LONDON ZOO

a ZSL conservation zoo

BRINGING THE SNOWDON AVIARY BACK TO LIFE



Impact Report

ZSL

With thanks to our funders including:

Made possible with Heritage Fund

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INTRODUCING ZSL

In 1826, Stamford Raffles and Humphry Davy founded the Zoological Society of London. Its purpose was to form a collection of animals and study them for the advancement of zoological knowledge. The Society quickly obtained a lease on an area of Regent's Park and appointed the young architect Decimus Burton to lay out the gardens and design accommodation for the animals, creating the world's first scientific zoo.

Fast-forward to today and ZSL has grown to be a global wildlife conservation organisation. Not only does it manage London and Whipsnade Zoos, but undertakes pioneering, wide-ranging and ambitious work supporting recovery for the planet, addressing the most urgent conservation issues and challenges, and restoring the wonder and diversity of life everywhere, and our connection to it.

London Zoo is a unique conservation zoo in the heart of one of the world's most vibrant capital cities. It welcomes over 1.1 million visitors every year; enjoying a day out whilst getting closer to nature, learning about and supporting vital conservation efforts.

Over almost 200 years, London Zoo has developed a wealth of architectural variety that illustrates trends and styles in architecture, and methods of construction over that period.

The collection of buildings includes two Grade I and eleven Grade II listed structures. Many of the leading architects have contributed, leading to a built environment at London Zoo with more listed structures of such diversity of design in a small area than anywhere else in the UK.

ZSL

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Front cover image: Monkey Valley 2022 © Paul Noble ZSL

This page: Colobus monkey © ZSL



FOREWORD



In 2017, we were delighted to be awarded a £4,593,700 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore one of the Zoo's most recognisable and iconic buildings, the Grade II* listed Snowdon Aviary.

It was originally intended to have a 30-year life span and, having lasted well beyond it, required a major transformation to not only restore the building but to create a new purpose for it.

We also saw this as an opportunity to embed London Zoo into the local community, with the iconic structure becoming a focal point for our communities, engaging new and diverse audiences with our conservation work.

The Covid-19 pandemic and building inflation brought significant challenges to what was already a complex project. We could not be more grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund and support from our other donors, who have all supported us, making this restoration possible. We have gone on to deliver a world-class colobus monkey walk-through habitat, welcomed over 200,000 visitors through our Community Access Scheme and made our Zoo more accessible - I am incredibly proud of everyone who has worked tirelessly to realise this ambition.

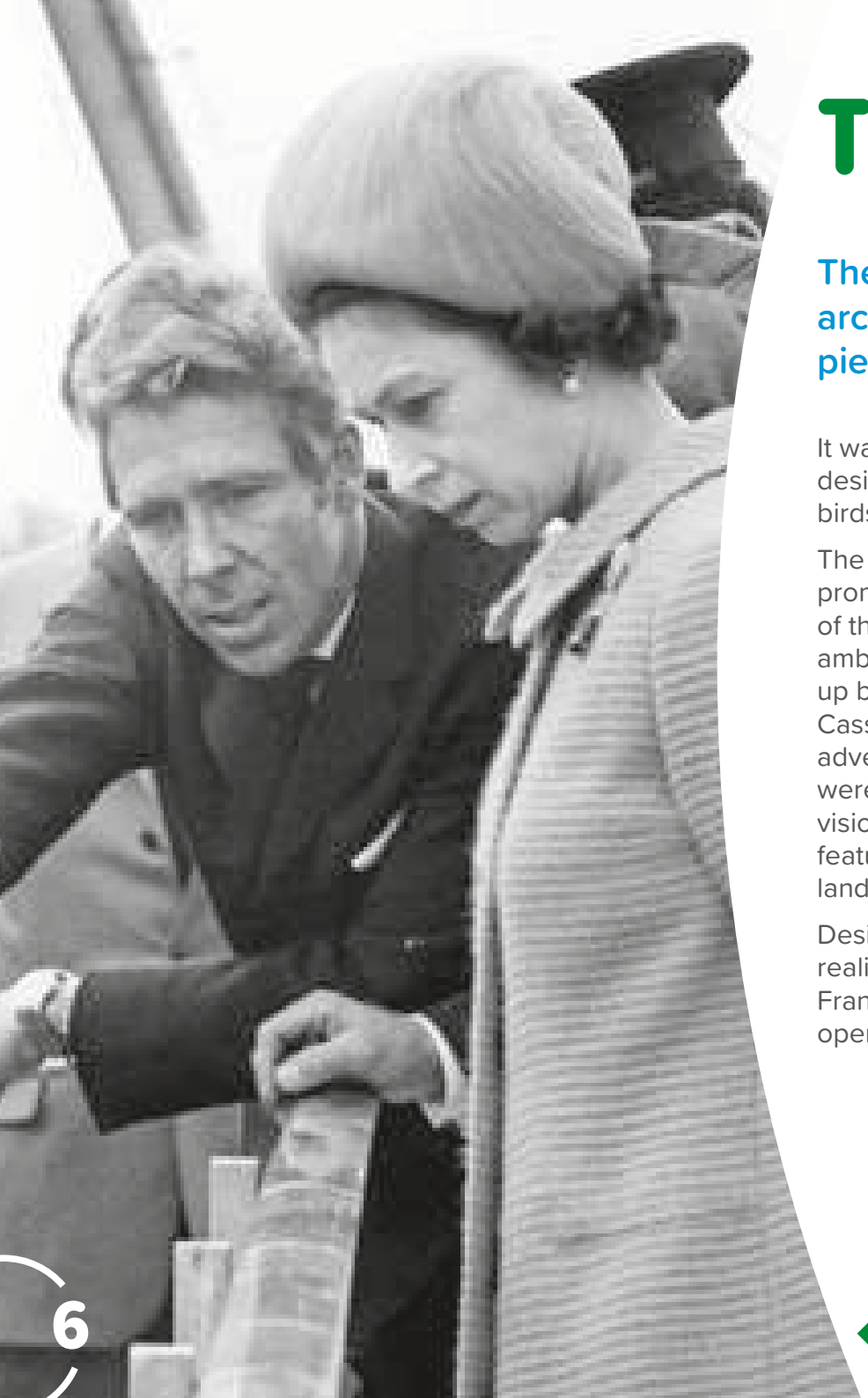
As we approach our bicentenary, we are committed to driving forward the legacy of this project across both of our conservation Zoos, ensuring that our heritage is preserved for the next 200 years, and our place within the community is secured.



