Rescue mission at Serlby Park Academy
Bircotes, Doncaster
Kier Construction Central

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: **Small Scale Permanent**

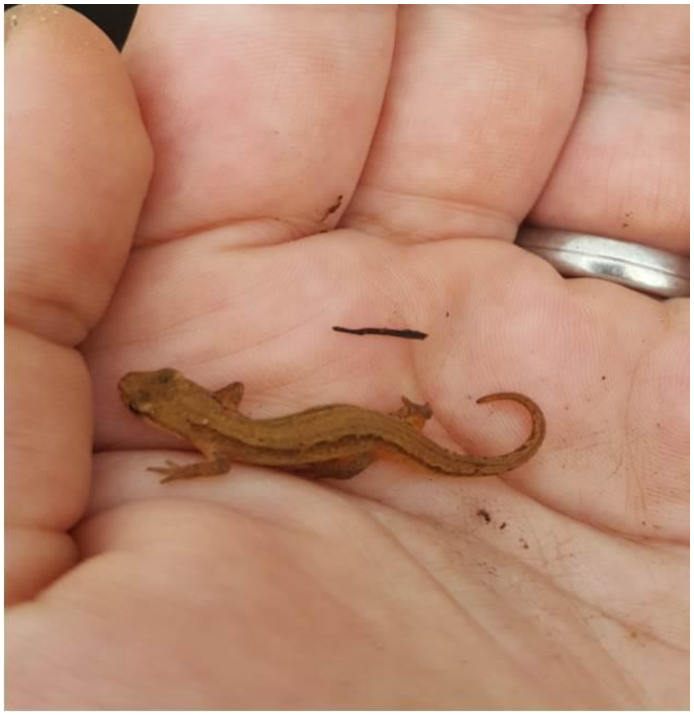
Project overview
Kier has been appointed as the main contractor to build a new school and demolish the old one located in a suburban setting.

During construction the site team developed a strong relationship with the school; site manager visited school and children regularly to keep them informed. The main building was handed over back in April 2016, with demolition starting during the summer holiday.

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?
The new school has playing fields as well as wooded areas past their boundary. The ecological report for the project identified bats as the main species of concern requiring protection.

The ground around the old school included a concrete pond which was not managed well; overgrown with water lilies, the water level was very low and the whole site was due to be demolished in near future including the concrete the pond.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?
No, there was no special conditions that led to the project to carry out this activity.



Smooth newt

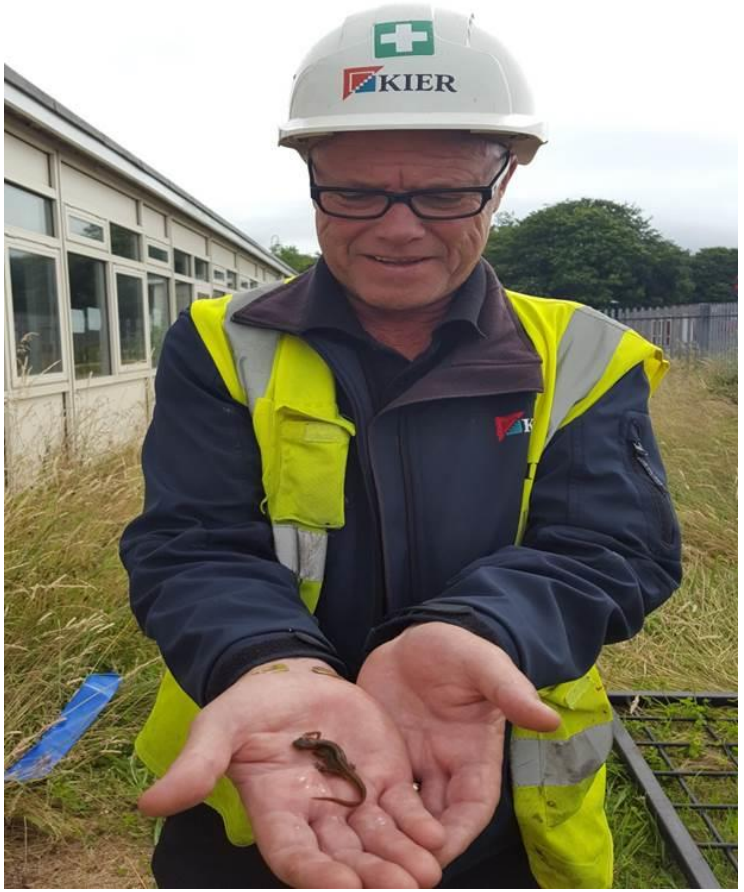
What were the biodiversity measures taken?

When main construction was over, the school moved to the new building and Kier took over the old buildings soon to be demolished. Within the ground of the old school a small concrete pond was identified on the ecological report as insignificant –no protected species identified. Site was under a bat licence for the old buildings but wasn't aware of any other wildlife on site.

However, during a site walkover site manager, Robert Collier, a keen fish enthusiast, has noticed koi carp in the pond. Surprised by his discovery he contacted the Environmental Advisor to have a look at pond biodiversity, with initial assessment identifying not only koi but also smooth newts. This was during newts breeding season and decision was taken to avoid disturbance during this time.

A rescue mission took place on 7th July resulting in 8 koi carp and 7 smooth newts being removed from the pond and being rehomed. It didn't cost anything to rehome individuals as the activity was carried out by the site team and Environmental Advisor- good planning was vital. Fish were not released back to nature as this was an ornamental species considered to be invasive, and they often interfere with natural ecosystems. Workers from the demolition company have assisted in the process during the day and they there very much surprised to see anything in that pond but at the same time were happy to learn about smooth newts and their behaviours.

This activity could be easily replicated within any setting where non protected species need to be relocated.



Site manager with evicted resident

How would you best describe the project?

Mitigation

Further information

This was simply doing the right thing on site, if the activity was not carried out those individuals would 've been lost during the demolition process.

Ever since Bob, the site manager, learnt about the pond and its inhabitants he has been looking after it by topping up water levels during warm weather and sporadically feeding fish. As the water level was relatively low and the pond was 1.5m deep, the Environmental Advisor asked for a "newts bridge" –timber plank, to assist newts movement out of the pond before actual activity.

It just shows that nature will always find a way to adapt, even in small forgotten ponds.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

At Kier we are always trying to reduce environmental impact on construction sites, unfortunately sometimes we can not prevent so we would try to mitigate.

Site team felt responsible for those living creatures and wanted to do their best to prevent any damage to them. At the same time it was a great learning experience for site as they had never done this sort of activity before.

Site team has been topping up pond in warm weather