

Sheffield Custody Suite- Homes for birds and bugs with wildflowers

Sheffield, South Yorkshire

Willmott Dixon Construction

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Temporary

Project overview

The programme of the main works is approx. 56 weeks and up to 50 people will work on the site at its peak.

The project consists of the new construction of a 50 cell custody suite and associated interview and administration areas with an open plan office to the 1st floor and external parking and landscaping in a suburban location.

Site clearance will include an existing concrete slab, and timber structure, several trees and vegetation.

The biodiversity project, which comprised constructing an insect hotel and bird feeder, involved 3 members of the site team.

Despite a minimal capital cost due to the use of recycled materials and only occupying a small area of the site, this project has had a positive effect on local biodiversity and has additionally served as an educational tool.

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



Photo: On-site insect hotel

The site was a former petrol station and waste transfer station and consisted primarily of concrete.

There was Japanese knotweed on the eastern boundary which was removed. The northern boundary of the site consists of a narrow coppice.

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

There were no planning conditions or statutory or other requirements from ecological surveys which required this work to be completed. The project

team wanted to improve the biodiversity on the site for future users and provide a positive impact on the local environment.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The site team decided to construct an insect hotel and erect bird boxes on the site to enhance the links between the coppice and canal that run along the rear boundary of the site.

This has previously been carried out on other Willmott Dixon sites as it is a fully replicable enhancement. In order to introduce an element of innovation to the

works, the site team decided to capitalise on the education potential of the project and installed QR coded information boards allowing visitors to scan with their mobile devices.

Once scanned, they would be presented with a wealth of information on the local wildlife species including the Chiffchaff.

Workers were engaged with and staff implemented measures, encouraging subcontractors to leave suitable materials which could be reused on the project in a designated area to assist.

The local community have also been engaged, with school children encouraged to visit the site to see the project and to learn about the biodiversity in the area, from the Chiffchaff to the bugs which have taken up residence in the hotel!

With waste materials being reused, the educational potential being realised and with staff generously donating additional time to the project it has proved very valuable to the local community and has demonstrated that the construction industry can make a positive contribution to biodiversity with just some waste materials and a little willpower.



Photo: Bird box and information board on-site

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

Further information

The project team constructed the bird boxes and insect hotels from materials on site.

The bird box and insect hotel are being extensively used and, although its not certain that biodiversity has increased as a result, it has

certainly provided a safe, comfortable house for existing species of birds and insects.

Although the project is temporary in nature we feel that the educational aspect will provide a long lasting benefit as local children have learned about native species, about the need for sustainability and about how we can all make a difference, however small,

to the biodiversity conditions in our local area. The bird boxes are located in the coppice adjacent to the canal.

The use of QR codes will be recommended on similar schemes in the future. They were found to be helpful in engaging with site visitors who enjoyed being able to access the information on their mobile device to read further at a later date.

On future projects the intention is to produce a questionnaire based on the information found following scanning the QR code. These questionnaires will be given to teachers and asked whether their pupils would take part in a fun test about the information they have learned either on-site or when they return to the classroom.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

We believe that we should not just build impressive buildings for our clients but should also do something positive for the local community.

I have always been a champion of environmental causes so carrying out a project to help local biodiversity was something I was delighted to volunteer for.



Photo: Bird box