James Wren
Executive Director of Fundraising, Marketing and Engagement



Family enjoying getting up close to the colobus monkeys © ZSL



THE SNOWDON AVIARY

The Snowdon Aviary is part of London Zoo's rich architectural heritage, and a bold and innovative piece of London architectural design.

It was Britain's first walk-through aviary; designed to offer close up views of birds in various habitats.

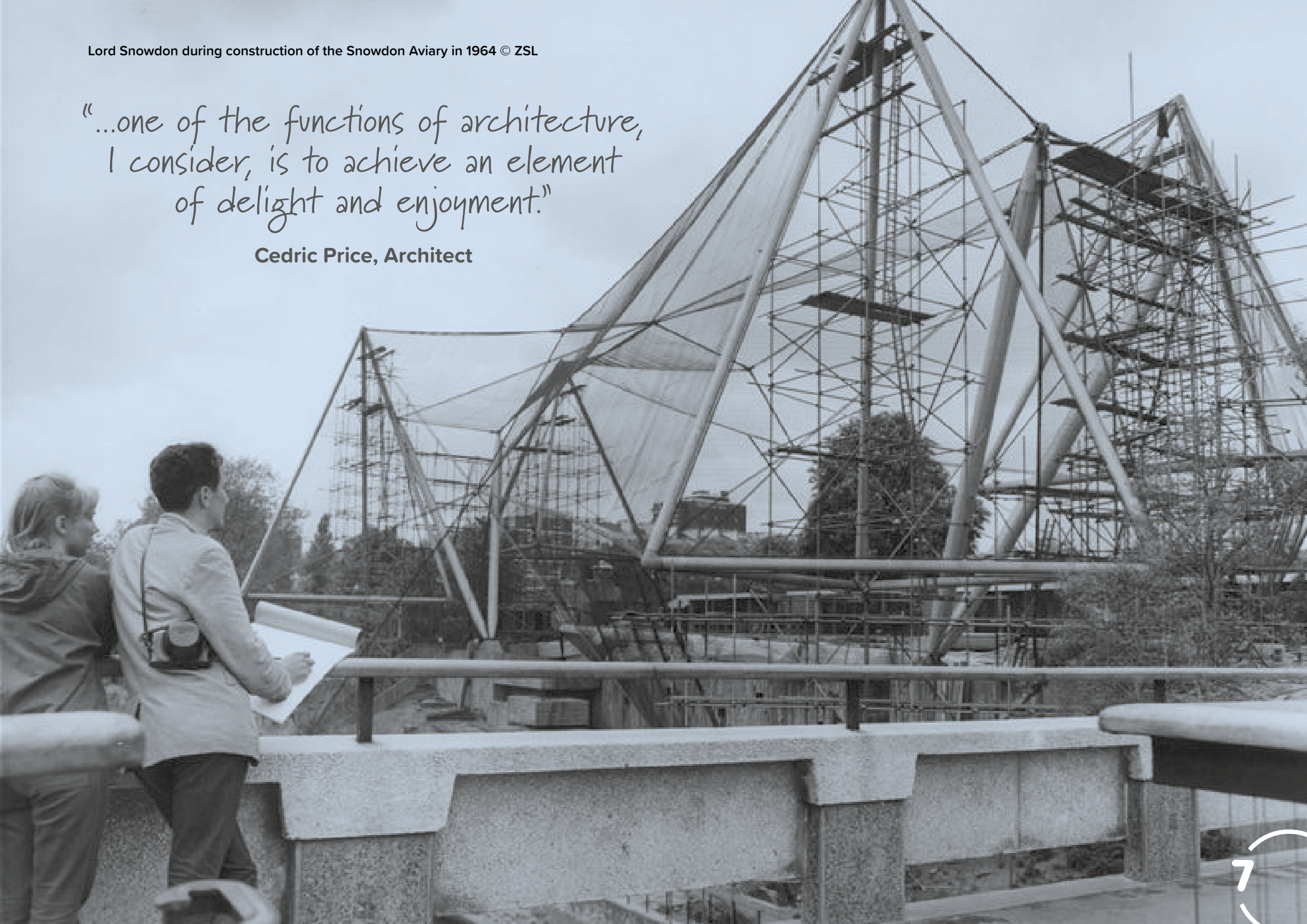
The idea of building an aviary in a prominent location on the North Bank of the Regent's Canal was part of the ambitious plans for a 'New Zoo' drawn-up by consultant architect Sir Hugh Casson at the end of the 1950s. Being adventurous and future adaptability were central to these plans with a vision to make the Zoo 'an outstanding feature of London's architecture and landscape'.

