

Felton Allotments Habitat Enhancements
Felton, North Somerset
Kier (Utilities/ Environmental Services)

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Community Engagement Award

Project overview

After the closure of St Katherine's school in Felton in 2010, Winford Parish Council decided to turn the school playing field into 15 allotments for local residents. Within the allotment area was also the school's wildlife area containing an overgrown pond. The council and allotment holders decided that the wildlife area was of conservation benefit and decided to retain and enhance it. Looking for advice, the council made contact with Kier's local Environmental Manager and a new partnership evolved. Initially Kier offered advice on what plants and features were of significance to wildlife and allowed the allotment volunteers to make a start on improvements.

Following the initial clearance work by the allotment holders, Kier donated wooden pallets and pipe off cuts to help create a substantial bug hotel. Hedgehog boxes were also built by Kier from food waste recycling bins and donated, along with a Tawny Owl nest box made from surplus plywood. A pond survey was also completed by Kier's Environmental Manager, identifying many plant, amphibian and invertebrate species. Further advice was then given as to how to improve the pond biodiversity and aquatic plants were donated to help encourage additional species such as newts.



Tawny Owl box being handed over to allotment holders

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

The allotment holders are very enthusiastic about wildlife and the opportunity to encourage natural predators to the site such as robins, blackbirds, hedgehogs to the site to control pests which eat their crops. This project will enhance the biodiversity of both the site and the local area.

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

The allotments are situated on the edge of the village and adjacent to the flight path of Bristol Airport. Areas of mixed habitats were available but in unfavourable condition. The pond and hedge were both overgrown and in need of attention to enhance their benefit to local wildlife.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Nigel Beaver (Kier SHE Advisor) made a Tawny Owl box in his spare time using a mixture of new wood and wood which had previously been used on building projects. The box has been erected on a fir tree overlooking common land in readiness for the 2017 breeding season. Tawny Owls are known to use the area and it is hoped the box will be occupied quickly

Two hedgehog boxes made from recycled materials were also built by Nigel and donated, hoping that it will encourage natural predators to the allotments.



Bug Hotel made from donated materials



Surveyed pond with donated aquatic plants

What were the biodiversity measures taken? (cont)

Material for a large bug hotel were donate from a local Kier depot and allotment holders built the structure under advice from Kier staff.

The pond within the site was in poor condition and vastly over grown. Kier's local Environmental Manager gave advice on what and how much to clear and also completed pond surveys to determine what would benefit the site most. Completion of a torch survey and a Habitat Suitability Index assessment led to the conclusion that the pond should be enhance for invertebrates and amphibians. Appropriate maintenance was then discussed with the allotment holders and suitable pond plants donated.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement

Further information

A working partnership has now been setup with the allotment association, with continued support being given by Kier. Annual surveys will be completed to see if species diversity is improving and if further enhancements can be made and supported.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

This was a unique opportunity to help engage a community group with the wildlife they were so enthusiastic about and at the same time create a net benefit for local wildlife.



Allotment users proudly erected a sign for their new nature reserve