

Construction Site Garden, West Quay Watermark Southampton, Hampshire

Sir Robert McAlpine

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Temporary

Project overview

On the project to construct West Quay Watermark in Southampton, a temporary garden has been installed with the help of a number of local schools, to provide a space for the site workers and the local community to enjoy.

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

The urban site had a very low level of biodiversity prior to when the construction works began on the project, with the site of the garden a bare concrete surface. The BREEAM target for biodiversity has identified the need for an increase of 6 species, at present this is to be met through the permanent landscaping planting scheme. Surveys of the site did not find any bat roosting or wildlife species of note, and the site was deemed of low ecological value.

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

Given the relatively large space available for welfare and the length of the construction programme, a



Photo: School engagement

suggestion was made to provide a less typical outdoor space that site workers and visitors could engage with and enjoy.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The garden was initially set up over a five week period in spring 2015, with a number of donated features including:

- Hanging baskets have been created from redundant hard hats and hung alongside the site entrance.
- Planters have been built around the garden with a variety of vegetables and fruit planted, including sweet peas, chard, cabbage, cucumber, lettuce, and strawberries.

- Over 50 flowering shrubs were donated by Hilliers, a local garden centre.
- The plants were chosen for their pollination benefits. They have brought a variety of species into the site including bees, butterflies and ladybirds, which were not present beforehand.
- Materials have been reclaimed from the construction site in the construction of the garden. For example, a sundial has been installed in the centre of the garden, made from reclaimed timber and rebar and a 'safety mushroom'.

The garden and site access planter are temporary enhancements which will be carried forward by the permanent soft landscape works that includes hedge species, wildflower grassland and trees offering long term biodiversity benefits.

The site aim to install a permanent bee or bug hotel and ensure the temporary garden plants and shrubs are passed onto local inner city community gardening projects.

How would you best describe the project?
An enhancement.

Further information

The fruit and vegetables being grown on the site provide added interest for site workers, the seating in the boat and the benches providing a relaxing environment for breaks during the day.

The boat constructed in the centre of the garden continues the maritime theme of the location. Engagement with various inner city schools and college groups has been carried out to build, plant, and maintain the garden.

Regular visits from a local school Nature Group have been set up on a once a month basis to help with the



Photo: Aerial view of construction site garden

garden and see the construction develop. This provides opportunities to learn about wildlife and gardening, as well as passing on knowledge of the site history and its future.

Over 82 school children visited the site in one morning, to learn about the changing City from past, present and future perspective.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

To provide an aesthetic side to an otherwise stark construction landscape of concrete and rebar.

To encourage and promote biodiversity opportunities don't have to be large scale to be achieved.

The objectives for biodiversity have been targeted at bees and are achieved through the community spirit and ownership.

The garden is a space that site workers can enjoy, and that the local visiting community can engage with.