Designed by Lord Snowdon, and realised by Cedric Price and engineer Frank Newby; the Aviary was officially opened to the public in 1965.

As the first (and still one of the only) permanent tension structures in the UK, and being unique in its form, the Aviary holds huge historic engineering importance. The Snowdon Aviary is a 24m giant net 'skin' wrapped around a skeleton of poles; held in position only by cables. There are paired diagonal 'sheer legs' at either end each linked to two three-sided pyramids or tetrahedrons. The building was also pioneering as it is made of aluminium. Other features include an M-shaped walkway and an internal water system with a fast-flowing waterfall.

This pioneering project made London architectural history and would go on to inspire future generations of architects. Its status as a landmark of historic, cultural and architectural significance was recognised with Grade II* listing in 1998.

Queen Elizabeth II visit to the Snowdon Aviary in 1967 © ZSL



Lord Snowdon during construction of the Snowdon Aviary in 1964 © ZSL

"...one of the functions of architecture, I consider, is to achieve an element of delight and enjoyment."

Cedric Price, Architect



Abseiling down the Grade II* listed structure to remove the first of 200 mesh panels, July 2021 © ZSL

THE PROJECT

The Snowdon Aviary is situated in what became a 'forgotten' corner of London Zoo. The Aviary was both the least anticipated and least visited of all of London Zoo's areas, with less than a third of visitors making it there.[1]

The structure itself was becoming rundown and inaccessible, with major work urgently required. Cables had far-exceeded their lifespan, patch repairs on the netting were visible and the 'M' bridge through the middle was at risk of failure. All this led the Snowdon Aviary to being officially placed on Historic England's 'At Risk' register.[2]

Furthermore, the aviary as a visitor experience had grown tired with dated and unexciting interpretation that lacked relevance to modern audiences. Poor access meant that the aviary was not wheelchair accessible or easy for people with additional access needs (for example, sign and hearing impairments) to enjoy.

Urgent action was required to halt and reverse the fabric decline, and to then re-imagine the Snowdon Aviary - bringing it back to life.

As a result, the Snowdon Aviary Restoration project was created.

This £9 million project was supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and a suite of other generous funders.

This ambitious five-year project was designed to:

- Undertake essential repairs to its iconic structure in order to transform the Snowdon Aviary into a modern, accessible exhibit
- Re-house the eastern black-and-white colobus monkeys into a stunning new primate walk-through
- Create a new community learning space
- Maximise opportunities for public enjoyment and learning through interpretation
- Connect with, and reduce barriers for previously under-represented audiences through a targeted programme of activities and initiatives co-created with audiences and community groups.

[1]Study by BDRC Continental (2011). [2]A register of buildings at risk across England where buildings are assessed for inclusion on the basis of condition, occupancy or use.

"The project goals were a brilliant kick start to get us thinking about the wider community and our impact on the community. It has been a brilliant catalyst to change our thinking, it has generated a profound change of thought around the social impact of ZSL, and our community impact. As a result, we have embedded social impact into our current and future activities."

