



Thames Riverside - Bexley

October 2022 - Revision 1.0

counterbalance

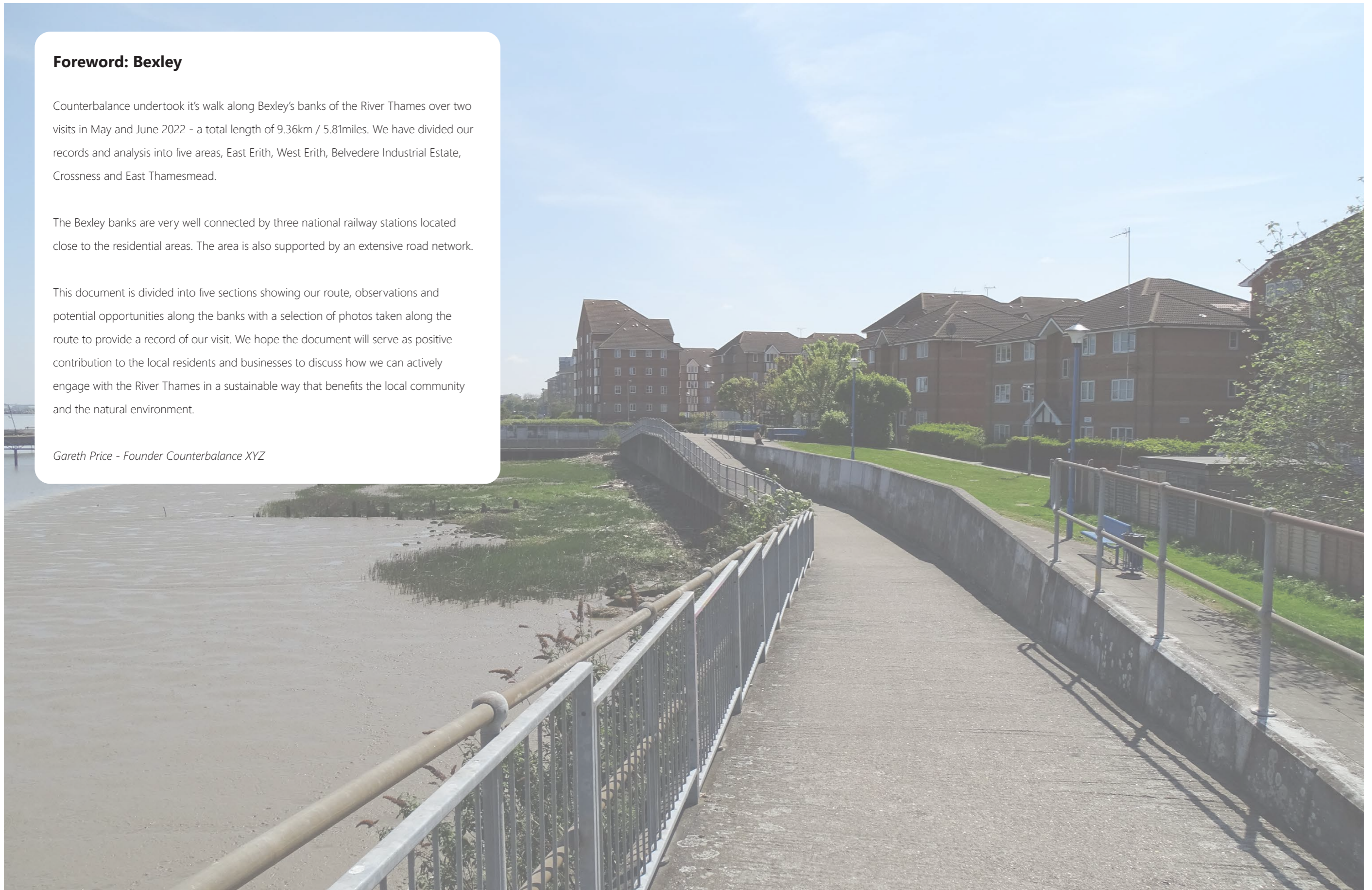
Foreword: Bexley

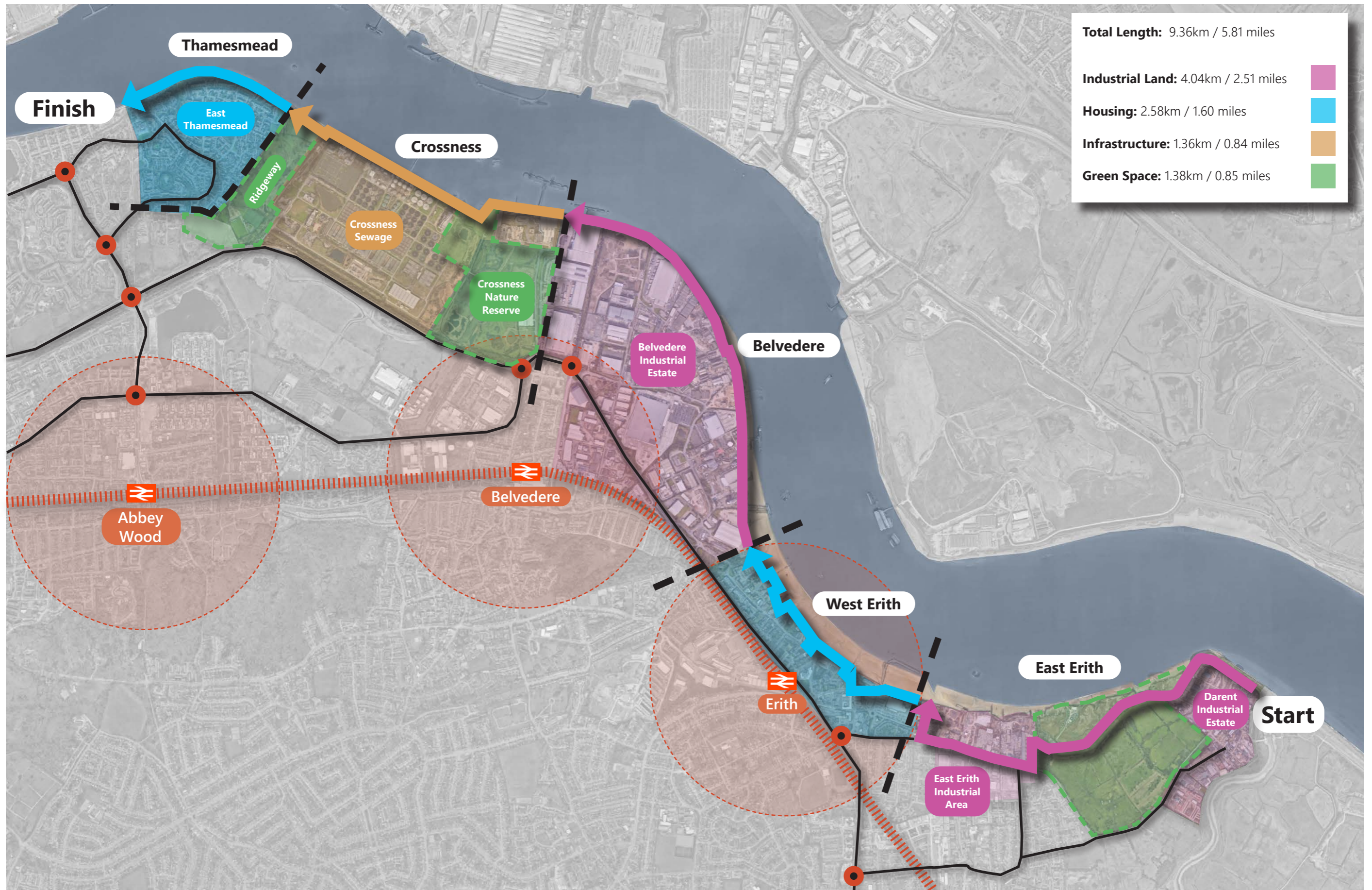
Counterbalance undertook its walk along Bexley's banks of the River Thames over two visits in May and June 2022 - a total length of 9.36km / 5.81miles. We have divided our records and analysis into five areas, East Erith, West Erith, Belvedere Industrial Estate, Crossness and East Thamesmead.

The Bexley banks are very well connected by three national railway stations located close to the residential areas. The area is also supported by an extensive road network.

This document is divided into five sections showing our route, observations and potential opportunities along the banks with a selection of photos taken along the route to provide a record of our visit. We hope the document will serve as positive contribution to the local residents and businesses to discuss how we can actively engage with the River Thames in a sustainable way that benefits the local community and the natural environment.

Gareth Price - Founder Counterbalance XYZ







East Erith

We started our journey in East Erith next to the Darent Industrial Estate, the outer edge of the GLA section of the River Thames. The riverside immediately felt industrial due to the large ships, landfill sites and background sounds. However, if one looks deeper there is a large amount of nature to be seen and heard providing a peaceful balance between the two.

