

**West Quay Watermark
Southampton
Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd**

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Temporary

Project overview

Sir Robert McAlpine, West Quay Watermark and Southampton City Council (SCC) worked together to install a new type of site garden to increase biodiversity and promote ecosystem services. Assessment of the project was supported a student from Wrexham Glyndwr University who carried out bug studies as part of her summer research project.

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

The urban brownfield site had a very low level of biodiversity prior to construction works on the project. Surveys of the site did not find any wildlife species of note, and the site was deemed to be of low ecological value.

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

It was recognised that typically, green hoardings are a living wall consisting of a monoculture of ivy, which has limited ecological value, particularly as it is usually cut back before flowering. Therefore, an alternative approach to green hoardings was investigated, with a view to producing a greater ecological benefit.



Photo Description: Ecological survey being undertaken by Katie from Wrexham Glyndwr University

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The site garden was designed with a range of plants that are beneficial to wildlife, including lavender and heather. Good pollinator plants were used to promote wildlife species and aesthetics.

Fruit and vegetables such were also planted with a view to being harvested by the site and local community, encouraging the benefits of ecosystem services. Strawberries, leeks, radishes, potatoes, onions, shallots, thyme and runner beans were all used.

The planting was done in five areas on and around the project site. In total, the project cost just under £3,000 with funds sourced from SCC Streetscape Projects.

Extensive surveying was carried out throughout the project by Katie Bottoms from Wrexham Glyndwr University, to monitor the effect on biodiversity. Across the five areas, the average biodiversity was recorded as being 0.79 species per m². As part of the surveying, five varieties of bees were observed, along with ladybirds, butterflies and caterpillars.

The project demonstrated that the green hoardings do provide habitat and refuge for wildlife but mostly at an invertebrate level. The plants that attracted the most insects were flowering vegetables, lavender, heather and buddleia.



Photo Descriptions: Examples of planters installed on the site



How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

The local community were involved in the planting and were encouraged to collect and use the fruit and vegetables grown, promoting ecosystem services. The project helped to build relationships between the construction site team and the local community. Local schools were given the opportunity to visit the site and design part of the hoardings. Following the project, the plants were passed onto a local residential home for others to enjoy.

The long term intention of the project was for Southampton City Council to include the installation of temporary gardens on development sites as part of the planning conditions on projects going forwards, promoting both biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Future site gardens should have a range of flowering plants which have successive flowering times so that there are always multiple feeding options. Guidance should be provided to site teams so that they can assist with activities such as 'dead-heading' flowers. Where pests are observed, such as black fly aphids, these can be removed but only with an organic, non-chemical method so as not to damage other invertebrates.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The intention behind the project was to maintain and encourage biodiversity through credible research results. This enabled us to engage with the local community and provide temporary biodiversity benefits that link to the permanent landscape at the end of a project.



Photo descriptions: School visit to the project and an example of the hoardings painted by students