Zoo staff



Site development, February 2022 © Evelyn Len ZSL

JOURNEY TO TRANSFORMATION

	Started by...	So that...
Visitor experience	• Exploring and researching key stories of the Snowdon Aviary's past • Assessing the current condition of the built fabric, infrastructure, space usage and planting schemes • Finding out how visitors use the North Bank and about barriers to engagement • Identifying opportunities to develop and engage new audiences • Developing, reviewing and revising imaginative plans to revitalise The Snowdon Aviary, its surroundings and programming.	• Accessible Interpretation is developed, ev to reveal the Snowdon Aviary's layers of h design, enclosure design, the life of colob conservation issues • Extensive renovation of the Aviary structu construction of a new building alongside • Detailed planning is carried out for suitabl colobus monkey troop, and surrounding p • Access, infrastructure and orientation is u paths and walkways, signage, gateways e
Local communities	• Consulting with local people to identify what they value about London Zoo and the barriers to visiting it such as cost, awareness levels etc. • Building a better understanding of existing and potential visitors, and opportunities for engagement • Trialling activities with target audiences to ensure they are effective • Creating plans that respond to local and under-served audience's needs, and maximise participation • Developing new volunteer roles.	• Communities work with London Zoo to co • A vibrant activity programme, community Access Scheme introduces new visitors to visiting, digital content, play, learning and • Activities and events help local people se light, and explore what's important to ther • Local people volunteer - giving their time, help care for and share the Snowdon Avia • Community members and organisations bu Zoo and the Snowdon Aviary to enthral, de
ZSL	• Agreeing a collective vision for the Snowdon Aviary and how this fits with the wider visitor experience at London Zoo • Developing partnerships with community organisations and delivery partners • Putting in place a specialist team of staff, contractors and delivery partners to deliver the project • Securing major funding • Commissioning and managing capital works contracts.	• Staff are trained, more knowledgeable and of delivering a major investment and comm programme • Trainees develop the confidence, social c knowledge and qualifications needed for • Barriers between teams are broken down and tap into expertise in order to deliver s • Lessons are learnt about how to ensure e investment plans • Community engagement, inclusion and ac within the wider organisation.

Leonard Cheshire Autism Spectrum Disorder workshop 2019 © ZSL

And then...

vents and conversations
history and ingenious
bus monkeys and relevant

re is undertaken, and
and community space
le enclosure design for the
planting plan
pgraded through renewed
etc.

- The Snowdon Aviary is rejuvenated, and once again a 'Wow' to walk to
- Visitors learn about the world-class architectural heritage of London Zoo
- Visitors get an up-close and personal, memorable encounter with the colobus monkey troop
- Visitors learn about the primate's autecology, behaviour, threatened habitat and the ZSL's role in their conservation
- Visitors are mindful of the paper and wood products they buy, and their link to deforestation
- More and a wider range of people visit London Zoo.

-produce ways to engage
space and Community
London Zoo through
volunteering
e London Zoo in a new
m
energy and passion to
ary
ild skills by using London
elight and deliver learning.

- The Snowdon Aviary is more accessible and available to everyone, enriching community life
- London Zoo is more relevant to, and 'visible', in community life, and becomes a community asset
- Landscape and area character is strengthened, contributing to the local sense of place
- The local area is a better place to live, work and visit.

d have experience
munity engagement

apital, technical
future roles
to work more effectively
shared goals
ffective delivery of future

ccessibility begin to embed

- The colobus monkeys have a new home, where they can leap through the heights and thrive
- The Snowdon Aviary is removed from 'At Risk' register and is easier and more cost-effective to maintain
- London Zoo has a new 'star' attraction and the USP of being the only colobus monkey walk through in the UK
- 'Proof of concept' of how a ZSL regeneration project in partnership with the local community delivers meaningful social, economic and animal outcomes
- Better career prospects for apprentices, and an upskilled workforce for ZSL
- Increased organisational expertise in place-based, community and partnership working
- Contributes towards wider masterplan for London Zoo and ZSL Strategy.



WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED

Over

1,000,000

visitors to London Zoo per year





1 troop of

colobus monkeys

enjoying their new home

1 Listed structure

restored and re-imagined

133,000 people

from low-income households, refugees, people with additional needs or disabilities and people over the age of 60 at risk of isolation **visiting via the Community Access Scheme**

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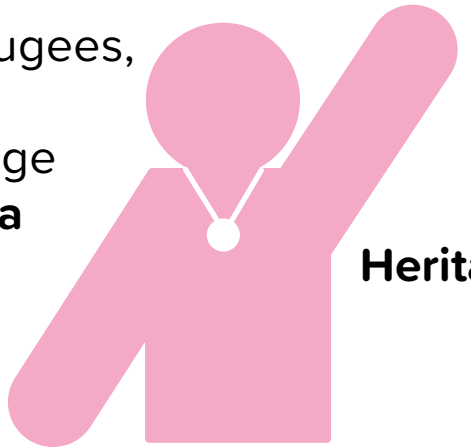
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20 new