There were several areas where there was a build-up of rubbish from the river. Although it is unlikely the majority of this rubbish is from the Darent Industrial estate, the surrounding businesses could become stewards of the land and help the local authority and river trusts regularly clean and improve the banks for the local community as a recreation space and home for nature. The Erith Yacht club

would provide an opportunity for a central location for all human recreation activity in the area.

As you walk closer towards Erith there is a stretch of path that loses contact with the riverside, due to the Manor Road industrial estate. Creating a new path along the river would help improve accessibility and increase areas for nature.

Comments

- ① Zone for Human Recreation & Nature Habitat
- ② Zone of Large Build-up of Rubbish from River
- ③ Erith Yacht Centre for Human Recreation
- ④ Improved Route along River



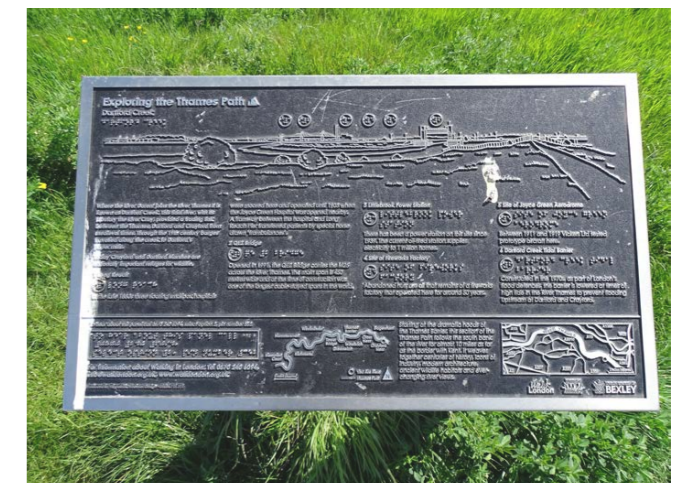
The start of our journey along the River Thames in East Erith, Bexley - Looking towards the Dartford Crossing.



View looking towards the Dartford Crossing - Marsh Land includes a network of ditches and open water, reedbeds, scrub and rough grassland.



