

## Skanska and Oxfordshire County Council Highways Maintenance Contract Deddington Depot, Oxfordshire, England

Skanska UK PLC

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Small Scale Permanent Award

### Project overview

Skanska is working in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council on the operation of the Oxfordshire highways maintenance contract. Skanska operates out of the councils three main highways depots delivering services such as gritting, pothole repair and verge maintenance as well as other larger schemes such as carriageway resurfacing and major bridge repairs working towards maintaining and improving the roads around Oxfordshire.

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

Prior to enhancement the depot had virtually zero biodiversity value with no green spaces or planters on site. The depot is all hardstanding with limited opportunity to enhance biodiversity in a depot where all space is valuable and used for day to day operations.

Although within a rural setting with trees surrounding the depot there was no biodiversity value within the footprint of the site.

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

This project was part of Skanska's "Living Our Values Week" and teams across the Oxfordshire Highways Partnership lived up to the Skanska Value "Care for Life" by giving nature a home and increasing biodiversity in order to improve the depot, make it a nicer environment to come to work and show the value provided by an increase in biodiversity to staff and visitors of the depot.



*A look at all the components of the new biodiversity and nature seating area at Deddington Depot including recycled pallet seat and vertical garden, and recycled wood planters.*

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

A team of ten from a rural highways depot in Deddington, Oxfordshire took part in the BIG Biodiversity Challenge and designed and built their own space for nature.

Sites were encouraged to be as sustainable as possible and use any recycled materials they had. Creations were judged based on the following criteria:

- Innovative use of recycled materials
- Creativity
- Biodiversity value

Deddington Depot were announced as the winners and received the Oxfordshire Living our Values Week Challenge Trophy for their innovative recycling of pallets, and wood to make several bird and bat boxes for their site as well as a new seating area, planters and vertical garden.

Actions were taken to enhance biodiversity by introducing new habitats for wildlife to use that were non-existent in this area before this initiative. Planters were made from recycled wood by members of our bridge building team to introduce flowers for bees, butterflies and other insects.

Logs were transformed into more planters and holes were drilled into the side to make spaces for insects to colonise. Pallets were recycled into a vertical garden and a new seating area for staff to enjoy the new wildlife area. This sort of initiative could be replicated at our other highways depots as the materials used are widely available at these other locations where a similar lack of biodiversity is present.

The initiative took place following encouragement from the Skanska Environment Team however the staff at the depot took it into their own hands to introduce a home for nature that had never previously been at their work environment.



*Bat box installed on the only tree in the footprint of the depot improves connectivity for the local bat population and surrounding trees. Another bird box installed on a telephone pole in the depot.*

The individuals at Deddington depot have been continuing to take care of the plants in the new biodiversity seating area and will continue to monitor the presence of bats and birds in the new boxes.

### How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement

### Further information

Installation of the biodiversity enhancements was carried out by individuals working at Deddington Depot. They used their carpentry expertise to build new products from recycled materials that they found on site as well as installing everything themselves including hanging the bat and bird boxes. Birds have been seen flying in and out of the bird boxes and the flowers in the seating area have attracted insects.

Objectives have been met due to the overall increase in biodiversity from previous low levels, expectations were exceeded with the introduction of the seating area where the enhancement can be enjoyed by staff and visitors of the site. If we were to carry out this initiative elsewhere we would recommend putting the bird boxes up well before nesting bird season and buying the right species of plant that are ideal for bees and butterflies.

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

As a member of the Skanska Environment team I am always looking for ways to improve biodiversity at our sites, what was special about this initiative is the motivation seen in the staff at Deddington Depot and how much they enjoyed improving biodiversity in their workplace and the investment they have placed in maintaining this for the future.



*Some of the team at Deddington sitting in their new biodiversity and nature seating area.*