



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **STRATFORD RIVERSIDE IMPROVEMENT PLANS GET STARTED**

Important first steps towards creating a recreational wetlands area by the side of the River Avon in Stratford are getting under way to deliver one of the key visions of the multi-million pound World Class Stratford initiative as swiftly as possible.

The riverside project is being spearheaded jointly by Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Stratford-upon-Avon Town Trust, the two bodies that own the relevant strips of land earmarked for the development.

Working closely with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, the District Council and the Town Trust will be developing a comprehensive management plan for the site that will be the subject of consultation later in the year.

The land is situated between Warwick Road and the River Avon and includes the Swan Reserve. It has already been identified by the Urban Design Framework (UDF) for the town as an area that can be improved to create an informal amenity for the benefit of both residents and tourists.

Paul Ogden, World Class Stratford's Project Leader, said: "The scheme will be phased. In the early phases there will be improvements to existing footpaths, the creation of additional footpaths and pedestrian routes and improvements to ditches and channels. There will also be the opportunity to create more wetland attractions - such as ponds - and make provision for additional ecology and habitat.

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“We are looking at the possibilities of the site for interpretation and education. We recognise that it needs to involve the local community, particularly Stratford College and the schools in the area. The immediate aim is to develop a management plan to start things off and consult on them.”

Councillor Les Topham, the chairman of the World Class Stratford Strategy Group, said: “This is an important element of the Urban Design Framework on which we’re keen to see some early progress. We have provided the framework, and now we need to deliver on it.”

Jean Holder, the chairman of the Town Trust, said: “Stratford Town Trust is a major landowner in the town and the creation of an informal wetlands amenity is just one of many schemes we can help facilitate in the pursuit of World Class Stratford’s bold vision. We are proud that we are able to help make such projects possible.”

Dr Andy Tasker, chief executive of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, said: “This is a project we’ve been working with our partners on for well over 10 years now, so it’s great to see something happening at last. The Warwick Road lands have huge potential for nature reserves to be enjoyed by local people, and it will be tremendous to see sensitive developments assisting with this.

“It will be exciting to see what we can do, to add to the ecological and visitor experience. We at the wildlife trust will be carrying out some ecological surveys over the summer and we would love anyone who has any records of wildlife in the area to make contact with us so that we have access to these records.” The wildlife trust’s email address is [admin@warkswt.cix.co.uk](mailto:admin@warkswt.cix.co.uk)

It is hoped that work on the wetlands development will begin next year to fit in with the building of a new access road from Warwick Road to the car-park at the back of Stratford Leisure Centre nearby. The road is designed to ease traffic pressure on the town’s gyratory system.

The District Council, the Town Trust and the Wildlife Trust poignantly held their first meeting to discuss the wetlands projects a few days ahead of World Wetlands Day on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> February, which focused public attention on the critical importance of the earth’s water supplies to human life.

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In a separate development, World Class Stratford has submitted a planning application to Stratford District Council for the temporary erection of a giant Ferris wheel on the town's recreation ground – across the river from the Royal Shakespeare Theatre – this spring.

The wheel is intended as one of a number of attractions that can be provided in Stratford between now and 2010 while the Royal Shakespeare Theatre is closed for redevelopment. Said Paul Ogden: “We think it is the kind of thing worth exploring to help support the town's economy over the next few months.

“It will be an opportunity for local residents to get a view of their own town from a different perspective and provide a flavour of the views that they will have from the top of the new tower that will be built on the Royal Shakespeare Theatre.”

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