

Fulscot Access Road

Fulscot, Didcot, Oxfordshire

J Murphy & Sons

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Medium Scale Permanent

Project overview

The Fulscot Access Road project is part of the Network Rail Great Western Electrification Project and involved the construction of a temporary access road to an existing site compound and drainage works along the access road to improve land drainage in the area.

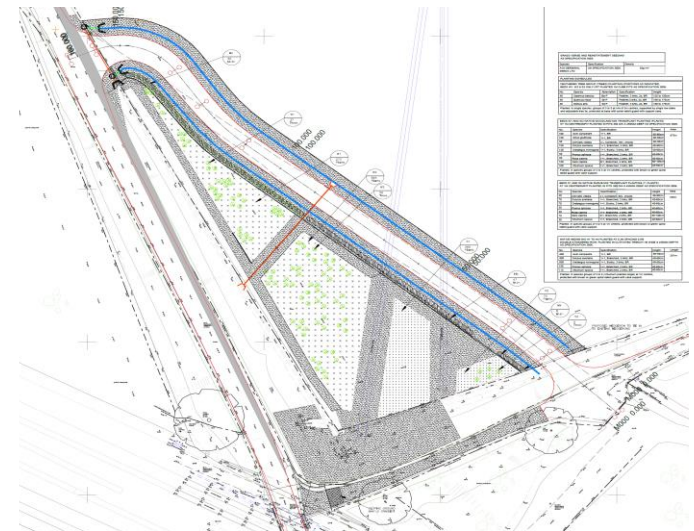
What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

A species poor hedgerow, with species such as hawthorn and blackthorn hedgerow, scattered ash and Scots Pine. The hedgerow contained a number of large gaps and had been left unmanaged for many years.

The hedgerow and scattered trees bordering the site provided suitable habitat for nesting birds. During the ecology survey a number of old wood pigeon and blackbird nests were located within the hedgerow.

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

A part of the Great Western Route pilot on 'no net loss in biodiversity' the project team looked to improve biodiversity to achieve a 'net gain' in biodiversity in the area.



Landscaping Design Plan

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Following completion of the works, extensive planting occurred along the new access road. The species selected are native to the area, this included:

- 261 metres of hedgerow comprised completely of woody species
- 975m² of native woodland plants
- 335m² of native shrub
- 2632m² of wildflower seeding

These species were selected as they create habitats that satisfy the South Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan of restoring the priority habitats; grasslands and woodlands. The species used for the hedgerow are 100% woody species, this **satisfied the criteria of a BAP hedgerow, being 'a hedgerow that is comprised of more than 80% woody species'**.

The biodiversity loss associated with the works was measured using the Parsons Brinkerhoff Biodiversity Toolkit. The works required the removal of 20 metres of hedgerow, and existing grassed groundcover. Resulting in a loss of 1.6 biodiversity units. The replanting works provided 3.2 biodiversity units, resulting in a net gain of 1.6 units for the project.

The original landscape design involved grass seeding, however, with approval from Network Rail, wildflower seeding was used instead due to the increased plant species diversity and lower maintenance costs.

It is expected the replanting works will significantly improve the biodiversity on site, as well as provide essential habitat and refuge for a number of species known to occur in the area including the Arable and Grassland Assemblage Farmland birds, Corn Bunting, Grey partridge, Lapwing Stone Curlew and yellow Wagtail.



Replanted Hedgerow

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement

Further information

Following the planting works, there is a 60 month maintenance period. This involves grass cutting with the removal of litter, debris and stone, fertiliser application in both March and September, and weed removal.

The project is located within North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The replanting works satisfied the North Wessex Downs Management Plan objective of restoring lost connections with the natural environment. The replanting is also expected to improve connectivity with existing Priority Habitat – Deciduous woodland located North-West of the project works.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

To ensure our works do not impact the surrounding environment negatively, and both ourselves and our Client, Network Rail, wanting to leave our worksites in a better state than when we found them.

As well as **show commitment to our Clients pilot project on 'no net loss of biodiversity'** and to **demonstrate achievement of Murphy Group targets of carrying out biodiversity enhancements on our projects.**



Landscaping Works