Gravel Thames Path towards Erith - An interesting balancing act between human industrial areas and the natural marsh.



Thames Path Sign, Dartford Creek, East Erith



Darent Industrial Estate - Erith in the background



Gravel path next to Darent Industrial Estate - Towards Erith.



Gravel path next to Darent Industrial Estate - Towards Dartford Crossing.



Thames Path way finding post along the route.



Gravel path next to Darent Industrial Estate - View towards Erith.



Gravel path next to Darent Industrial Estate - View towards Erith.



River bank next to Darent Industrial Estate, build-up of rubbish on river bank - View looking East.



Gravel path - View towards Erith - Wind turbine in the background.



Gravel path - View towards Darent Industrial Estate.



View towards Cold Harbour - Showing the balance between nature and industrial activities.



Wind Turbine in Erith.



Cargo Ship in River Thames



Green space between Darent Industrial Estate and Erith



Gravel path towards Erith



View towards Cold Harbour



Gravel path towards Erith.



Green Space next to Erith Yacht Club - Horse grazing



Metal Security Gate Along Thames Path.



Anchor Bay Wharf, Erith.



Anchor Bay Wharf, Erith.



Anchor Bay Wharf, Erith.



Manor Road towards Erith



Manford Industrial Estate, Manor Road, Erith.



Path along Manor Road, Erith - Industrial Area.





Path along Manor Road, Erith - Residential Area.



Path along Appold Street, Erith - Back towards River Thames



Path along Appold Street, Erith - Back towards River Thames



James Watt Way, Erith - Back towards River Thames

West Erith

As the Thames path moves back along the river during the Erith section there are mainly residential homes directly facing on the banks of the river. It provides a beautiful outlook for residents and a focal point for recreational activities

The Erith Pier is a central place for these activities in the area where people are walking, fishing and enjoying the beautiful views across the Thames. The local council is upgrading the pier facilities and landscape in the area as part of the wider regeneration of Erith.

One section of the path is currently closed off and blocked by Anchor Stone Court building. Providing a solution by working with the land owners would be a great improvement to the local area. As Erith transitions through a regeneration of the area the path and area along the Thames could provide a perfect location for public realm space for recreation and social activities, bringing the new and existing communities together over the betterment of a single project.

The River Gardens have improvements planned which will start this process and set a precedent for the types of green public realm spaces which could be created along the Thames. Areas to the North West have a difficult relationship with the river and could provide opportunities for new gardens and areas of nature to improve the outlook. By bringing local communities to help with the process of designing and building becoming stewards for the green spaces.

Improvements

- ① Improved Route along River
- ② Development Opportunity (Housing & Workspace)
- ③ Improving Riverside Gardens
- ④ Potential Landscape Projects





View Wharfside Close, Erith, Bexley - Looking West. - Great opportunity for enhancing riverside living in the heart of Erith.



View East along the Thames - Path is blocked by an industrial estate.



Path towards Erith Pier. Existing housing has a difficult relationship with the Thames Path and little physical engagement.



Base of Erith Pier - Currently undergoing improvements.



Erith Pier - A unique and quintessential British asset for the local community.



The Erith Pier is a large space which could be enhanced to provide a focal point for social and recreational activities for local residents and bring tourists from other parts of London. Perhaps even one day have a boat connection to the centre of London.



Closed Section of Thames Path



Current Path along Wharfside Close, Erith.



Current section of Thames Path along Wharfside Close



You turn the corner and the visual connection with the river is restored along Erith High Street.



Along the path next to the Riverside Gardens and route is back along the River Thames.



Views are towards Rainham Landfil, which perhaps will become it's own riverside garden in the future.



Existing Thames Path, Riverside Gardens, Erith - Improvements are to start soon.



