

M&S Newcastle – Sustainable Retrofit Store

Northumberland Street, Newcastle

Marks & Spencer

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Large scale permanent

Project overview

Over the past few years Marks & Spencer have launched a series of biodiversity initiatives in new new stores at Ecclesall Road, Cheshire Oaks, Monks Cross and existing Simply Food Stores.

As well as delivering biodiversity benefits, feedback gathered suggests that these initiatives help to both enhance customer's shopping experience and make a positive difference to the local environment.

The latest sustainable store at Newcastle City Centre, launched at the end of March 2015 with a striking 167 square metre green wall. This store is situated on Northumberland Street in Newcastle which until recently was recognised as a prime retail destination in the city centre.

However a lack of strategic vision has led to a detrimental impact upon the street. The green wall installed has helped to both improve the general appearance of the street and introduce green infrastructure to an urban area.



David Charlton Photography

Photo: Front façade which hosts green wall

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

Previously, the site and the immediate local area had no biodiversity features.

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

The development was in response to the Newcastle City Council Northumberland Street Management Strategy.

Key elements of this were to develop a green infrastructure strategy and to encourage building owners/occupiers to produce innovative, original and exciting.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The planting mix for Newcastle green wall was carefully selected for its ecological biodiversity value as well as its suitability to site conditions.

The plant colours are aimed at attracting bee and butterfly populations to the walls. Whilst the water needs for the green wall were being met by a rainwater harvesting system, the plants were also chosen for their low water usage.

There are also other perceived benefits of green walls (as outlined in the

M&S biodiversity manual). For example, evapotranspiration occurring at the building surface can help reduce the urban heat island effect; Plants can absorb CO₂ and help remove other pollutants from the air and water retention properties of green walls help alleviate localised flooding.

The installation of the green wall was also used as an opportunity to add in thermal insulation to the building which will help retain the heat in the cold months and provide shading benefits in the summer.

Green walls are highly visible and can transform a building into something which lives, breathes and changes with the seasons.

The green wall helps to promote sustainability to M&S customers and the wider community and further enhance the company brand.

To help educate people around these many benefits of green walls, customer signage has been invested in at the store. An official press launch for the store involved the store staff, customers and the local community.

This was heavily publicised in local radio and newspapers (see example



Photo: Green wall close up

The Chronicle). A comprehensive maintenance package has been procured to ensure that the green wall continues to remain in good health.

This includes fortnightly visual checks and bi-annual landscaping. M&S believe green walls are fully replicable and are already planning a further retrofit sustainable learning store which will be launched in March 2016.

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

An enhancement.

[Further information](#)

Installation –
The installation of the green wall at Newcastle was particularly challenging due to the wall being situated directly above the main entrance for the high street.

The total install duration including assembly/dis-assembly of a scaffolding took over 10 weeks and prior to this there was a 10

week application into planning and an 8 week planting cycle.

Revisiting the scheme – M&S is sponsoring a study to measure the health, wellbeing and productivity benefits of sustainable retail property with the UK Green Building Council.

M&S intend to use Newcastle as a pilot store within this study which aims to establish the business case for sustainable stores including biodiversity enhancements.

Lessons learnt –

- See M&S biodiversity manual which details guidance for green walls.
- Consult a structural engineer early on in the project to establish the integrity of the wall you are installing the green wall onto.
- Establish available locations for the rainwater harvesting tank early on to ensure the scheme is viable.
- Allow time in your project plans for obtaining planning permissions and for the plants to grow. Green Walls can't be built in a day.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?



David Charlton Photography

Photo: Children at green wall press launch



David Charlton Photography

Photo: M&S staff at green wall press launch

Newcastle was selected as a sustainable learning store due to the tenacity and drive of the Store Manager who was heavily involved in the steering group meetings with the local council in order to develop a green wall at the store.