

Strawberry Line Smart Systems Connection Strawberry Line, Yatton Station, North Somerset

Kier Services

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Pollinator

Project overview

The project involved the installation of four sections of underground cable in order to provide an augmented electricity supply to Smart Systems Ltd, Yatton, North Somerset.

The works included excavation, bedding, cable & marker tape laying, cable joint holes, cable recording and all reinstatement works.

The works covered 2.7km of land, of which 1.8km were installed in The Strawberry Line, a former railway line which is now part of the National Cycle Network Route 26.

The Strawberry Line is a local nature reserve and runs adjacent to a designated as a SSSI, which is managed by the conservation group, YACWAG.

Innovative use of a Mole Plough, allowed the works to be completed quickly with minimal disturbance to wildlife and the users of the cycle path. The project took four weeks to complete with seven staff on site.



Photo: Strawberry Line, view along cycle path

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

The Strawberry Line is managed by a conservation group, who work extensively to enhance the ditches and maintain sufficient cover for wildlife.

Bird life in the area is exceptional, particularly in terms of breeding warblers but is also known for excellent invertebrate populations.

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

Natural England consent was required to work adjacent to the SSSI.

No specific conditions were set by Natural England for the project, other than works were not to impact on the SSSI, with special consideration being given to the designated ditches.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

As part of the works, the verges of the cycle path were disturbed to lay the new power cable. The verges were known to have a significant numbers of important species for local wildlife, especially birds and

invertebrates. The use of the Mole Plough prevented the need to open cut a trench along the 1.8km section of the Strawberry Line and it also meant that 600m³ of soil/stone did not have to be removed and also negated the need to import 400m³ of new material. This meant that disturbance was minimised.

However the Mole Plough still caused disturbance and as such it was decided to try to enhance the species diversity at the same time.

After consultation with YACWAG, Natural England and Somerset Wildlife Trust, two specific wildflower seed mixed were chosen and 3kgs of seed were bought. 2kg of seed were spread along the working area and an additional 1kg was sown in a newly created grassland area.

In addition to buying seed and volunteering time to help spread it, Kier also funded buying tree for local school who wanted to plant a small orchard. Kier then helped create links between the school and YACWAG, who have now been visiting the school giving advice on making wildlife enhancements to the school grounds and giving talks on species of interest such as bats.



Photo: Wildflower seeding 1

The overall project was a success and all aspects of the enhancements made could be easily replicated if a similar project was to present itself again in the future.

[How would you best describe the project?](#)

An enhancement.

[Further information](#)

The use of a Mole Plough for such a project is innovative and allowed significant savings in waste production, use of raw materials, vehicle movements and time.

It also meant that the cycle path could remain open at all times, whereas with traditional digging methods the cycle path would have been closed for up to four weeks.

The sowing of seed was completed in conjunction with YACWAGs volunteer group, where seeds were spread by hand on disturbed soil. In larger areas seeds were then raked into the top soil.

After conversations with the local primary school, funding for trees was offer for their new orchard and when this was mentioned to YACWAG they were keen to help the school enhance the school for wildlife.

A meeting was set up through Kier's Environmental Manager and now a permanent link has been made between the school and the conservation group. One lesson learned by Kier from this project is that community work and

social responsibility can be very rewarding. Earlier engagement with conservation groups, schools and other stakeholders may increase the opportunities for helping with additional enhancements benefiting both wildlife and the community.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The project team were very aware of their potential impact on the local environment and it was a key for the whole team to leave the site in an improved condition.

Personal satisfaction and a love of wildlife were the main motivation for completing the enhancements.



Photo: Wildflower seeding 2