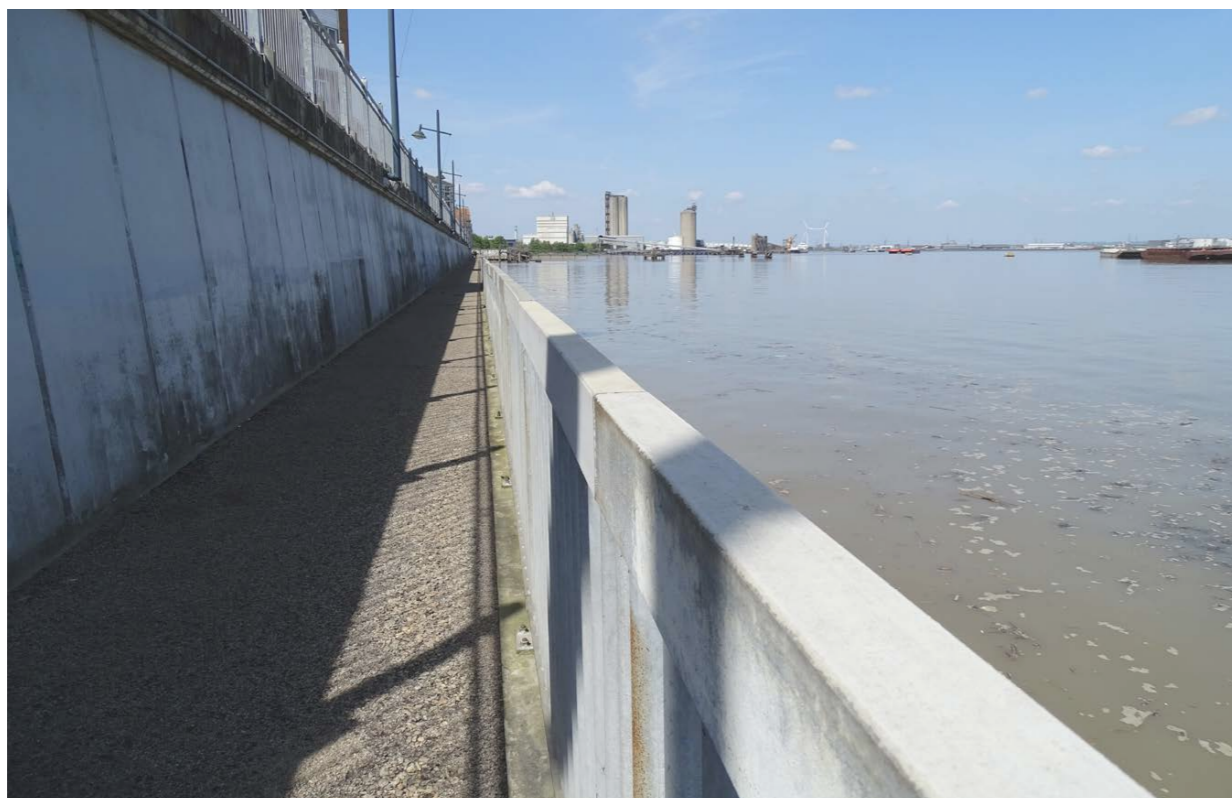
Pilgrim Ferry Plaque, Erith



Thames Path, Riverside Gardens, Erith.



Thames Path, View towards Riverside Gardens, Erith.



Thames Path along Chichester Wharf, Erith. - This section of the path feels unsafe and requires a better connection with the existing housing.



Thames Path next to Blyth House, MacArthur Close, Erith.



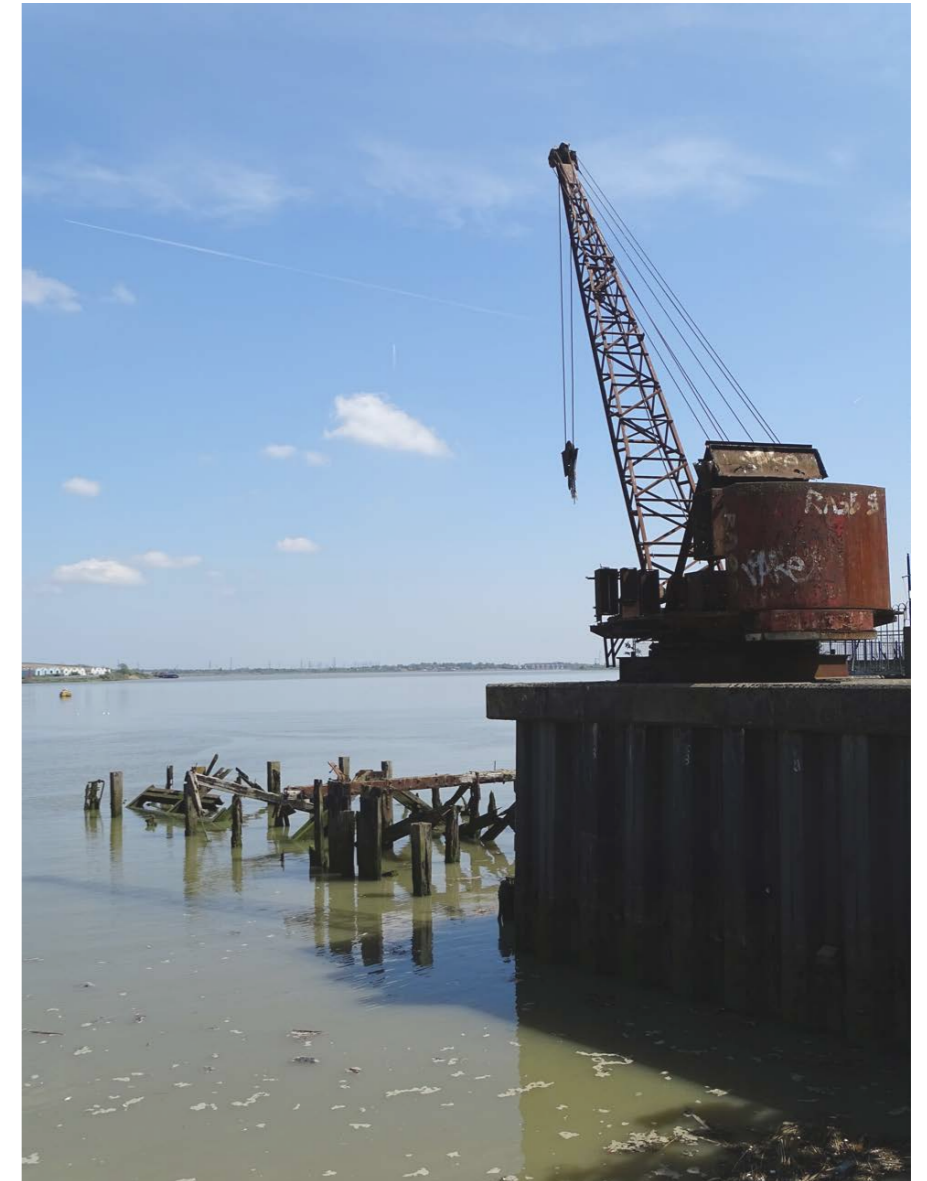
Potential landscape opportunity next to Blyth House, MacArthur Close, Erith.



Existing Thames Path around Blyth House, MacArthur Close, Erith.