Community Ambassador volunteers

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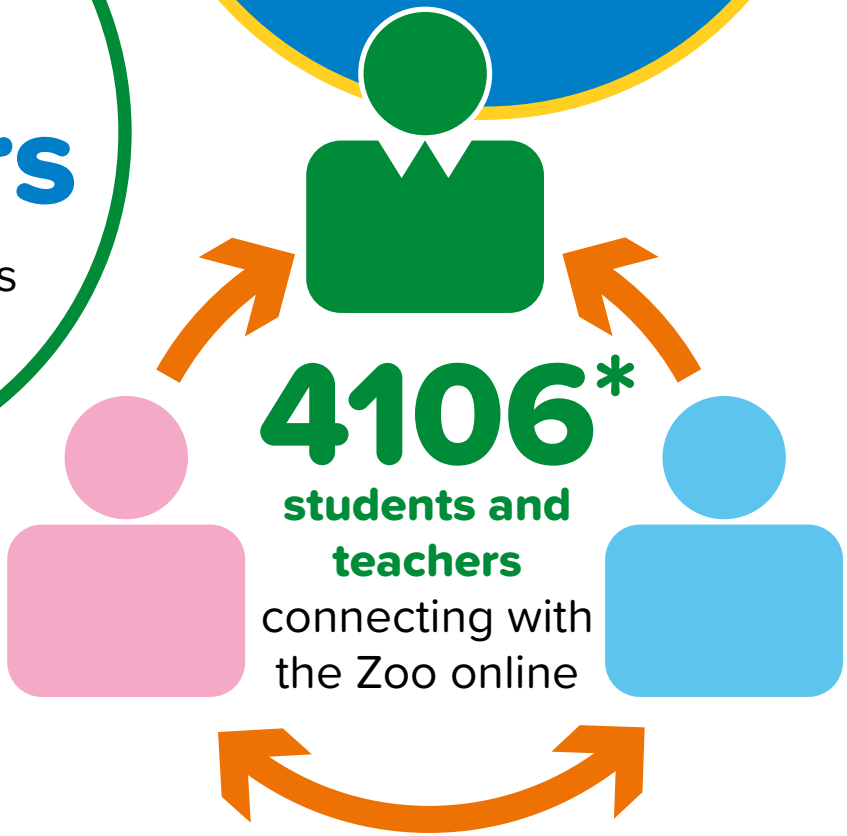
young people

excluded or at risk of exclusion from school **visiting on taster days**



312 hours

spent helping teachers plan school trips



4106*

students and teachers

connecting with the Zoo online

713 attending

accessible sensory events

*Via virtual outreach

THE SNOWDON AVIARY IS IN BETTER CONDITION AND IS BETTER MANAGED

Prior to the project, the Snowdon Aviary's structure was becoming rundown and inaccessible, with major work urgently required, leading to it being officially placed on Historic England's 'At Risk' register.

Furthermore, the whole of the North Bank appeared unloved, with outdated outbuildings, unattractive access routes and overgrown vegetation. It made this area of the Zoo feel run-down and unattractive to spend time in.

The project undertook a complete restoration of the Snowdon Aviary to repurpose it as an enclosure for a troop of colobus monkeys. The surrounding area was also re-landscaped, the interior of the exhibit enriched for the monkeys, a new monkey house constructed and linked by a high-level monkey walkway to the Snowdon Aviary, a new community space added and paths improved.

The project has revitalised the Snowdon Aviary, giving it a new lease of life. It has been transformed into a modern habitat by creating a stunning new primate walk-through and a re-imagined North Bank designed to maximise opportunities for public enjoyment and learning.

The Snowdon Aviary has now formerly been removed from the 'At Risk' register - a landmark moment for this important piece of London's architectural heritage.

The eastern black and white colobus monkey troop has also benefitted. These primates are highly arboreal, with amazing leaping ability - meaning the Snowdon Aviary's space and complexity is well suited to their needs.

With an impressive troop of colobus monkeys overhead, the Snowdon Aviary now combines world-class animal care with a breathtaking educational, and more accessible, visitor experience, with uninterrupted and unique opportunities to observe amazing feats as colobus leap overhead.

"...the aviary was completely revitalised from a near derelict state to something that many people are coming to enjoy, admire and appreciate."

Zoo staff

"The greatest success was that the colobus monkeys received a new much improved (bigger) home, you could visibly see the difference in behaviours as soon as they had access to their new larger space."

Zoo staff



Visitors are able to learn about the Snowdon Aviary heritage as they walk across the bridge to Monkey Valley © Jonathan Kemeys ZSL



HERITAGE IS BETTER INTERPRETED

The project has put a spotlight on the historical and architectural heritage of the ingenious Snowdon Aviary, and introduced visitors to the colobus monkeys, their forest habits, habitat and conservation.

The new interpretative scheme is imaginative, attractive and creates a distinct 'feel' for the Monkey Valley exhibit. The stylised illustrations are a key part of this and evaluation found that inclusion of these aided accessibility for some visitors with Autism Spectrum Disorder, whilst tactile models and audio descriptions add a new dimension to the visit for blind visitors and those with sight impairments.

