

## Redrow apprentice eco-classroom challenge

### South Cerney, Gloucestershire

Redrow

*BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Community engagement*

#### Project overview

A group of 9 Redrow apprentices were tasked with the challenge of creating a new outside eco-classroom at the rural village school Ann Edwards C of E Primary School, South Cerney, in just seven days with no budget.

Redrow had approached the school as they were keen to develop their passion for the great outdoors, a similar passion to what our Redrow apprentices displayed during the challenge.

The classroom was designed to help the school's pupils learn more about natural habitats, biodiversity and provide an area where the school's eco club can thrive.

The new classroom includes biodiversity enhancements such as a log pile hibernacula and bug hotel.

The challenge saw the team of construction-site and office-based apprentices, work together to source free materials from local suppliers before building the



*Photo: Area before development*

structure on a previously unused bit of land situated within the grounds of the existing school.

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

The biodiversity conditions were poor on site, as confirmed by the school groundsman, with bare soil and a small section of brambles that made the area unable to be utilised by the pupils.

There were mature trees that surrounded the development area, these were retained and protected throughout the challenge.

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

There were no specific conditions that led to Redrow carrying out this work however, we are developing new housing within the area and wish to engage with the community in a positive manner.

The school were approached as they had a keen interest in biodiversity seen through their current work toward a Silver Eco Award and existing eco-club.

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The transformation of an unused area with the use of donated materials from Redrow's supply chain to create a successful biodiversity enhancement for both the school and nature is what makes this project innovative.

The challenge completed by the apprentices is unique to the school; however, the skills learnt by Redrow's apprentice team about biodiversity enhancements can easily be replicated at their divisional sites and offices.

The school's eco club will now take management of this area and use it as an outside classroom that will continue to grow with their passion for nature.

Two new large habitats have been created in the form of a hibernacula log pile to encourage insects to the eco-classroom and a bug hotel to increase the selection of biodiversity that can utilise the newly built area.

In addition to this, a series of raised flowerbeds were created so the school's eco club can plant, watch and learn about the various species of flora they can develop in their eco-classroom.



*Photo: The apprentice team and eco club*

Before the project took place there was very little opportunity for biodiversity to thrive in the area, thus the main result of this project is a brand new habitat for the local wildlife and pupils of the school to enjoy for many years to come.

The new eco-classroom for the school uses a variety of materials and textures to provide an appropriate surrounding for learning about the benefits of wildlife.

Most of the material used for the biodiversity improvements was donated from Redrow's sites, which not only reduced waste but also informed the apprentices about the waste hierarchy.

To supplement the materials reused from site Redrow's generous suppliers provided

additional materials to make the eco-classroom appropriate for use by young children.

### How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

### Further information

The ground was cleared of debris and levelled out to create a good starting point, from there slabs were put down to create the classroom area which holds a canopy showing the school's logo which enables the area to be used during wetter weather.

Surrounding the paved area are the raised flowerbeds, handmade by our skilled apprentices and filled with compost, herbs and pollinator friendly plants.

Within the area surrounding the classroom is the bug

hotel made from reused materials on site, layers of broken plant pots, piping and wooden pallets creates perfect hiding places for insects.

The hibernaculum was supported to ensure safety through four large wooden posts. Finally, the area is finished with a winding path of stones and bark mulch to guide pupils to the new habitats.

Once the area was created, the eco-school's club were invited to witness the transformation, they were delighted with the result and buzzing with excitement about the insects and new plants they had already spotted in their eco-classroom.

The objective for this project was to provide a space for the pupils to learn about nature and biodiversity as well as providing them with an outdoor classroom where they can enjoy, learn and continue to enhance the local biodiversity whilst on their journey to increase the school's eco awareness.

TIP – use local supplies to reduce waste and increase biodiversity for a double achievement!



*Photo: The finished bug hotel and hibernacula*

### What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Rosie Cameron, Redrow's office-based apprentice who took part in the challenge said her personal motivation was to show what an apprentice can achieve if given the opportunity.

Redrow is very proud of the achievement and lasting legacy by our apprentices on this project.