

Crossrail Anglia
Stratford to Shenfield – office in Romford
 JV - Costain & Network Rail

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Community engagement

Project overview

As part of a £150 million contract, Costain is delivering the works associated with the north-east spur of the Crossrail Programme on behalf of Network Rail.

The work will see station improvements along the 25 km at 13 stations between Stratford and Shenfield.

Platform extensions will allow longer, higher capacity trains to run and other works will include infrastructure improvements, such as extra train stabling capacity and turn-back facilities that will improve the reliability of passenger services.

Other works include the reconfiguring of ticket offices, upgrading telecoms systems and the provision of step free access.

The route spans five local authorities, namely the London Boroughs of Newham, Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Brentwood Borough Council.

The surrounding area is predominantly urban, consisting of industrial and



Photo: Community bee talk

residential properties. Areas of open space and amenity parkland are also present along the route.

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

We targeted a woodland area within Brentwood Borough Council that had become very overgrown. Weeds and nettles were encroaching over public walkways and invasive species of plant, such as laurel, had begun to flourish, causing a die-back of native species.

The stream flowing through the woods was hampered by litter.

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

There were no specific conditions that led us to carrying out this work.

However, as a large infrastructure project, we understand the importance of reaching out to the local public.

We were able to raise awareness as well as being seen to be giving doing something extra in the local communities through which our works span, some of which were not particularly convinced by the idea of Crossrail.

Getting staff involved in volunteering activities during our “Wildlife Week” also aimed to instil a proactive attitude towards biodiversity throughout the Project.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The Project undertook two community engagement events during Costain’s “Wildlife Week”.

The first event was a visit to Oaks Park High School in the London Borough of Redbridge. We spoke to 90 students about the importance of biodiversity and provided them each with a wild flower seed pack.

The packs enabled students to enhance biodiversity in the local communities and encourage wildlife into their gardens. This relatively simple event can be replicated across the project and, a large number of young people can be made aware of the importance of ecology and ways in which they can actively promote it.

For the second event, nine volunteers from the Crossrail Anglia Project joined forces with a local community action group in collaboration with Brentwood Borough Council.



Photo: Community volunteers

They helped clean-up La Plata Grove Woodlands, which is close to our worksite at Brentwood Station.

The woodland provides a large amount of vegetation in an otherwise built-up area.

They removed invasive plants, including laurel, to allow native species to regain position and increase the biodiversity in the area, and removed a large amount of waste and scrap metal which presents a danger to wildlife and the public.

Old signs were recovered and taken back to the Council with the intention of getting them restored.

The Crossrail Anglia team were joined by local residents to form a 22-strong gang, which made a huge impact on the woodland and ensuring it continues to act as a great habitat for local wildlife and recreational area for member soft the public.

This scheme is extremely replicable, with such volunteering events occurring on a monthly basis in Brentwood.

And, with there being of plenty of potential to undertake similar work elsewhere along the 25km route, the Project will definitely be undertaking further work later in the year.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

Further information

Costain's Community Relations Manager, Ben Coughlan, arranged the events by getting in touch with the school and the community action group respectively.

The Project Ecologist and Beekeeper helped put together the material presented to the students, the latter joining us on our visit to the school.

Tools for the work at La Plata Grove Woodland were provided by Brentwood Borough Council and they also took away any unwanted waste. T

he aims of the schemes were to engage with the local community, raise awareness of the project and help boost biodiversity in our "Wildlife Week" and we believe those were met.

The Year 8 classes had learnt about biodiversity in science, but appreciated a real-world look at its importance giving them a new view on the importance of both lineside ecology and at home – the importance of bees.

We believe teaching a younger generation about the benefits of diverse ecological system is more likely to have a lasting impact.

Once we had completed our work at La Plata Grove Woodland, there was a marked difference: the flow of the local stream had improved, paths were visible and vegetation had been cut-back to promote the growth of the other species.

We believe that this volunteering activity was particularly successful due to the collaboration with the local council and providing the additional manpower needed to make the day highly productive.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

We wanted to engage with the local community and raise awareness the Crossrail Anglia Project but also the project team on the importance of local biodiversity sites and raise the awareness that we all enjoy getting outdoors and enjoying nature. Costain's "Wildlife Week" provided the perfect opportunity to do this.