

**(MORPETH NORTHERN BYPASS EDUCATION HUB AND PROGRAMME)
(MORPETH, NORTHUMBERLAND)
(CARILLION and EcoNorth)**

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Community Engagement

Project overview

Morpeth Northern Bypass is a 3.8km single carriageway with a separate 2.5m wide combined cycleway/footway, four road junctions, two bridge structures, two underpasses with mammal shelves and one mammal tunnel along the route of the bypass.

The Morpeth Northern Bypass Education Hub and Programme was developed by the site team after recognising the ecological and educational value the site could deliver to the local community, stakeholders and students. The Education Hub is both a virtual and physical classroom where the site ecological enhancements and mitigation are used to educate the importance of biodiversity on a larger scale and its impact locally. The site team formed of senior managers, engineers, apprentices and foremen, along site the local ecologist, EcoNorth, develop community enhancement projects and education schemes.

The Education Hub has been active for over 12 months and forms part of the Morpeth Northern Bypass road construction project (circa £30 million).

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

Prior to our Education Hub Programme there were no construction sites sharing knowledge and information about biodiversity enhancements, their monitoring and incorporation of ecological considerations into the design and construction process. The ecological benefits of the project were not understood by local communities or universities

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

No, the planning conditions called for numerous biodiversity mitigation and enhancements. We identified early on



Creating Bee Waterers at AbbeyfieldsSchool

the importance of and the opportunity to use the site as a classroom to educate not only the local community and stakeholders, but the numerous educational organisations we are involved with as a company and at the local community level. In partnership with our ecologists, EcoNorth, we identified and developed opportunities to deliver biodiversity knowledge internally and

externally to the project, as well as biodiversity projects. It was seen as an opportunity for us to go beyond any conditions placed on the project.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

To date the Educational Hub Programme has:

- Spent over 230 hours of the project team's time to deliver biodiversity education and presentations to over 305 people aged between 5 and 70 years old. This includes local schools, community members, Rotary Club, Universities, Construction Youth Trust students, STEM students, Institute of Civil Engineers, local community members, Northumberland County Council members, project construction team and work experience students
- Contributed over £4,000 in materials and donations to biodiversity enhancements including pollinators presentation and creation of bee waterers at Abbeyfields Forestry School, an educational arena at All Saints school by creating dipping pond
<http://www.morpethnorthernbypass.org/2016/06/15/apprentices-dig-a-new-pond-for-local-school/>, materials for building gardens and enhancing existing wildlife areas, donated £500 to undertake white clawed crayfish work in the Wansbeck catchment, another £500 to the community gardens to enhance the plantings and donated clay to build the Hauxley Nature Reserve Visitors Centre
- Developed an online Education Hub with ecological articles, briefings and bird of the month (<http://www.morpethnorthernbypass.org/news/education-hub/>)
- Supported Groundwork Northumberland Community Woods Fair with a staffed ecology display
- Undertaken guided batwalks with students from Abbey fields Forestry School
- held with the construction team bat surveys, name the paw competitions, name the bird of the month, ecological surveys, feedback briefings on the ecological works undertaken and toolbox talks onsite



Construction of dipping pond at All Saints School by Morpeth Northern Bypass engineers and apprentices

- Held staffed ecological displays for the local community
- Litter picks from around banks of the burns and woodland areas
- Given year out students, work experience students and technical apprentices the opportunity to shadow onsite ecologist when undertaking ecological surveys and inspections

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Those who came to site for presentations, surveys and site visits learnt about biodiversity enhancements including mammal ledges in culverts, culverts sized for bat routes, connectivity for otter migration, translocation of amphibians, temporary bat crossings, bat boxes, water vole displacement, badgers and fencing for safe passage, building hibernaculas and Otter Holts, maintaining connectivity of animal pathways during construction and the success these enhancements.

How would you best describe the project?

The physical projects undertaken, bee waterers, dipping pond, donations towards community biodiversity projects and vegetation maintenance are all enhancement. Education of people of all ages could be considered both mitigation and enhancement, depending on how they carry forward the information and knowledge they receive.

Further information

The programme was developed by the site stakeholder and community team in partnership with our ecologists and media/communications team. We meet on a monthly basis to review proposals, discuss ideas and to develop further educational activities for various groups. We have used both physical and virtual mediums to communicate information around biodiversity, practical interactive educational sessions with students to build bee waterers and dipping ponds, detailed presentations to students, councillors, stakeholders and community members, as well as one to one mentoring and training of our staff who shadow our ecologists on site and participate in site ecological surveys. Toolbox talks and monthly briefings to site personnel also communicate the ecological benefits of the structures and works they are undertaking, such as bat boxes, mammal shelves, mammal tunnels, temporary bat crossings and protection of particular habitats. Through these educational vehicles the awareness around biodiversity



Newcastle University students are receiving a presentation in our onsite classroom before a site tour

has increased significantly with site personnel now identifying nesting birds, paw prints onsite and maintaining ecological fences. Feedback from work experience people and visitors to site normally includes how they did not understand the importance of ecological considerations in the design and the degree to which it had been incorporated into the project.

We are educating the future planners, designers and builders of the world and hopefully they will carry their experiences on our site into their work in a positive and sustainable way.

<http://www.morpethnorthernbypass.org/news/>



What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Our motivation was to help give something back to the community in this green landscape and optimise the use of a real life classroom which incorporated some impressive ecological aspects. We also wanted to leave a legacy, something that people would always use and remember.