Future development in this area should provide an opportunity to improve the route.



Redundant Dock Crane, Erith.



Potential landscape opportunity next to Chandlers Drive, Erith via pier or reclaiming additional land.



Abandon Pier, Erith - Landscape Opportunity



Thames Path next to Chandlers Drive, Erith. - Another section of path which lacks a physical connection with the existing housing making it feel unsafe.



Thames Path next Galleon Close housing Estate, Erith.





Thames Path next to Galleon Close housing Estate, Erith. - This area feels more inviting than the previous section by opening up and having a physical green connection with the path.



View of the path transitioning alongside Belvedere Industrial Estate.

Belvedere Industrial Estate

This section of the river is defined by the Belvedere Industrial Estate with a total length of 2.54km / 1.57 miles and many national and local companies using the land as a home providing jobs to the local community.

The path along this stretch of the river is well established as the Thames Path and provides good access to the river. During the day the route feels surprisingly safe with many walkers, runners and cyclists even in an industrial context.

This area is likely to remain as much needed industrial land for a long period of time. This provides an opportunity to work with the owners and tenants to become stewards of the stretch of the path to help tidy and improve biodiversity of the banks.

There is an opportunity to integrate these businesses further into local community by providing resources through employees and funds to help local community groups to get involved improving the banks of the river. Furthermore, it would help local businesses think about how they currently use the river and how this can be improved to help the natural environment thrive alongside this industrial led area, creating nature reserves.

Improvements

- ① Private land owners to have a steward adoption role of their neighbouring bank for ecology upgrades and maintenance





Oliver oil processing docking facilities - Belvedere Industrial Estate - Thames Path has been maintained amongst riverside industrial uses.



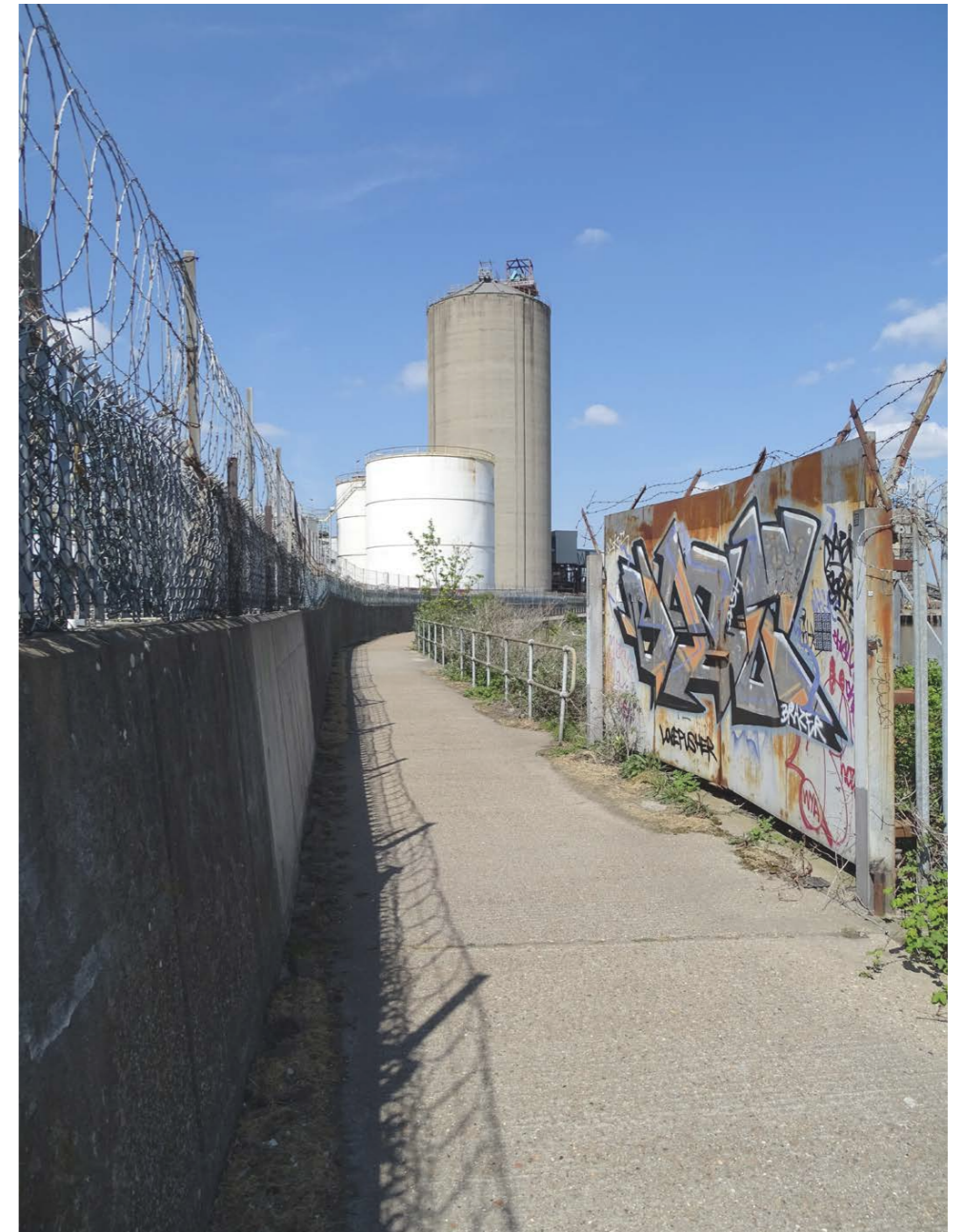
Thames Path alongside the Edible Oils process plant, Belvedere Industrial Estate.



