



## THE KING'S CROSS

# POND CLUB



## THE UK'S FIRST PUBLIC NATURAL SWIMMING POND



The UK's first public natural swimming pond has been unveiled as part of the redevelopment of the King's Cross area.

World leading natural pool designers BIOTOP Landschaftsgestaltung GmbH and its specialist UK partner Kingcombe Aquacare Ltd constructed the pool. BIOTOP's founder and managing director Peter Petrich reviews the project...

Since natural bathing ponds were invented in Austria in the mid 1980s there has been a gradual move in mainland Europe away from chlorinated pools, towards the clear and naturally filtered waters provided by natural swimming pools. In Europe today there are an estimated 20,000 private and community natural

swimming pools. It was not until 2006 that the UK joined the natural pool revolution, however.

Although the private pool market continues to grow, until now there hasn't been a public natural swimming pool built in the UK. The King's Cross Pond Club is the first to be open for the public to enjoy and has been specifically engineered by BIOTOP to accommodate larger numbers of swimmers – around 169 per day.

The 67 acre site at King's Cross has a rich history and a unique setting. The original concept for the swimming pond within the development was created by Ooze Architects (Eva Pfannes and Sylvain Hartenberg) and Marjetica Potrč. The project's full title "Of Soil and Water: The King's Cross Pond Club" is the fourth and final part of a series of events called the RELAY public art programme, commissioned by King's Cross Central Limited Partnership and curated by Michael Pinsky and Stephanie Delcroix. The programme features imaginative new ways to enjoy natural water

environments and explores the growing urban swimming movement in our cities

The King's Cross Pond Club is a main attraction within the Lewis Cubitt Park area of the development. The aim is to provide people living in the area with a beautiful, relaxing vantage point from where they can swim and enjoy watching the rapidly expanding King's Cross Development around them. The swimming pond project is currently planned to run for just two swimming seasons in 2015 and 2016 and then the site will be turned into parkland.

In November 2014 BIOTOP partners Kingcombe Aquacare began the highly technical construction of the natural pond project, which had to be completed by Spring 2015. Kingcombe is recognised as an industry leader in all aspects of water construction, restoration, maintenance and management.

The project was specified by Kingcombe's design team working in conjunction with the team at BIOTOP. They coordinated closely



with landscape design consultancy, BD Landscape Architects and with the developers, artists, structural engineers and infrastructure engineers.

The pond was constructed using an earth bank technique and BIOTOP's recycled plastic corner elements. The deep swimming area within the pond features a reinforced geotextile wall. As with all BIOTOP's natural pool designs, the pond is completely chemical-free and the water is purified by a specially designed 180m<sup>2</sup> ration zone, supported by BIOTOP's patented filter and animal-friendly skimmer system.

During the final weeks of construction Kingcombe carried out the final balancing tests on the water's natural nutrient content and completed the planting, which plays a vital role in the pond's natural filtration. The vegetation includes hundreds of oxygenating plants such as *Elodea canadensis*, *Lagarosiphon major* (curly waterweed) and *Myriophyllum spicatum* (water milfoil). Also featuring are two species of *Phragmites communis* (Norfolk reed), ornamental *Iris pseudacorus* (flag iris) and species of water lilies *Nuphar lutea* (brandy bottle) and the white *Nymphaea alba*.

The majority of the plants were planted bare root to ensure they didn't bring additional nutrients into the water. Others were planted in the margins in special pots which fertilise the plants without enriching the water to avoid the development of algae.

Public pools differ greatly from private pools, mostly in terms of the size required to accommodate larger numbers of swimmers.

To ensure the success of the project we used specialist equipment and hydraulic design to ensure the pond could function with the designated maximum number of swimmers.

The King's Cross Pond project had a tight construction schedule but Kingcombe has a highly experienced team which has built all sizes of pools, lakes and water features in a variety of locations, including roof top gardens. The team rose to the exciting challenge exceptionally well and completed the project on time.



Top: Artist's impression of the King's Cross Pond  
Below: Final planting

Now the pond is open and people can really enjoy its natural beauty. We hope that the success of this first public natural swimming pond will lead to many more public projects developing around the UK as swimmers demand chemical free and environmentally responsible swimming in the future.

## ABOUT PETER PETRICH

Peter graduated in 1981 from the Federal Research and Training Institute for Horticulture in Schönbrunn Vienna, before going on to get a degree in landscape ecology and landscape design at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna. He has been Managing Director of BIOTOP Landschaftsgestaltung GmbH since 1985, holds several patents and is winner of numerous awards in the field of natural pool construction.

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## Facts and figures

Water Depth	max. 2.8m plus 1.3m swimming zone
Swimming Area	228m <sup>2</sup>
Regeneration/Filter Zone	183m <sup>2</sup>
Total area:	411m <sup>2</sup>
Year of Construction	2014

## Technical equipment

PhostecUltra	3 (plus 2 for fill water).
Animal Friendly Skimmer	2
Bio compact filter duo	3
Curved sieve combined	2