Visitors are:

- **Enjoying sharing space with our colobus monkeys** - most visitors enjoy the excitement of walking through the troop and their habitat
- **Feeling awe at the size and shape of the Snowdon Aviary** - many visitors stop to view the structure from the canal bridge or look up in wonder whilst inside
- **Recalling at least one amazing fact about colobus monkeys** - visitors were very good at recalling memorable facts: 'They "clean" their teeth through the foliage they eat'; 'They continuously fart!'; 'How they grunt to communicate'
- **Having fun easily accessing activities in the space** - interactive activities encourage play by visitors of all ages, hands-on learning and interacting and learning as a group.

Online content accompanies the onsite visitor experience, highlighting the significance of the architectural heritage and an opportunity to delve deeper.

"I took a blind man and his wife to the exhibit where there is a tactile model of the aviary itself with some Braille, the man who had no sight was able to smell and hear the exhibit but also touch and understand the shape of the exhibit too. It enabled his partner to enjoy the exhibit with him."

Zoo staff

MORE AND WIDER RANGE OF PEOPLE ARE VISITING

Pre-project UK visitors to London Zoo were mainly from white, economically advantaged backgrounds with only 15% from Black and Minority Ethnic groups.[3] This was a clear call to action to diversify audiences.

The project event and activity programme was co-designed with target audiences and community delivery partners. Project and partner staff and volunteers successfully created inclusive spaces where a wide range of people could feel welcomed for who they are and not feel judged.

The Community Access Scheme has been fundamental to broadening access. Over 90 groups took advantage of the sliding scale of discounted tickets including:

- **Families on low incomes and in challenging circumstances** - e.g. Lewisham Children and Family Centres
- **Faith-led groups** - e.g. West London Synagogue
- **Minority Ethnic/Global Majority groups** - e.g. Al Manaar Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre
- **Asylum seekers and refugees** - e.g. Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile
- **Youth organisations** - e.g. Gascoyne and Morningside Youth Clubs
- **SEND and disability groups** - e.g. Empowering Deaf Society.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and even moving. Many spoke of how they would never have been able to visit without the scheme, had never visited before, and how memorable and special the experience was. They valued the extra effort staff made to welcome them into the Zoo and to accommodate additional needs.

The project also delivered dedicated sessions specifically to overcome access barriers:

- 183 people attended relaxed openings particularly suitable for visitors with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- 233 people attended Audio Described Tours with a sighted guide, which are designed for blind or partially sighted visitors
- 399 people attended guided tours in British Sign Language.



ZSL staff leading an Audio Described Tour for people who are blind and partially sighted © ZSL

"They loved the aspects when they were cleaning enclosures, in their hi vis jackets they felt part of the team there. They don't often feel included, so this was a huge moment for them."

Teacher

[3]Compared to 46% of Londoners



PEOPLE HAD AN ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE

ZSL identified three major barriers to an enjoyable visit to the Snowdon Aviary during project planning:

- With a clear Unique Selling Point, the bird exhibit was not a priority for visitors
- The aviary's location away from the main part of the Zoo was inconvenient
- Visitors were not aware the Snowdon Aviary existed.

The new Monkey Valley is proving to be a significant draw, bringing a variety of visitors through the gates who may not otherwise have come. In this way, the project has created a new 'go to' destination for visitors at London Zoo, with around 10% of people saying that seeing Monkey Valley motivated them to visit.

Evaluation revealed that Monkey Valley is an enjoyable and memorable exhibit that remains 'top of mind' following a visit. It is having significantly more impact than the previous exhibit, and appears to be driving greater recognition for the monkeys, as well as the Zoo's rich architectural heritage.

The project has been successful in overcoming the identified barriers to visiting the Snowdon Aviary and to providing an enjoyable experience.

Thank you so much for the experience day you facilitated for 2 of my patients. This is the closest they have ever been to an animal, and the happiness and laughter that radiated from them throughout the day was wonderful to watch.

You truly made a difference to these two little girls who have now decided they are going to become zookeepers.

Thank you so much for giving them a chance to have a fun day that many would take for granted but in this case, it gave respite and a chance to be just like every other little girl.'

Community stakeholder

OUR PEOPLE HAVE DEVELOPED SKILLS

Training and skills development have been a foundation for change at London Zoo as part of the project.

It has been an opportunity to invest in ZSL's people, ensuring they are equipped and confident to welcome visitors to Monkey Valley and engage them with the fascinating history of the Snowdon Aviary. This has included:

- ZSL staff have honed varied customer service skills, from welcoming visitors with additional needs to experience of delivering a major National Lottery Heritage Fund supported project
- Volunteers have developed skills from horticulture, an understanding of the heritage and the colobus monkeys, to skills for successfully engaging with different types of visitors
- Teachers have built their confidence and knowledge to undertake a self-guided visit
- An apprentice developed employability skills through workplace and formal learning.

