

Bridgeway Biodiversity Enhancement Project using seed balls

Across all suitable sites in the UK

Bridgeway Consulting Ltd. (BCL) & Project Maya

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Most Innovative

Project overview

To implement this project, Bridgeway required its Directors, Project Managers as well as all site personnel to be on board as it is a long term project which requires every site to be assessed before seed balls can be used (to ensure we are only using them on suitable sites).

The cost of using seed balls is just over £2.00/m². Areas covered by the project vary with the size and nature of the project we are commissioned to undertake.

Work generally takes place on short stretches of site (approximately 0.1 ha) but this can be reproduced over several miles and spread across the UK in urban, suburban and rural settings.

The majority of work carried out is on infrastructure projects but the seed balls will also be used on building development projects.

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



Photo: Seed balls

Seed balls have only been used on sites which are of negligible/low ecological value and species poor (sites with improved to semi-improved grassland, ephemeral/short perennial or invasive species).

Seed balls are sown on bare and disturbed ground after site investigation/vegetation clearance have taken place.

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

During the 2015 Environmental Week, BCL reflected on the business' impacts on the environment and which measures it could take to reduce them.

Several opportunities were discussed and seed balls were one of the opportunities selected as they offered the chance to train staff about the benefit of biodiversity enhancement as well as leave sites after work better off than we found them.

Of the opportunities considered, seed balls offered the highest benefit for the environment.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

BCL has decided to spread seed balls as part of its commitment to biodiversity enhancement as it is easy to carry out, replicable on all sites with suitable habitats, it can only result in biodiversity net gain as it increases the plant diversity on site and thus helps bringing insects (including pollinators) and other fauna onto the sites.

BCL believe it is innovative as we are not aware of anyone currently doing it on site after vegetation clearance or small scale work, generally habitat enhancement and re-sowing is done for large site or as part of the re-development of a site.

BCL feel that helping nature by replenishing its seed bank is one of the way forward to promote biodiversity and stopping the loss of keystone species in the food chain (i.e. pollinator insects).

Staff are engaged in this project as they are the ones who carry out the work and have to remember to disseminate the seed balls.

We do not engage with local people as our work is generally of short duration across the country but should we use them on a



Photo: Plants germinating from seed balls

larger scale, we would (to make sure we provide the best seed mix for the area and local people carry on this work once we would have left the area).

However, we are collaborating with Project Maya (seed ball provider) which is a small, local company which uses native seed species and only work with local people.

After discussing with them our ideas of using their seed balls on our site, Project Maya's directors have offered to provide us with a mixture of all their seed balls in order to ensure at least some of the species will take and this include several plant species which favour pollinators.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

Further information

Based on the habitats on site and the planned work, project manager make the call to recommend or not the use of seed balls on site and pass on the message to the staff who will carry out the work.

Seed balls are part of the equipment delivered to our staff. As the project only started a couple of months ago and we have not yet been back to any site where we have sown the seed balls, we have not been able to see the results but we are keen to go back next year and check if the seeds have germinated and if the sites look different.

So far, the lesson learnt is that small actions are sometimes all that is needed to actually make a big difference and making people aware of those opportunities or changing their ways is actually the hardest challenge.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Our motivation was to do something we hope will be positive for the environment and show others that enhancing biodiversity does not have to be expensive, time consuming or difficult.



Photo: Overall target – wildflower meadow