

## 'Incredible Edible' Living Wall Ashington, Northumberland

JV – Gentoo Construction and Bernicia

*BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Temporary*

### Project overview

The 'Incredible Edible' living wall project was created to engage with the local community, and in particular local children, on the importance of recycling and sustainability within their community and at home.

Gentoo Construction is currently on site in Ashington building a 40 bed sheltered living apartment scheme alongside 26 bungalows on behalf of client Bernicia and wanted to utilise their connections with a local school to bring the idea of the living wall to life.

30 pupils were chosen to be involved with the project and these children were picked due to their interest in gardening and art as they attended after-school clubs covering the subjects. After a number of workshops and site visits, they came along on the day to create bird feeders, bird homes, bug hotels, paint recycled plates to make an art mural and planted flowers and edible delights on a board of recycled pallets.

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



*Photo: John Johnston Deputy Chief Exec at Bernicia with some pupils from Central First School in Ashington*

The space where the enhancement took place was a disused car park on a brownfield site with no positive signs of biodiversity anywhere. By bringing the 'Incredible Edible' Living Wall project to this area, we have created a viable place for biodiversity to improve and thrive.

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

The site we are building is to BREEAM 'Very Good' status and as part of being compliant with this, a Biodiversity Champion was nominated. This was taken on by the Project Manager who was instrumental in the

creation and implementation of this project. As the project is on a brownfield site there was nothing specific that led to the creation of this enhancement, other than our commitment to adding value to the communities where we work and creating a positive legacy throughout the build programme.

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The project saw a number of different enhancements that were put into place during the day's activities.

One enhancement was the edible garden including tomatoes, basil, chillies and lettuce that were planted

into the recycled palette sections of the hoarding. This produce will be looked after by site staff who will be encouraged to take the produce home, as well as the school children and the local community with suggestions including donating the produce to a local food bank.

The bird feeders, bird homes and bug hotel that were made will hopefully increase the biodiversity on site and create new habitats as the site continues through the build programme.

The flower beds and edible garden will be maintained naturally thanks to a drainage system of recycled pipes going along the top of the hoarding. A water harvesting station has also been installed near the site so that during dryer periods, the site staff can manually water the plants.

The local school was engaged during this project and the weeks before the enhancements were made thanks to staff from both Gentoo Construction and Bernicia visiting the schools to deliver health and safety, recycling and planting workshops to engage and educate the children about what we were trying to achieve. 12 members of staff volunteered their time



*Photo: Full image of the hoardings*



*Photo: Bottle garden preparation*

on the day and also the preparation achieve. 12 members of staff volunteered their time on the day and also the preparation beforehand to collect the recycled bottles, plates and hose pipes that were used to create the art mural and bottle garden.

#### How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

#### Further information

The day started by setting up three different stations where the three groups of 10 pupils would rotate round.

On the painting station, recycled plastic plates, paint pot lids and food trays were used and the children painted flowers, bugs and animals which would help make up the mural on the centre of the hoardings.

Small stones and pebbles were also painted as bugs that would go along the row of Astroturf laid down in front of the hoardings.

The flower heads went on the end of recycled hose pipes that had previously been attached to the hoardings and the bugs or animal faces were then dotted around.

On the bird feeder and nature homes station, the children were given a choice of the different bird feeders they could make. Recycled bottles were prepared with feeding holes and filled with seed mix and pencils pushed through two holes to make the stand where the bird would land to feed. For the second design children mixed seed with fat and pushed this into scooped out oranges, hung by string.

The planting station was split into bottle planting and pallet planting. The bottles were already prepared with planting and drainage holes and the children had to fill it with soil and select a plant to use. They then wrote their name on a lollipop stick so when they revisit the site, they can identify which was their bottle and see how much it had grown.

[What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?](#)



*Photo: Making bird feeders*

There were a number of reasons for implementing the enhancements for a number of reasons. This included:

- Educating children on the importance of health and safety when living near a construction site.
- To build awareness of the importance of recycling and sustainability.
- To improve the relationships between client, contractor and the community.