"The training gave me good up-to-date insight on how to communicate and challenge my own assumptions to not only make me a better colleague but a better ally to people with disabilities. It also gave me an understanding of the best ways of working to make ZSL accessible for everybody which is pretty invaluable information."

Zoo staff

"I'm proud of how my confidence has grown just by volunteering. I used to find it difficult to talk to people and now I can approach visitors and offer help or start a conversation, that is a big personal achievement for me. I saw the confidence of the other volunteers and that rubbed off on me, it gave me a boost."

Volunteer





PEOPLE HAVE LEARNT ABOUT HERITAGE

The project was an opportunity to build upon and extend London Zoo's educational offer through:

- **Digital outreach** - into schools and other education institutions was an effective tool to reach more pupils and teachers, especially where transport or time out of school may be a barrier. For example, the project delivered 17 online events during British Science Week which reached 12 schools and had 1,249 attendees
- **Onsite learning opportunities** - for example, taster days for 83 young people at risk of exclusion or who have been excluded from school and are in a Pupil Referral Unit
- **Professional development** - for teachers to ensure they feel confident to plan a visit with their school to London Zoo. 103 teachers attended onsite Discovery Days
- **Planning support** - 312 hours of further targeted support for teachers in planning their school visit.

The education offer was supported by skilled staff, specialist volunteers and enhanced educational facilities to help deliver a programme all year round.

The project has contributed towards education in the local community, with Real World learning experiences, and making Learning Outside the Classroom a reality for more children and young people. In turn, this will contribute to vital cultural and environmental science agency for young learners.

"The ZSL staff came in to meet the students beforehand to understand their learning, mental and emotional needs. I linked up with them from that and we planned the sessions together."

Teacher

"ZSL as an organisation, are one of the best learning partnerships that we have."

Teacher

"There was an enthusiasm throughout the school to extrapolate on it wherever we could. We did lots of artwork, poetry, zoo keeper diaries, model making and drawing."

Teacher

◀ **Interpretation within Monkey Valley has helped to inform visitors about our heritage and the wider conservation work of ZSL © Evelyn Len ZSL**

PEOPLE HAVE VOLUNTEERED THEIR TIME

In common with many conservation organisations, volunteers are a crucial part of London Zoo, helping the Zoo to run smoothly and enhancing the experience for visitors.

The project has helped to build the Zoo's volunteering programme with new roles, community volunteering for all ages and supported-volunteering opportunities for people with additional needs.

Volunteers were incredibly positive about the experience, with over 95% rating it 'good' or 'excellent'. Volunteers have significantly benefited from their roles:

- Learning from and being inspired by the heritage, people and animals they've encountered in their role
- Developing new skill sets and building upon their experience
- Boosting confidence, which many feel has blossomed
- Enjoyment from working with others, creating new social connections including forging new friendships
- Feeling a sense of belonging and being part of the London Zoo team
- Seeing improvements to their inward and outward mental health, noted by themselves but also remarked on by friends, family and others with close relationships, such as support workers or community organisation group leaders.

The project provides an excellent platform for ZSL's volunteer offer to go from strength to strength.

"We developed a supported volunteering scheme, the sessions are an embedded part of the programme, those with learning difficulties came and enjoyed being in the outdoors and really felt like they were helping, which they were. We also gave them their own ZSL zoo uniform, seeing their pride in that was magical."

Zoo staff

"It gets me outdoors and out of the house, it gives me so much focus and I can forget about everything else in the world, everyone is really nice, and it has done wonders for my mental health."

Volunteer





THE LOCAL AREA IS A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT

The project has contributed towards the local area in a range of ways, including:

- **Sense of place** - embedding the value and significance of the Zoo's architectural heritage into local community life, engaging communities and improving the vista from the canal towpath, thus contributing to pride in the local area's natural and cultural heritage, a feeling of ownership, and sense of place
- **Levelling-up** - improving access to opportunities for those in the community who experience barriers to accessing nature and local heritage
- **Contributing towards social integration and cohesion** - by bringing the community together through social events and opportunities to showcase their achievements onsite and online
- **Mobilising people** - providing opportunities for local people to care for and share heritage through volunteering
- **Space to feel welcome** - creation of a dedicated community space on the North Bank of the Zoo
- **Adding value to the local economy** - through supporting local jobs and businesses through contracts let, developing skills and adding value to the London tourist economy with a new 'must visit' attraction
- **Increasing capacity and resilience** - by supporting local community organisations, charities and SMEs to increase their resilience through diversifying their offer, adding to skills or demonstrating the impact they can make.

"A lot of them [the children] had never been to the zoo here before this project."

