

“Symbiosis”

Westthorpe Field Business Park, Killamarsh, Derbyshire

Breakthrough Community Enterprise/ Nationwide Forestry Solutions Ltd

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Maintenance and Management

Project overview

We have created a nursery with 30000 native trees saplings (from local seed), open woodland, closed woodland, close scrub, meadow, and mature mixed hedge line habitats along with multi height mowing regime in the open areas. The land consists of an acre of land with 11 industrial units on a much larger Industrial estate, based on reclaimed coal spoil. At the rear of the units is a fence and a green space which ranges between 5 – 10 m wide with a hedge. The area was close cropped grass and hedge, with a few trees.

We took over the maintenance of the estate for the princely sum of £1/ year, thus saving the landlord 6.5K. we then agreed that we could manage the estate and green areas in whatever way we liked. The cost has been limited as everything we have used is re-cycled and labour has been voluntary.

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

The bio-diversity across the area was extremely limited. Lawn type Flora, no nesting birds, no recorded amphibians reptiles and limited invertebrates. This was entirely as a result of the maintenance regime that had been in place. The hedge was mixed but was cropped so low as to offer limited habitat.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

In 2004 we started from scratch with a unique business model designed to tie industry, community and environment, benefiting all parties equally without imposing additional costs on any party. We have planted since 2011 over 20000 trees across the UK on community projects.



This area is part of the raised bare root beds nursery system we employ. From bottom to top – in the photo – White Beam, Sweet Chestnut, Walnut, Common Oak, Hazel, Gelder Rose, Horse Chestnut, Downy Birch, Hornbeam, Holly, Yew, Hawthorn, Norway Maple, Crack Willow, Scotts Pine, Field maple, English and Wych Elm, Rowan, Beech, Alder, Goat Willow, Labernum, Silver Birch, Edible Fruits beds (pear, apple, cherry, plum, peach Elder) – approx. 15,000 in the picture

The models has won a Gold Green Apple, a Silver Green World award and recognised as a Green World Ambassador. The aim was to create, on a sliver of reclaimed industrial land, a nursery to grow Native trees for community projects and an area specifically designed and managed around offering the maximum level of bio-diversity possible.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The management profile for the estate was designed to showcase how easily bio-diversity across the board can be encouraged and developed with limited cost or disruption to day to day affairs by just implemented a slightly different management process. It is by its nature designed to be replicable.

We have worked in true partnership with the land owner to manage the area, in the long term, in this manner, and to our knowledge this model is unique (hence the status of Green World Ambassador that was awarded to us in 2015).

We have created bird and bat nesting areas, hibernation sweets, brashens, different grassland/ meadow structures, close woodland, open woodland, close scrub and open scrub, mature mixed hedging, sheltered and damp areas along with elevated dry and exposed areas, mature nettle beds and structured loose bio-mass and bird feeder stations

The area now hosts an extremely diverse bird population (inc: nesting wrens, wood pigeons, Great and Blue tits, Robins and thrushes). To be found across the spread of micro-habitats are frogs, toads, newts, grass snakes, dragonflies and damselflies flies, water beatles, over 10 different recorded butterflies, an array of moths, shield bugs, centipedes, gaul wasps burrowing solitary bees and other invertebrates. The flora now ranges from over 40 species of native and naturalised trees through to a profusion of meadow grasses and flowers,



One of designer habitats – “The Woodland Edge”. Behind this is the closed woodland and in front of it is the raised dry bank, mature nettle beds, leadings into meadow grasses and the start of the Nursery beds section.

ferns and mosses. It is now so diverse we are unable to give an accurate species count.

All of the works carried out have been in unison with members of staff working on the estate and local volunteers from the surrounding area. ALL of the materials used are re and upcycled from industrial waste products, gathered from local businesses and saved from landfill via their skips. Each contributing business is certificated to allow and show environmental partnership.



How would you best describe the project?

THE FUTURE !

If we are to re-connect humanities relationship with the environment that it inhabits and shares, it is not the distant, high profile re-forestation projects, that are going to make the difference. Although essential, they do not engage on a personal level.

This project ties Community, Industry and Environment on a day to day and personal level, with no additional cost, a huge carbon gain, reduction in landfill waste and huge educational forum which to date has had a positive interface with well over 5000 people.

The nursery areas are wheel chair accessible (recycled decking, obviously!) and we are now working closely with the probation service with people on the periphery of society to be part of the “Green Industrial Age”.

Further information

On this particular site our target is to expand and develop the wetland values by re-landscaping a highlighted area for a small pond which will be fed from the overspill from our water catchment system.

Overall however, we will never meet our bio-diversity target for the following reason: This is our Hub. This is our shop window to show case how easy and beneficial working with, as opposed to against, the natural world actually is. From the hub we take the native and naturalised trees that we have grown (from locally collected seed as opposed to importing them!) and take on community projects on industrially damaged land, Nationally. Therefore, each area has its own Bio-diversity targets which develop as the newly created ecosystems develop. Our job is to encourage, create and maximise on the ecological potential in each area. GREAT INNIT?



This shows the willow beds, two mowing lengths, open woodland with closed woodland behind and grounds beds of Elder, Gelder Rose, Lime, Hazel, Damsen, Blackthorn and crab apple. Fantastic for birds and butterflies this area.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

I am, and always have been, an Environmental Biologist and now work as part of fabulous team with a common goal. I have had to learn business in order to create this model. If we are but care takers of the environment, keeping it safe and healthy for the next generation of care takers, we have an obligation to act NOW, before the catastrophic damage that has being done becomes truly irreversible. I have no greater aspiration other than to assist in this process and the business that I have set up have this at their core.