Existing wildlife along the route - Common Shelduck



Thames Path at the boundary with Belvedere Industrial Estate.





Bridge over access point for the docking facilities: many cyclists try and fail to overcome this obstruction but it does bring delight to many walkers observing the contest - Belvedere Industrial Estate.





Olive Oil docking facilities - Belvedere Industrial Estate.



Top of the hill - Belvedere Industrial Estate.



A green relief along the path with a route from the industrial park joining the Thames Path - Belvedere Industrial Estate.



Concrete wall protecting the public from the concrete processing plant / Abandon Piers - Belvedere Industrial Estate.



Metal railing fence at the boundary with Belvedere Industrial Estate.



Access point to barge docking facilities from river to steel arts metalwork - Belvedere Industrial Estate.



Path next to Lidl regional distribution hub, where nature is trying to regain control of the bank - Belvedere Industrial Estate.



Thames Path next to Lidl regional distribution hub, where nature has been controlled and the path maintained - Belvedere Industrial Estate.



New warehouse recently completed - Belvedere Industrial Estate.



The path becomes wider and new metal fencing has been erected - Belvedere Industrial Estate.



Existing wildlife along the route - Juvenile Great Cormorant



Thames Path sign post - Belvedere Industrial Estate.



Wind power from Ford Motor Company in Dagenham



Crossness Sewage

This section of river is defined by the Crossness Sewage Treatment Plant and related public infrastructure, with a total length of 1.84km / 1.14 miles. As you can imagine this stretch of river is dominated by the smell of sewage but perhaps surprisingly large areas are inhabited by nature with the help of Crossness Nature Reserve.

The Riverside Resource Recovery Plant processes up to 785,000 tonnes of non-recyclable waste a year and generates electricity to power 160,000 homes. This is possible because of riverside infrastructure to receive waste making it one of the largest facilities in the UK.

The Crossness sewage plant has been on this site for over 150

years and is Europe's second largest sewage treatment plant after its counterpart Beckton Sewage treatment plant.

The former pumping station designed by Sir Joseph Bazalgette and Charles Henry Driver is a beautiful example of Victorian architecture and a masterpiece of engineering. It was fully restored by the Crossness Engines Trust in 2016.

Improvements

- ① Sewage treatment plant to have a steward adoption role of their neighbouring bank for ecology upgrades and maintenance



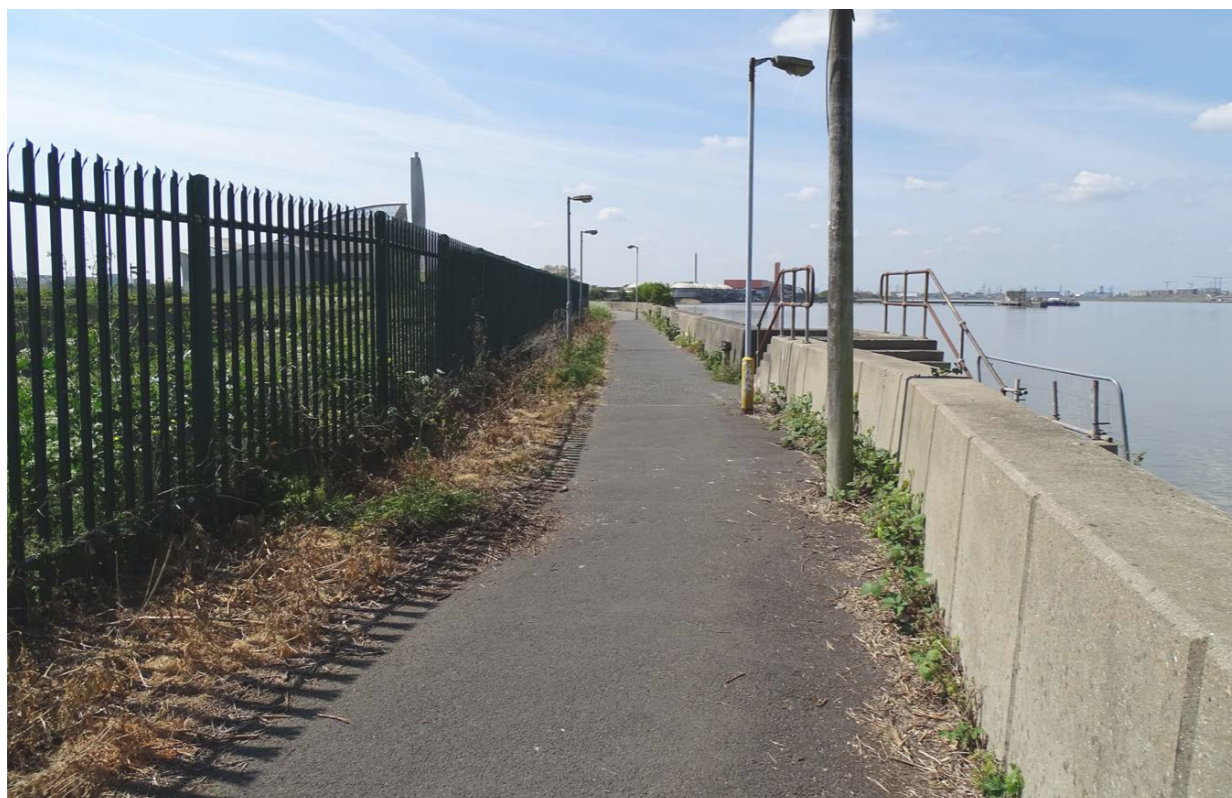
Mosaic artwork showing the various types of birds inhabiting the area with the Riverside Resource Recovery Plant docks in the background - Crossness Sewage Treatment Plant



Thames Path, Riverside Gardens, Erith.



