

New London Embassy

London

SIR ROBERT McALPINE LTD

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Community Engagement

Project overview

Working with the US Embassy in London, the New London Embassy project participated in a day of service held in memory of the events of 9/11. The day which looked to positively contribute to the local community, involved US Embassy staff from Grosvenor Square volunteering at a number of events including mentoring at local primary schools as well as working to rejuvenate a local community centre.

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

There was limited ecological value to the space in advance of the project.

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

The project came about through ongoing engagement between the project team and the local community, which identified the need for assistance with the community centre. The commemoration of the events of 9/11 provided an opportunity for volunteers to come together and carry out some valuable volunteering work.



Photo Description: Volunteers being welcomed at the start of the day

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The main event of the day co-ordinated by the project was the renovation of the Rose Community Centre. The aim was to create a more comfortable space for users as well as tidying and improving an area which would be used as a community garden open for use to local neighbours from three estates in the area.

Volunteers worked hard on the day to paint the interior of the building and give it a general clear up. Benches and planters made from wooden pallets donated from the New London Embassy site were painted and put out in the community garden while gardening, weeding and planting helped improve the feel of the space.

MDF panels were provided by the site for school children to paint 'My Favourite Thing' as well as sign posts for 'The Rose Centre'. These were put up on display both in the centre and externally in the community garden.

The Centre Manager wrote a letter of thanks, saying

"I'd like to express a deep thanks to you and your staff for the tremendous support and hard work you undertook. We've also started a gardening group who now tend to the new planters in the community garden area. It has inspired the group to apply for more funding to further develop the garden – exciting news especially as most residents have never had their own green space. We're delighted with our new centre and all the positivity that has come about as a result of it. You've really made a big difference to a lot of people!"



Photo Description: Volunteers hard at work in the community garden



Photo Description: Signs for the centre painted by local school children

How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

Members of the project team along with Sir Robert McAlpine's small works and subcontractor AC Beck & Sons spent the week prior to the day preparing the centre while contractor Woodlands changed all lighting and carried out servicing of the electrics. Equipment was provided by HSS who also provided volunteers on the day and financial support was received from sub contractors MPG and Raphael Contracting.

Both the US Ambassador, Matthew Barzun and Deputy Chief of Mission Elizabeth L. Dibble attended the day to show their support taking part in some of the activities taking place and speaking to local school children. The event was also attended by both the Leader of Wandsworth Council and the Mayor of Wandsworth.

The event was another step towards the integration of the Embassy into the area - it's new home when building work completes at the end of 2017.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The enhancement was carried out to give something back to the local community and to enhance relationships between the project team and the surrounding area.



Photo Description: Volunteers plant up the newly constructed planters