake area have been formed into new habitat for wildlife including wet woodland, reed beds, a wet meadow and ponds.



Brushwood was tied into stakes to stabilise the banks of the new channel

New wetland

During the works amphibious vehicles were used to help to install pre-planted pallets, temporary piling sheets to reinforce the new bank and large stones to protect the bridge structures from the faster water flow. In the planting scheme at the water's edge, reeds and other marginal plants will absorb pollutants and adapt to changes in the water level. Black poplar trees have been included as these are rare locally.



Amphibious vehicles were needed to work in the lake

Some species of animals and plants found in and around the wetland

The **European otter** (*Lutra lutra*) is one of the UK's top predators, feeding mainly on fish (particularly eels, salmon and trout), waterbirds, amphibians and crustaceans. They are well suited to a life on the water as they have webbed feet, dense fur to keep them warm and can close their ears and nose when underwater. Otters have their cubs in underground burrows, known as holts.



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The **Little egret** (*Egretta garzetta*) is a small, white heron with black legs, yellow feet, a black bill and long plumes on its head and neck during the breeding season. It feeds on small fish and crustaceans. It was once a very rare visitor from the Mediterranean, but now they are a more common sight around the Midlands.

Common reeds (*Phragmites australis*) are tall, golden coloured reeds, which grow to 2 metres tall. Feathery slightly purple flowers turn brown in the winter. They spread via underground stems and fill large areas of ponds, ditches and edge of rivers. They provide habitat for birds such as the reed warbler and bearded tit.



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