Thames Path, View towards Riverside Gardens, Erith.



Thames Path next to Chichester Wharf, Erith.



Thames Path next to Blyth House, MacArthur Close, Erith.



Belvedere power station situated within the natural world of the Crossness Nature Reserve



Views of Ford Engine Plant in Dagenham.





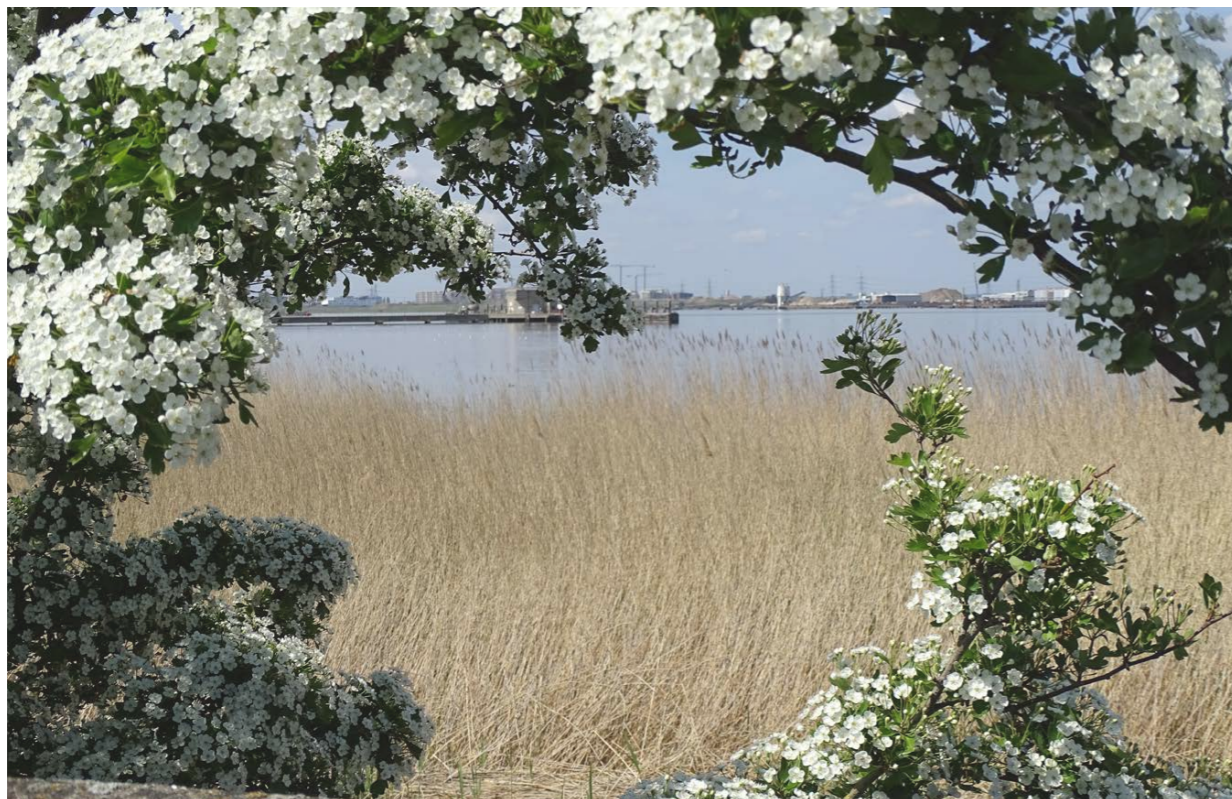
Example of how nature can take back control of the banks along sections where humans will not want to inhabit such as public sewage treatment areas.



Build-up of rubbish along the banks of the river.



View of the natural reeds and trees along the banks creating a home for wildlife.



Crossness Nature Reserve - Marshland Habitat



Reeds along the Thames providing a home for wildlife. Rubbish collecting at certain parts of the banks. Ford Engine Plant in the background - Crossness Sewage Treatment Plant.



Nature naturally forming alongside the Thames Path throughout the Crossness section. This could be encouraged to extend further along the path.



Wildlife living alongside public infrastructure and Thames traffic.



Crossness Sewage Plant - A necessary requirement of any settlement



An opportunity to educate the public on what happens behind the fence.



Although the smells stop most people from gathering in this space it does provide an opportunity for wildlife to inhabit the banks.





Crossness Sewage Plant



Concrete flood barrier wall - A blank canvas for artists to improve the view for cyclists and walkers.



Moments of expression and art along the Thames Path.



