

Graduate Natural Grid
Wymondley, Hertfordshire, SG4 7PD, East of England
National Grid

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: *Community Engagement*

Project overview

The aim of the Graduate Natural Grid (GNG) project is to create Sustainability Action Plans for National Grid sites. GNG Wymondley Project's aim was to improve the community pathway through engaging the community. Working with a volunteer charity to deliver the work.

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

Overgrown vegetation encroaching on to the community pathway. Risk of injury due to broken fence and barbed wire. Little floral biodiversity on the ground due to overgrown vegetation (e.g. brambles and invasive species). Trespass activities (due to broken fence sections) which included rabbit hunting, harming the wildlife on site as well as harming biodiversity through not following the pathway.

What were the reasons behind this project ?

This project was part of the National Grid Graduate Scheme, to enable ability to learn new skills on project management. It was also to meet corporate targets of creating 50 Sustainable Action Plans by 2020. The aim of the Wymondley Natural Grid project was to improve the reputation and community engagement within the local community, as well as improve the safety of the pathway surrounding the National Grid substation site.



Before photo of the worst section of fence



Finished photo of the same section (worst)

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

We engaged with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust who conducted a wildlife survey of the site. The site has been confirmed as a recognised wildlife site following the Wildlife Trust's site inspection.

There was an option to use a fencing company who would have been able to install the whole fence using disruptive machinery tools. However, we chose to work with The Conservation Volunteers who would work with us to build the fence using less invasive methods, such as digging the fence post holes with spades and tamping the soil using a tamper.

During the works, we made sure to reduce any damage on the foliage, and only cut back vegetation during times when birds or other animals would not be nesting. We also built habitats using the old posts to encourage biodiversity growth.

The longer-term management of the pathway has been agreed to be covered by National Grid's land management contractor, ensuring the maintenance of the path continues to build on the community relationship with National Grid.

We made sure to recycle any waste materials from re-building the fence and to continue to use any materials that were still usable from the old fence.



Log habitats from old fence posts



Wheelbarrow we used to transport materials (in this picture new fence posts)

Further information

As graduates we were running and organising the project. The initial step was to understand the amount of fencing that needed fixing and how we were going to do this. Through engaging with TCV, who had the correct expertise, we understood how long it would take and the amount of materials we would need and the best way to do this without harming the local biodiversity. The task of clearing the vegetation, fixing the fence and tidying the pathway was then completed over a number months. The installation of the new fence was all done by hand, from both The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) and the graduates. We also attended the local school to present on what National Grid do and what we were doing at the local Wymondley site. This allowed us to highlight safety issues with electricity (to keep the children safe) and also build knowledge on environmental issues as well as ways to support the environment. The objectives of the project were met, we massively improved the community relationship. The Parish Pathways Partnership group near Wymondley were very pleased with the work and glad that National Grid were working to improve it for the community. As graduates, we were really able to benefit from doing this project because we were able to learn project management skills, as well as undertaking a project from start to finish. We learnt lots more about sustainability, biodiversity and environmental impacts from this project. TCV were able to help provide us with this knowledge.

Project Team

- 5 National Grid Graduates (Hannah Rochford, Josh Cayenne, Amy Neave, David Devoy, Ricardo Vazquez Roman)
- The Conservation Volunteers (varying numbers)

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

To improve the environmental aspects of a number of National Grid's sites across the country. The motivation for the specific Wymondley Project was to improve the community relationship and National Grid's reputation within the community.



*Josh Cayenne
digging a fence
post hole*



*The Conservation Volunteers who
supported us and provided knowledge*