

Sir Francis Drake Primary School
Lewisham, London
Kier Construction

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Small scale permanent

Project overview

Due to the ever growing demand for school places in the London borough of Lewisham, Sir Francis Drake Primary School is expanding. Kier Construction London has been appointed by the Education Funding Agency to carry out the development of a new, larger school.

The school is located in a tight urban site adjacent to Deptford Park. The surrounding area is mainly residential with industrial units to the south. Due to site constraints typical of London, the new school development will be constructed in the existing playground with a temporary playground being formed in Deptford Park, allowing the school to operate as normal. On completion the old school will be demolished.

The cost of the project is £6.8 million with a programme of 1 year and 4 months. The project has involved approximately 500 people from design to production.

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

Before any activities commenced an ecologist visited site and confirmed that the site was of limited ecological value. There were no nesting birds present and the site has little suitability for nesting birds. While working on site it was clear to see there were no stag beetle habitats or pollinator planting species present.

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

Sustainability is one of the key pillars of Kiers core values, thus it was natural for the site to look at ways to enhance the area and have a positive impact on the environment. We researched the Lewisham Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and selected three key areas where we could improve the local environment whilst being consistent with the BAP. These were to improve habitats for and promote populations of;

- stag beetle
- pollinators (bumblebees, honeybees, hoverflies etc.)
- Birds (house sparrow, song thrush)



Planting flowers in school courtyard

As we are working so closely with the school we felt that it would be a great opportunity to educate the local children on wildlife in their local community hoping to promote sustainably and creating longevity and demonstrating how their individual actions can have meaningful, long term impacts.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The following biodiversity measures were taken for the 3 focus areas:

Stag Beetles:

Measure 1: A detailed review the London Borough of Lewisham Biodiversity Action Plan was carried out to identify the 3 core focus areas

Measure 2: Liaison with Sir Francis Drake School teachers to agree a dedicated area for Stag beetles which could in an area both suitable as a long term habitat and accessible to the children to create an educational impact.

Measure 3: Identify local sources for deadwood, soils and foliage. Deptford Park, where the temporary playground is located, provided deadwood and soils which allowed the reuse of maintenance waste from the local park.

Measure 4: Gather a group of school children who are interested in the project to join in with the construction of the new habitats and design educational posters.

Pollinator Planting:

We aimed to inspire and educate future generations with the simple process of planting species which would attract pollinator species and in turn increase the current declining population.

Measure 1: Reused old site hoarding (following the waste hierarchy by recycling otherwise waste timber) to construct planters that are now located in the school courtyard.

Measure 2: Educated members of the workforce on timber recycling with TBTs and presentations.

Measure 3: Held a workshop with the school children to plant a number of species listed by the Royal Horticultural Society that improve pollination, and furthermore explained to them the positive impact this had on UK pollinators.



Stag beetle habitat made by school children

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

House Sparrow and Song Thrush boxes:

Measure 1: identified the importance of house sparrow and song thrush as two British garden birds that are currently in decline in the local environment.

Measure 2: Using our timber hoarding, created bird boxes to install around the school grounds.

Measure 3: Educated the works forces knowledge on declining bird populations in hope they will attempt this task within their own communities and families.

How would you best describe the project?

This project is an exciting opportunity to aid the London Borough of Lewisham in expanding their school to create more learning opportunities for children in the area. In the venture to expand the project we get the opportunity to enhance the lives of animal species and educate the community and workforce.

Further information

The three actions we implemented were installed as a group effort involving the Kier site team, the school and surrounding community. The immediate benefits have been an increased biological activity around the school area however more importantly we have educated and inspired the workforce and school staff and children to continue this mind-set as they continue their lives.

As the project is in the early stages, the long term objectives have yet been achieved however it's predicted that biodiversity will be improved in the surrounding environment by the small simple measures we have put in place.

The key lesson for the site team was the importance of education when it comes to implementing measures such as these. When the site team finish the overall build and leave the site, we hope that our efforts have inspired the school to remain motivated and to continue the maintenance of the biodiversity measures installed. We also hope that having put these measures in place, the school will seek other ways in which they can work towards education future generations about the importance of biodiversity and how they can have a positive impact on this whether it be on a large or small scale.



Recycled bird box made on site

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

My personal motivation for carrying out this enhancement was my passion surrounding sustainability and I work to promote this whenever I can, in this instance it was to the workforce and the school.

It is widely recognised that climate change and biodiversity are interconnected and having a positive effect on one will in consequence have a positive effect on the other. Working towards a sustainable future for all aspects of wildlife is important to me.