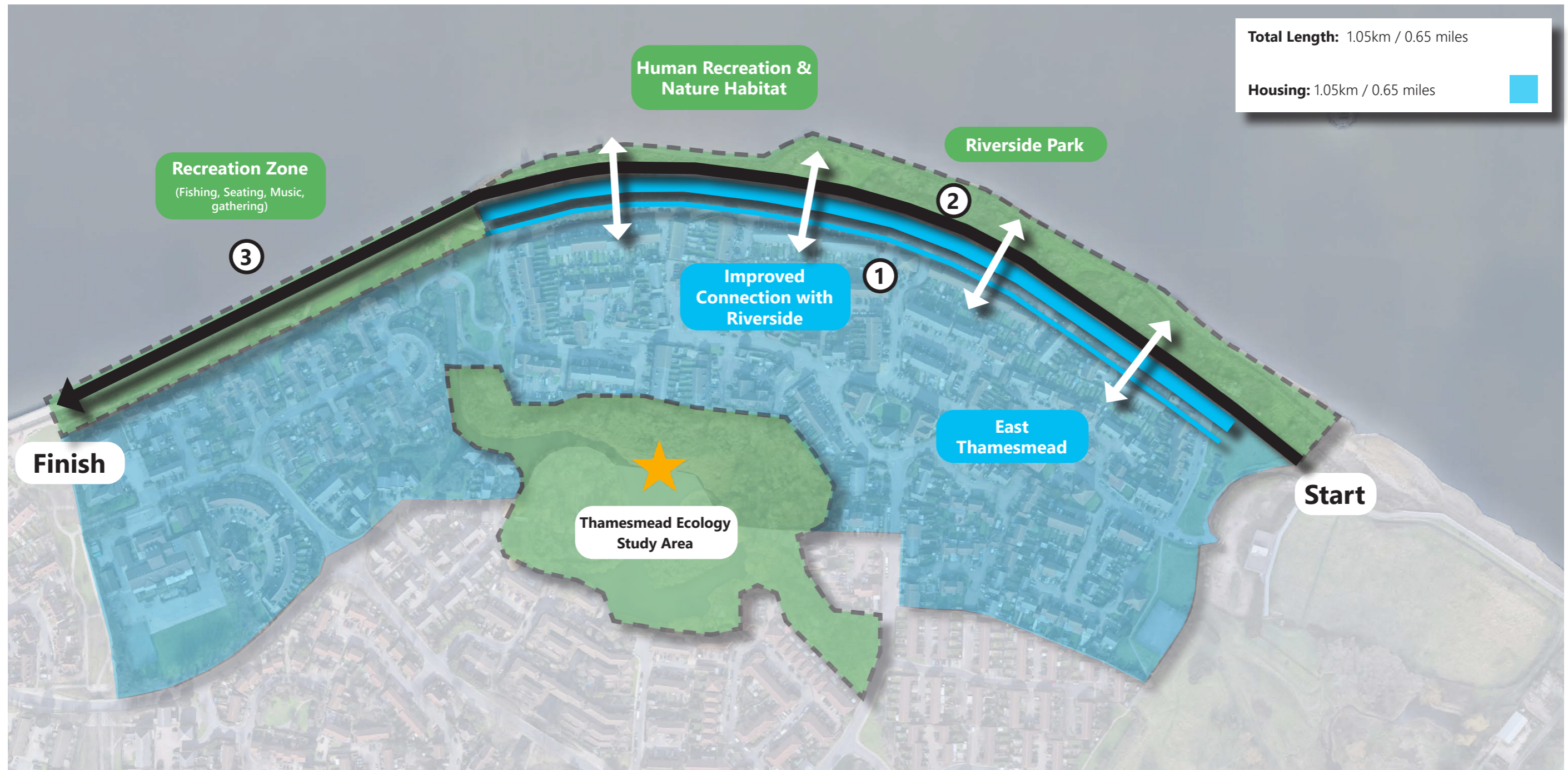
Collection of natural drift wood and rubbish, opportunity for artists to gather materials and a clean up of the river banks.



Thames Path alongside Ridgeway Park and Golf Centre with concrete flood barrier wall.



Beyond the concrete wall, nature is starting to create a home.



East Thamesmead

East Thamesmead is the second section along the Thames in Bexley where people live directly next to the river. Approximately 1km in length with a well established path, it provides an excellent opportunity to reinforce the advantages of riverside living to the local residents.

Currently, there is no physical connection between Lytham

Close, St Andrews Close and Redbourne Drive onto the Thames Path. To the south of the path there are fences, parking and bushes preventing access. The area has the opportunity to create a riverside park for local residents and natural habitats to thrive. Improving this connection will provide a better outlook for the homes and increase surveillance on the path, especially at night.

The last section of our walk in Bexley was along what was known as the Crossness Explosives Pier. This area is full of local residents cycling, running, fishing, talking and gathering. Although this zone is already very successful it could be improved with the help of the local residents and council in exploring what residents want and feel could be improved.

Improvements

- ① Improve connection with homes and riverside
- ② Opportunity for Riverside Park
- ③ Recreation Zone, Improve Facilities



The start of the Thamesmead Estate has become the start of many runs as going any further east could risk a chance smell from the sewage plant.



The housing along this stretch of pathway has poor connections with the Thames Path with many fences and bushes separating the two areas.



A greater connection could help transform this area into a park/garden for local residents along with a home for nature managed by local communities.



Evidence of local community running and fitness clubs



Foxes, birds and insects have made their home along this section of the Thames Path, giving local residents an opportunity to see a thriving wildlife.



This section of the path feels as though nature has control and humans are merely guests of the river as animals establish their homes.



As you turn the corner the natural habitat stops and a man-made pier creates a natural gathering for humans opening a view further into the city.



Thames Path along North Thamesmead.



Distance views of Central London (Canary Wharf) reinforcing its physical connection to the city, yet highlighting the large expanse of the city.



Crossness Explosives Piers along the Thames Path once home to a dangerous export is now a peaceful place for residents of Thamesmead to fish, cycle, walk and run. This creates a gathering point for a recreation area for residents.



Crossness Light - Admiralty Light No.2144, Red Navigation Light along the Thames Path.



Thames Path at the boundary between Bexley and Greenwich Boroughs - The end of our journey through Bexley. A peaceful place with exciting views of more to come.

counterbalance