

SGI 18 Bow Creek Meanders

London Boroughs of Newham and Tower Hamlets (The river is the boundary)

Bow Creek Meanders, confluence of the River Lea with the Thames

Grid reference: TQ 392 812

A meander is a looping bend in a river, probably the best known example in London being the majestic loop of the Thames at the Isle of Dogs. However, there are more impressive meanders on the River Lea near its confluence with the Thames immediately opposite the Millennium Dome. This part of the River Lea is called Bow Creek and here the river turns back on itself twice before finally discharging into the Thames. The reason for a river adopting a meandering course is not fully understood but it is clear that a river uses less energy this way and once a curving channel has been established, water moving downstream will exaggerate the curve and eventually create a series of loops which move back and forth across the floodplain. The Bow Creek meanders have created two tongues of land; the western one has long been derelict and has now been designated as Bow Creek Ecology Park. The eastern one was actively being developed in 2017. Good views of the Bow Creek meanders can be obtained from the Docklands Light Railway which passes over the park on a modern viaduct but they can only be fully appreciated from the air.

Near the confluence with the Thames on the eastern side bored material from Crossrail was delivered by conveyor to waiting barges that transported it down the Thames to Wallasea Island in Essex where it has been used to construct a new RSPB nature reserve.

Text from GeoEssex/Essex Field Club with thanks; additions re Crossrail LGP 2017



The Bow Creek meanders from the air

Source: Google Earth. NB the larger land enclosed within the meander is being developed and the appearance is constantly changing.