

Area 2 Asset Support Contract (Highways England) South West England

Skanska UK PLC

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Small scale permanent

Project overview

This infrastructure project covers all maintenance and improvement works on the Highways England road network in Area 2, covering a large part of the southwest of England.

There are approximately 350 staff on the contract, working from 13 depots and offices. The projected spend is £230m over the 5 year contract, with approximately £110m completed so far.

The project is mostly rural, with some sections of suburban and urban road e.g. M32 Bristol.

This submission focuses on biodiversity enhancements at 3 of the major maintenance depots in the north of the project, located at Tormarton (M4 J18), Bamfurlong (M5 J11) and Almondsbury (M5 J16). These depots consist of salt barns, garages and small office buildings and are used for storage of plant, materials and equipment used on the motorway network.

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



Photo: Recycled PPE and compost planters

The biodiversity value of the depots can be considered low as they are mostly hardstanding areas, with buildings.

There are areas of amenity grassland and trees around the perimeters of the depots.

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

There were no specific conditions relating to this project. Highways England however does have an obligation under the National Pollinators Strategy to improve conditions for pollinating

insects. It also has new biodiversity improvement targets since it became a government company.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

At Bamfurlong depot the operatives built a bird feeding station from recycled materials in the skip, including waste wood, instarmac container lids and plastic bottles.

This has now been replicated at Tormarton and Almondsbury depots using the same techniques.

At Tormarton depot we have installed a kestrel nestbox

on a lighting column which has been used as a nesting site.

Two more kestrel boxes have been installed on the back of the large advanced direction signs on the M5 motorway near Bamfurlong depot as well as in the salt barn.

At Tormarton scrub has been removed from an unused area of the depot and created a wildflower patch, approximately 100m² in area. This has done particularly well this year, attracting lots of insects and pollinators.

At Almondsbury depot a PPE amnesty was held, recycling old boots and helmets into planters which were planted up with herbs and flowers.

The boots and helmets were placed in an area cleared up and now used by the operatives to eat lunch and host social events such as team BBQ's.

The recycling rate has increased by installing a food waste hotbin composter, which provided the compost for the planting. On the side of one of the barns and in several of the larger trees we have installed Schwegler bat roost boxes with the hope of attracting common species found in the local area.



Photo: Recycled material bird feeding station

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

Further information

Each of the biodiversity enhancements has been installed separately, since 2013.

All of the features have been installed or created by depot staff using the minimum of tools, materials

and equipment which have been recycled wherever possible. The longer term benefits of the features is an improvement in biodiversity, food availability and breeding habitats available within the depots for a variety of species.

Kestrels have been observed breeding in the nestbox in Tormarton depot, whilst the new wildflower

area at Tormarton has attracted lots of pollinating insects and birds.

By encouraging staff to recycle food waste we have reduced our general waste collections and engaged people with recycling in the offices in general.

Another important benefit is connecting the staff working in the depots to nature, their local environment and sustainability. By making the staff feel more engaged with the 'soft estate' areas of their depots and offices they have taken ownership of the biodiversity improvements.

Events like having the kestrels nest in the nestbox in the depot were great for raising awareness and making people think more about how they can affect biodiversity, even at a small, local scale.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

As Environmental Manager for the contract the role involves improving the sustainable performance of the whole project.

Motivating people to take part in activities that connect them with ecology and the environment, hopefully



Photo: Tormarton wildflower plot

encouraging them to lead more sustainable lives outside of work.