ASPEN WAY – GOOD BEEHAVIOUR.
TOR2, ASPEN WAY HIGHWAYS DEPOT, TORQUAY, DEVON, ENGLAND.

Kier Group: Local Highways Division.

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: **Pollinator**

Project overview

Staff at Aspen Way Highways Depot, Torbay have created a wild garden area within the depot for provide a refuge for nature. In addition to this, Parks & Open Spaces Manager Mark Ilsley and Supervisor Laura Gough liaised with a local beekeeper to undertake a beekeeping course. This enabled them to incorporate beehives in the wild garden, to improve the pollination of wild flowers and provide a home to the bees.

The beehives were produced by carpenters in the facilities maintenance department. The team also produced insect hotels from waste wood, pallets and plastic pipe sections. This provided two new insect habitats to help populate and enhance the new biodiversity area. The site now has new bird species populating the garden, including nesting swallows. Staff have taken great pleasure in monitoring the progress of the project and it has served to increase awareness of the importance of biodiversity conservation.

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

Prior to the implementation of this wild garden, the area was simply overgrown with weeds and had no ecological management for the benefit of biodiversity.

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

Kier Local Highways have recently been undertaking work to improve awareness of environmental issues across the business stream.

Staff and management teams at the contract have identified this opportunity to implement minimal cost improvements which make a significant difference to the environment and biodiversity of the local area.

Photo provided by Mark Ilsley, Parks & Open Spaces Manager at TOR2, Devon. Image shows the beehives produced by the carpenters in the Facilities Maintenance Team and the new family of bees now nesting in the wild garden at Aspen Way.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

This project has demonstrated that a valuable improvement with the implementation of a wildlife area can be undertaken with minimal effort and cost. In particular the work demonstrates the importance of providing a habitat for bees which in turn pollinate the wildflowers growing within the garden.

The inclusion of insect hotels provides a secure longer term refuge which will ensure permanent habitat for insects and in turn food for natural predators such as birds and bats.

The use of waste materials to produce insect hotels and habitats has ensured effective use of resources at no additional cost, at the same time ensuring engagement with the facilities maintenance team to involve all staff in this exciting work.

This project has provided a fantastic increase in environmental awareness amongst staff at the highways depot and has become a source of conversation and interest in undertaking further biodiversity improvements across the local contract schemes and also as part of other Kier Highways projects.

Photo taken and provided by Mark Ilsley. Image showing Laura Gough, Supervisor; checking on the progress of the beehive in the wild garden.

How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement.

Further information

The beehives were produced by carpenters in the Facilities Maintenance Team, and installation was simple and easily replicable. The original setup saw the first two attempts at establishing the hive, fail. However the third hive successfully flourished and the new family of bees and is now thriving within the new habitat. Staff on site have since noted an increase in bird species nesting in the area, including nesting swallows now living within the garden. The team would now be able to provide best practice advice to other sites or communities wishing to set up similar projects.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The team felt strongly about the natural decline in bees and felt that this particular project would go a step further to support this essential species and raise awareness of the importance of pollination for the survival of all species.