Teacher

"All our children are from the immediate area, all have significant needs and are from families that are particularly economically challenged, this project made them feel part of the community in which they live and ZSL resides."

Teacher

ZSL Volunteers play an important role in informing visitors about our heritage and wider conservation work of ZSL © ZSL

A LEARNING JOURNEY

Like every complex project, the Snowdon Aviary Restoration project has been an intensive learning journey encountering:

Challenges - for example, delivering during the pandemic and war in Ukraine, when resulting price fluctuations create a volatile situation for budgeting

Opportunities - for example, the enthusiasm of the community to get involved, new partnerships opening doors to work with a more diverse range of people.

The end-of-project evaluation was an opportunity to reflect on what went well, what was challenging, why this matters and suggested actions for future projects and programmes as a result. Three examples of lessons learnt are:

1) Community partnerships are fruitful...for everyone

Partnerships with delivery partners with deep existing links within the community, such as Groundwork, gave the project a 'leg-up' in reaching under-served audiences. It also brought new perspectives, talent and energy to the project team.

The evaluation shows that these partnerships were highly impactful for participants, community groups, partner organisations and for ZSL.

They allowed a higher level of participation in the programme, from consultation through to co-production with new audiences, and enabled ZSL to deepen its understanding of new audiences. This model of collaborative working should be an essential and well-resourced ingredient of future heritage projects.

"Knowing that they were contributing to the project, that was the draw. We could see how our ideas and feedback came to fruition. That was great to be involved with; the signage, the trail, gardening and growing. It's about having ownership of parts of the zoo, that's what the students really like."

Zoo staff

"We are making ou
accessible and

Matthew Gould, Directo



ur Zoos more
inclusive."

or General, ZSL



2) Joined-up evidence-led plans breed success

Formalised project plans (most notably the Activity Plan) have helped to set an intention, provide resources and a focus for testing new ways of working. These have also brought together strands of work from across London Zoo into one coherent package.

Finding ways to ensure this coherent approach is reflected in project structures, decision-making and processes will help future projects to thrive.

> "The greatest success has been the ability to pilot a new way of working with volunteers which was volunteer led, it was a huge success. We might not have been able to do it without the activity plan and the aspirations within the plan."
>
> **Zoo staff**

3) Access should be integrated from the start

Central to design within the project was considering all kinds of accessibility right from the start, from hard landscaping and thresholds, to interpretation and signage.

This approach is already being transferred into new projects at London Zoo, and could usefully be turned into a protocol and quality-assurance checklist for the accessibility of new exhibits.

ZSL staff member running a diversity and inclusion session with community groups at London Zoo © ZSL

NEXT STEPS FOR ZSL

The Snowdon Aviary Restoration project was always designed to be a catalyst for new ways of working and increasing capacity (through skills development, volunteering etc.) for London Zoo.

However it has gone beyond this to be transformational for both the North Bank area of the Zoo and for ZSL as an organisation.

This heritage project has helped to deepen the organisation's understanding and relationship with local communities and previously under-served audiences, it has brought access front and centre on the discussion table and has helped break down silos between technical departments.

In 2026, ZSL will be 200 years old, marking two centuries of discovery, pioneering, and inspiring and delighting visitors through science, conservation and its two Zoos.

This project was a celebration of London Zoo's heritage, and of the diversity of both animals and people. It therefore makes the perfect foundation from which to drive engagement in heritage, nature and science with more, and a wider range of people. This will amplify ZSL's impact, mobilise action to support conservation and bring the benefits of the Zoo to the lives of more people, especially those living on its doorstep.

ZSL can now proudly share its lessons learnt with the sector, and be a thought-leader in the ongoing conversation about how to ensure zoos continue to find relevance with modern society, as platforms for change.

This project is another footstep in London Zoo's journey, but a revolutionary one.

"The greatest success isn't the output necessarily, but the huge change for the organisation to work in a different way. It was embraced positively and that means that we can do this kind of thing more often. We are better future proofed as result; we are more forward thinking as an organisation."

Zoo staff



London Zoo heritage is explained through interpretation panels used throughout the exhibit © Jonathan Kemeys, ZSL



"We are doing things now that we would never have dreamt of or thought of doing without this project. It is about gaining support from the organisation and the community. It's a slow burn to build the sense of trust and belonging, but now the sky is the limit."

Zoo staff



Visitors enjoying London Zoo as part of the Community Access Scheme © ZSL



Impact report researched and written by Heritage Insider.
Graphic design by Genie Creative.

Heritage Insider is a sector specialist in evaluating funder investment and complex projects. With over 20 years' experience, this consultancy has supported over 200 National Lottery Heritage Fund projects, and helped to leverage over £75m for heritage organisations.

A mixed-methods approach was used to evaluate the Snowdon Aviary Restoration project, including reflective practice, visitor observation, participant feedback, interviews, professional review and project management records.

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