

**Ulster Hospital Inpatient Ward Block
Dundonald, Belfast
GRAHAM – BAM Healthcare Partnership**

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Temporary Award

Project overview

Located on the outskirts of Belfast, the Ulster Hospital Inpatient Ward Block is a 7 storey building containing 12 inpatient wards with 288 single ensuite bedrooms. This project was part of the Ulster Hospital Phase B Redevelopment and replaces the existing ward block built in the 1960's. It is connected to the existing Ulster Hospital Critical Care Complex with 2 new link corridors.

A key feature will be the access to natural light and the amount of privacy afforded to each patient in their single rooms. The building encloses self-sufficient landscaped courtyards at various levels along with extensive landscaping to the perimeter of the building.

Over 650 individuals were involved in the building project at its peak and the overall value of the project was circa £112M. The Inpatient Ward block was completed on time and on budget with the first patients in the hospital in April 2017

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

Brownfield site. Previous hospital buildings had been demolished and partly cleared with material stockpiled from adjacent previous works to the Critical Care Unit. Wild vegetation had grown in most areas.

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

The existing hospital ward block was built in the 1960's. It had reached the end of its life cycle and the Phase B redevelopment plan was to upgrade the hospital's facilities. The Site Team were keen from the commencement of the project to integrate the construction works into the established environment creating minimal disturbance within a live hospital environment.



Photo Description: Front of the Ulster Hospital Inpatient Ward Block

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

An ecologist carried out a survey of the site in the initial stages to assess the ecological value of the land and to give advice on the ecology elements on the lands that surrounded it.

Appropriate recommendations for protection and enhancement of site ecosystems were made and implemented by the Site Team throughout the construction stage.

To gain additional knowledge on how to improve the performance a SHE assistant with an Environmental degree was employed ensuring the project completed surpassed the required environmental standards, i.e. BREEAM excellence award and Considerate Constructors Scheme award (NB: the site won the top UK award of Most Considerate Site over £50million in 2017).

The SHE assistant attended a 'Designed for Biodiversity' land management training course which raised awareness of conservation and providing for biodiversity in new building projects.

When the welfare facilities were relocated to the north side of the project after one year, trees that had been carefully removed during site clearance were replanted along the front of the site hoarding in order to reduce the negative impact on the habitat and create a hidden compound.

Bird boxes/feeders and bat boxes were placed in the trees to attract animals.

Wildflowers were planted on unused ground and along the hoarding to help improve the aesthetics and provide habitat and food source for invertebrates.

This created additional habitats to ensure that wildlife was not displaced from the area during the construction of the project.



Photo Description: Trees Planted in front of Welfare Hoarding

Existing Yew trees were designated as protected and remained in place following construction of the Tor Bank Car Park facility.

During demolition of the boiler house a seagull had nested on a patch of grass that had been growing on the roof. After consultation with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and specialist ornithologists from the RSPB, they implemented measures to relocate the nest once the eggs had hatched. Three chicks, including the nest, were successfully relocated to the roof of the laundry.

How would you best describe the project?

Mitigation

Further information

The project was extremely high profile as it was within a live hospital environment and high standards were expected across the board from GRAHAM-BAM and the client. Working closely with the Client, GBHP ensured a positive image was maintained across the site. This was very much evident when the site became a Green Apple Award winner in relation to Best Environmental practices implemented and excellent overall environmental performance. The project's environmental management procedures were used for NETREGS as best practise guidance.

Biodiversity information was made available to all of the Site team and Sub-Contractors, most notably in the form of information provided at induction and displayed on the Environmental Notice boards on site.

These themed notice boards were displayed at the main entrance, canteen and the site offices. Environmental toolbox talks were routinely issued throughout the project. Considerable effort was also put into ensuring all work areas were maintained in a tidy and professional manner at all times.

Discharge consent was obtained from the NIEA as dewatering was required. The project implemented an extensive filtration system to meet the requirements of the consent and protect local water courses.

Due to replanting of trees and planting of wildflowers along the steps and hoarding, this led to the Robin and Blackbird population greatly increasing with numerous sightings of the birds around the compound observed daily.

The overall objective was to raise the importance of environmental awareness, to encourage the site staff to think not just about Health and Safety onsite but also the environmental aspects.



Photo Description: Recycled Pallet under notice board filled with flowers

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The motivation was to promote biodiversity and to enhance the appearance within a live hospital environment. The replanting of the trees and wildflowers hid the site, adding splashes of colour to an otherwise grey landscape. The birdsong and greenery that now surrounds the compound promotes a more relaxed atmosphere.