

## Lee Tunnel Project, Barking, Essex

MVB Joint Venture

*BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Community engagement*

### Project overview

A workshop with children from Play, Sow and Grow (PSG) involving painting and planting up waste 'poly' pipes donated by the Lee Tunnel Project.

Play, Sow and Grow is a facility run by Newham based charity Community Links, and is situated next door to our Abbey Mills site in Stratford, East London (a suburban area). The facility gives children the opportunity to sow and grow their own plants and vegetables, care for the facility's flock of chickens, and undertake various other outdoor activities.

A small group of staff from the project undertook the workshop one Saturday in June during a PSG special events day. Many of the plants used were chosen specifically because of their attraction to bees, such as lavender.

The pipes, which would otherwise have been thrown away, were sourced, cut into suitable sizes and delivered to the facility prior to the event, all ready to be painted etc. on the day.



*Photo: Children from PSG painting the pipes*

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

The PSG facility mainly consists of raised beds for vegetables. There is also a herb garden and a small area of fruit trees, such as cherry, apple and pear. Planters and hanging baskets for flowers are also present.

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

No specific conditions as such. Community Links is a local group we have formed a partnership link with as part of our community relations programme. We have volunteered at a number of

their facilities, however we are particularly keen to get involved with PSG due to the proximity to our construction site at Abbey Mills Pumping Station.

A member of the project team suggested reusing the waste 'poly' pipes in some way and involving PSG. The final workshop was agreed between the project's environmental team and the facility's project manager, with the former keen to ensure that there would be some benefit to wildlife from the activity.

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The biodiversity measure taken was the planting of flowers and herbs attractive to wildlife, specifically bees.

This particular workshop was an exercise in what can be done with waste materials. PSG have a large quantity of pipes still to be used, not only by the facility themselves. The project manager of PSG for example, is currently in discussions with local councillors about a plan to use some of the pipes for planting fruit trees at different sites in the surrounding area as part of the local Community Clean Up activities.

As the planting that has been undertaken is within PSG, the plants will be managed by the children who visit, as per one of the goals of the facility, which is all about using the natural environment to engage with children.

Operatives and staff from the project have been involved in this activity, not only taking part in the workshop on the day, but also sourcing and preparing the 'poly' pipes for use, pipes which would otherwise have been disposed of as waste. Those involved in the workshop volunteered three hours of their time on a Saturday afternoon in June.

Getting the facility involved at



*Photo: 'Poly' pipes ready to be transformed*



*Photo: Some of the finished planters*

Play, Sow and Grow was one of our key objectives, run as they are by Community Links, a local charity with whom we have developed a partnership link. We plan to continue to assist PSG in their plans for the rest of the pipes, including taking part in a 'recycle day'.

### How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

### Further information

Our objectives for the activity have been met in that we engaged with the children visiting the PSG facility and provided additional plants with the purpose of attracting wildlife.

Long term benefits would be the replication of the planters by visitors to PSG, who will hopefully be inspired by the simplicity and visual attractiveness of the planters to create something similar in their own gardens etc. This is in addition to the plans PSG have for using the pipes to enhance the local community as detailed in Section 12.

As the workshop was of a limited duration, we didn't have the time I would have liked to explain the benefits of planting certain types of plants to attract wildlife, specifically pollinators, and why the later, such as bees, are so important. I would



Photo: Children planting up the pipes

have liked to do different things with the pipes other than just use them as planters – create bug hotels with the children for example, and perhaps this is another workshop we could instigate.

### What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

To do something, albeit in a small way, to provide for pollinators, particularly

bumblebees which are in decline. To engage in a positive way with a charity organisation such as Play, Sow and Grow, and support them in their initiatives and facility improvement projects.