

## Sunflower Challenge

### Nationwide

### Redrow Homes

**BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category:** Temporary Award

#### Project overview

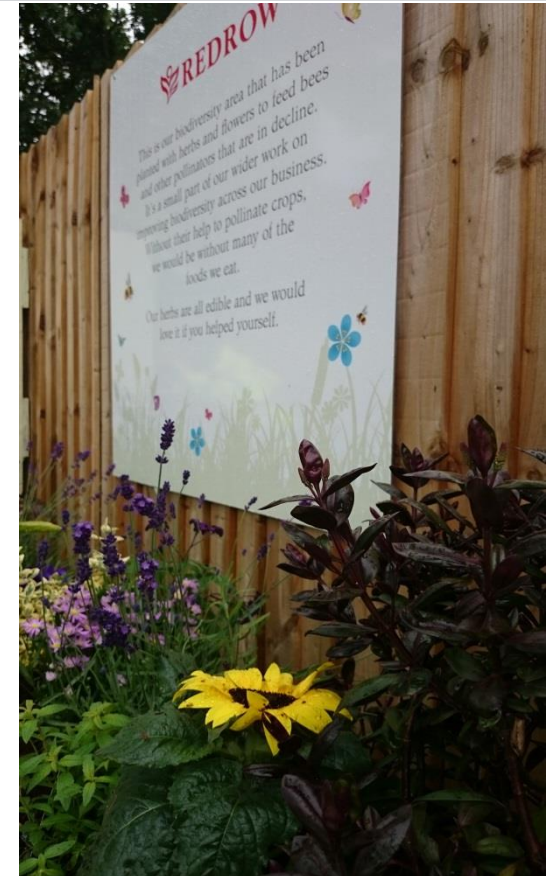
Building on our commitment to improve biodiversity in and around where we develop and work, the Pathfinder Sunflower Challenge is an opportunity for our sites, offices and sales centres to create a small haven for pollinators during the summer months and birds in the autumn. It is also a chance to encourage engagement between over 25 employees from across different regions and the local community. The Sun Flower Challenge is taking place outside places of work in urban settings. The cost incurred to start the challenge was relatively inexpensive costing less than £50.

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

The biodiversity conditions varied prior to the enhancement with office spaces and gardens used. The seeds were sent out to different divisions many of which were growing them in their inside and outside office areas, sales centres and local schools and community area, where there previously would have been minimal biodiversity. Some seeds were taken home by staff to be planted in gardens too.

#### Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

The idea behind the sunflower challenge was to try and engage all different divisions and people with in the divisions, through friendly competition, to support and improve local biodiversity and ecosystems. Sunflowers were picked as they are simple to grow, can be grown in different places and having different varieties adds to the challenge, while being beneficial to biodiversity through the encouragement of pollinators. The challenge also provided the opportunity to engage the local community with sales centres and local schools taking part and enhancing the biodiversity of more diverse areas.



*Sunflower being grown on site.*

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Being temporary enhancements, a lot of consideration was given to ensuring the maximum biodiversity help was gained from the initiative. A key benefit of the project is the ease of replicability. It can be run yearly or could be modified to be run at different times of the year with different types of plants or trees. The life of the biodiversity enhancement has been taken into consideration and measures taken to extend the beneficial impacts of the enhancement.

Tips and advice were provided with the seeds to encourage the best growth of the sunflowers and also what to do when the sunflowers have finished flowering to provide food for birds in the autumn. With encouragement of the sunflowers to be planted outside and the attraction of sunflowers to pollinators and smaller insects, the project should create new habitats for a variety of species. As this is the first time the competition has been run and it will be running throughout the summer, the exact value and biodiversity gain is not known, but from other similar projects we expect it to have a net positive biodiversity gain. This project also contributes to our wider biodiversity strategy for the business in which we are aiming to achieve a net positive biodiversity gain on all our future developments.

Initially the project was aimed at staff but this quickly expanded to engaging local communities in the project. Sunflower packs (Containing seeds and helpful information) were given to local schools, community centres, scout groups and other local causes with take up high. Providing the seeds to marketing centres on developments gave customers the chance to get involved too. Members of the Pathfinder teams (Groups in each division set up to organise charity, health and wellbeing initiatives) helped contribute to the design of the project and all those planting sunflowers are doing so on a voluntary basis which has helped the project become what it has.



*Sunflower progress at one of our divisions.*

## How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

## Further information

Although a seemingly simple project the benefits and engagement has far outweighed the simplicity. The idea was thought up as a way to engage staff in biodiversity and increase understanding and awareness through friendly competition. Once the idea was put in place the seed varieties were obtained to produce different types of sunflower and advice was given on the when, where and how of growing sunflowers to ensure the maximum number and longevity of the project was achieved. By providing seeds to offices and local communities, it meant biodiversity could be created or increased in places where it usually lacks, such as offices. Advice was provided for post flowering to increase the beneficial impact by providing food for birds in the autumn from the seeds.

Still ongoing to the end of the summer, the project has so far exceeded objectives with the uptake from staff and those in the local community and is hoped to continue to exceed these objects to the end to provide a platform for the next planting project. As a pilot project there are always things to be learnt and going forward for futures versions of the project the key thing will be to increase participation further by trying to have all developments alongside the offices taking part. The project has aided our biodiversity objectives as a business by increasing engagement and awareness around the business as well as supporting our partnerships with the bumblebee conservation trust and RSPB.



*Sunflowers planted with the advice box sent with the seeds.*

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

The simple yet fun nature of the project seemed the perfect way to get a variety of people in a variety of places aware and motivated to get involved in biodiversity and creating a positive impact on the areas around them.