

ST MARGARET'S & PALMERSTON SCHOOL LIVERPOOL

Kier Construction - Northern

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Small Scale Permanent

Project overview

The schools are located in an urban area. Palmerston is a new build SEN school and was built on the site of the former Aigburth High School. St Margaret's is an existing high school that received a refurbishment and extension. The project was £9.2 million and involved over 200 people from start to finish.

The new single storey building accommodates boys and girls aged 11-19 years with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple needs. It includes a sports and dining hall plus anew hydrotherapy and splash pool together with sensory learning spaces. Hoists, accessible toilets, touchpad and voice control to each room and corridors suitable for wheelchairs.

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

Part of the site was a brownfield site where previous school buildings stood. There were some existing grassed areas surrounded by trees.

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

We felt it was important that we gave the children an area to focus on wildlife and provide an area of calm. This would also contribute to the BIG Biodiversity Challenge. So we suggested to the school that we provided this facility. We then liaised with key members of staff to ensure we worked together to provide a facility suitable for the children



Bug Hotel

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

We created a hedgehog habitat , a small mammal sanctuary, two bug hotels and we are creating an environmentally friendly greenhouse out of recycled bottles, this is currently in progress. We took the existing surroundings into account to ensure the habitats are sensitive to its location. The layout was also designed with the sensitivity of the children in mind.

All these ideas are replicable, we showed innovation with the greenhouse design and worked with the children on its requirements, and we created a booklet to describe how to build the environmental greenhouse utilising plastic bottles to minimise waste to landfill. The green house was a key learning feature for the children. It provided arithmetic challenges for them in order to work out the number of plastic bottles, and bamboo canes it would take to construct the greenhouse. The school is currently in the process of collecting enough bottles to complete the greenhouse.

The long term management was discussed with the school and this was taken into account when deciding which new habitats we created, so we worked together as a team. The habitats attract a wide range of species from small mammals to insects which in turn attracts other wildlife and improves the biodiversity of the area. The other positive outcome is the reaction from the children. They have immensely enjoyed the project and it is still running, we have involved them right from the start and listen to their ideas and tried to create this habitat with them in mind and with their ideas. In addition we have developed a working relationship along with the school teachers and have attended meetings and open days with them, carers and parents, from which we got positive feedback.



The Environmental greenhouse under construction.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

A number of different waste materials were used in addition to the plastic bottles being collected for the greenhouse and these include pallets, recycled brickwork, recycled plastic piping, reuse of stone and soils which would have originally gone off site for disposal. Work has been undertaken by the team in our own time, mornings, evenings and weekends to ensure the success of the project.

How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

We wanted to create the legacy of a quite area and let the children have somewhere to go to have space and time. The children can also have interaction and develop gardening skills 3 days a week. This provides an alternative education for them as they learn how things grow and get a sense of achievement.

The greenhouse was constructed by following the guidance booklet we have created for the school children. First 4 posts are fixed in the ground, then frames for the sides and doors are created. Plastic bottles can then be threaded onto bamboo canes and these can be used to create the side and roof.

The long term benefits will be realised through the end user taking ownership of our project to ensure that our efforts to enhance the school for the long term and this valuable asset is not lost to the school.

We were lucky that we had so many materials available through donations, recycling and what we could salvage on site. For future projects we would see if any further materials could be recycled/ supported and try to engage with local ecologists to improve local species population

The project team benefited from taking the BIG Biodiversity Challenge as it was evident to see the joy the project brought to the children and the support it gave to the teachers and carers.



The small mammal sanctuary

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

We wanted to create areas that would have long term environmental benefits and also give and share with others, creating a legacy and creating inspiration, motivation and teaching for the children