

One Tower Bridge Bee Hives
One Tower Bridge, Southwark, London
 Berkeley Homes (South East London) Ltd.

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Pollinator Award

Project overview

One Tower Bridge (OTB) is a luxury, mixed use development in the London Borough of Southwark. Parts of the development are now occupied by residents and the final phases are due to be completed early 2017. Following discussions with Bermondsey Street Bees, a local honey producer, the OTB Operations Team decided to install four hives on the roof of one of the completed apartment blocks. Throughout the project the key objective was to ensure the good health of the One Tower Bridge apiary. To do this, Berkeley also sponsored the planting of bee forage in the nearby St. John’s churchyard to ensure sufficient food was available within a 2.5 mile radius of the hives. The project has complimented the aims of Southwark’s Biodiversity Action Plan, particularly in relation to enhancing biodiversity through the built environment.

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

Prior to construction starting, the One Tower Bridge site was originally a coach park with very little (if any) ecological value. The design of the project has incorporated green and brown roofs along with landscaped communal gardens which increased biodiversity

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

This project developed from a desire to provide residents with a gift that was specific to their local area in order to make them feel part of the community and a way for them to interactive with nature in an urban context.

As the OTB Team became more educated on the important contribution bees make to increasing biodiversity, the more they did to support both them. The project was the initiative of the team and was not part of any planning or company requirement.



Hives located on the top of Windlesham House at One Tower Bridge

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

In total four hives have been installed at OTB, each containing approximately 50,000 bees. The offsite planting at St John's churchyard is also an important part of the project as it provides additional forage to support local bees all year round. The planting will be pollinator-centric and mirror the existing planting at Potters Fields which is located next to OTB. Ian Mould, Head Gardener at Potters Fields says: "Potters Fields Park supports a huge array of plants and you can explore them in detail here. There are over 50 species in the beds and many tree species throughout the park".

It was important that residents, local businesses and Berkeley staff were involved in the project. Two members of staff are being trained by Bermondsey Street Bees to become bee keepers and manage the hives over the long term. Plans are in place to donate the first honey harvest to local restaurants and cafes. Residents have been invited to a honey spinning event in September where they can learn more about the bees living on their development and the importance of enhancing biodiversity. This event will also be used to launch the Bermondsey Street Bees Native Planting Guide which has been sponsored by Berkeley.

Bermondsey Street Bees have recently been appointed to assess the feasibility of installing hives on eight other Berkeley sites. The recommendations from the reports will be incorporated in to the planting strategies of new developments moving forward. The OTB Team have developed an understanding of the need for bee friendly forage, and have been spreading the message across the Berkeley Group to encourage other projects to get on board.



Martin Brown (Customer Service Manager) training to become a bee keeper to manage the OTB hives

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement

Further information

This project has enabled the OTB team to form links with local organisations which may not have otherwise happened. The guidance from Bermondsey Street Bees has been invaluable and we would defiantly recommend them to other companies looking to do a similar project. The biggest lesson we learnt is that being a responsible bee keeper is not just about looking after the hives but also enhancing biodiversity in order to support them.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

When you consider that this project started off by shopping for honey, the team have taken on a far bigger commitment to biodiversity than originally planned but it has been a joy to do. The project was never a tick box exercise and has been an excellent learning opportunity for the OTB team and wider business that has made a tangible impact on biodiversity in the local area.



Queen Bee marked with a white dot in one of the OTB Hives



Close up of one of the hives located on the green roof