

Cannington Flood Alleviation Scheme

Cannington, Somerset

Kier Utilities/ Team Van Oord

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Medium Scale Permanent Award

Project overview

The works comprise of the construction of a new flood relief channel and associated structures around the south of the village of Cannington.

To the east of the A39, an existing ditch will be widened to accommodate additional flows, which will connect with the brook. The new flood channel will measure a maximum width of 25m. Associated with the work ; flow control and an off-take structure; and a new access bridge which will manage flows through the brook and new flood channel during flood events. There will also be new culverts installed under the A39 to accommodate the flow volumes during flood events, a new footbridge to accommodate the existing footpath and two number low level access crossings .

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

The site prior to the works was farmland which was prone to flooding.

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

The village has been prone to flooding in recent years due to the limited capacity of the existing drainage/ditch system. The Environment Agency made the decision that flood alleviation was required to help prevent further flooding.



Creation of the flood defence channel

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Pre-construction surveys showed that the area was used frequently by otters and as such training for site staff and mitigation were put in place.

At the start of the project the site team identified that an otter holt could be constructed from a recently felled old tree that had a hollow centre that could accommodate these mammals. Guidance was sought to the siting for it to be far enough away from the ongoing construction works. The tree was lifted from its current position and moved further away from the works and closer to the river, where evidence of otters had already been discovered.

The result surprised everyone as within a matter of weeks otters were found to already be using the newly created habitat.



Fallen tree/ otter holt in-situ

How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

Using early ecological assessment knowledge of the area was key to being able to identify the potential for this work. Once it was known that otters were present in the area, the idea fell into place when the tree was discovered. Liaison with ecologists and Natural England was important from a legal and planning perspective to ensure everything was done correctly. Once everything was organised the tree was lifted carefully and set in a preselected area away from the main site works and in an area where otter field signs had been noted. From this, observations were made by ecologists to ensure the site was suitable and monitored. Within a matter of weeks otters were reported using the newly placed tree.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Our personal motivation was to enhance the local environment for otters, which are still a rare and enigmatic species and to demonstrate that enhancements, even on small scale can make a difference to wildlife and don't have to be expensive.



View inside the holt