

Golborne High School – Wetlands Scheme

Golborne, Wigan

J. Murphy & Sons Ltd

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Community engagement

Project overview

The project involves the total transformation of an unused playing field at Golborne High School into an important local wetland.

The ‘pondscaping’ project, completely financed and constructed by Murphy, provides a network of pools, ditches and scrapes that will evolve through natural colonisation and planting projects delivered by students and the local community.

The project is stand alone and not associated to a specific engineering scheme. Rather, the scheme has been selected to support Golborne Village, the community which Murphy North West regional office and yard are located and operate from.

As such, it’s not a building or infrastructure project but a voluntary enhancement scheme.

A key project objective is to deliver an enhancement scheme centred on delivering ecological an education programme. It illustrates what can be



Photo: The wetlands project in the heart of Golborne Village

achieved in ‘recycling’ unused areas of land into a resource that can be used by the whole community, with educational access for all. Cost: £11,000

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

The project took place in the local secondary school where biodiversity is limited and see’s recycling and regeneration of an unused space.

The all-weather playing field is of no ecological value and biodiversity in the immediate area of Golborne is limited due to housing and factory development projects.

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

There were no specific conditions for this initiative. The project was a voluntary commitment to do more for the community we work in and support without the need of specific conditions to bind us to such a commitment.

We wanted to not only enhance the environment but to enhance peoples respect and knowledge of it.

Once the wetlands has established and is colonised, it will give us the opportunity for biodiversity offsetting with the potential for translocation of species

from sites to our 'back garden', so looking after the ecology we sometimes have to disrupt as part of engineering works.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The development of the wetland will see a massive biodiversity net gain with wetland habitat creation of a 3500m² area that currently has no ecological value as an all-weather playing field.

The development at the school was selected due to its suitability as a learning hub for primary, secondary and university pupils/students as well as its perfect location to support Wigan Council's Greenheart campaign.

The Greenheart campaign sees the development and maintenance green spaces to improve vast areas which have been neglected following the closure of industry and mines.

Golborne is at the heart of this space but currently offers few areas of ecological value, until this project was set up.

The scheme has seen a collaboration of Murphy staff and WCLT's (Wigan & Leigh Culture Trust) Wildlife Manager to maximise on the biodiversity benefits.



Photo: Pupils visiting a wetlands to learn about wildlife

As such, the scheme will support Wigan's GCN and Reedbed BAP's through new habitat creation.

In Wigan, characteristic birds of reedbeds include reed bunting, water rail, reed warbler, bittern which as the wetland colonises should enjoy the habitat created along with the invertebrate species dependent on the reedbed habitat.

The long term management has been well thought out by developing a 'friends of' scheme which will engage with students and the wider local community to develop a 'Custodians' group to help manage, further develop and promote biodiversity in the area e.g. planting projects.

The scheme was set up not only to enhance the natural environment but also enhance people's knowledge and respect for it.

We've involved Murphy staff and school children in integrated education days, including:

- Wetland Workshops – sessions about wetlands birds, invertebrates and plants with a wetlands field trip.
- Aspirations Week – a presentation given about careers in the environment to Year 10's to support their careers choices.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

Further information

This project's focus was people and their environment, and wholesome community engagement.

A lot of time was spent partnering with GoalCo (Golborne and Lowton Co-operative - made up of WLCT, Murphy, Golborne Trust and School's) to understand how to provide a project with has benefits branching out wider and deeper into both the environment and community.

Complete community representation was important to make sure there was true community engagement, we achieved this by working with GoalCo over the last 11 months.

Our project has helped 'recycle' an unused area into one full of biodiversity potential but it's unique and different to other enhancement schemes because of the time spent delivering educational sessions and awareness workshops, to primary, secondary and university pupils/students together with the older members of Golborne.

We invested more in this side than we did the physical enhancements as to us its important people



Photo: Murphy educating Golborne High School's young people

have a true respect and understanding of nature, in order to protect what we already have so we don't always have to compensate for loss and so others outside of the industry can 'Do One Thing'.

The benefits of just this first phase are much stronger ties between the school, Golborne Village and Murphy – helping to enhance the reputation of the construction industry.

With an application from a Year 11 pupil for the Murphy HSQE Graduate Scheme, it seems like the benefits are being seen already and the fantastic biodiversity benefits of the wetland establishing naturally over the coming months and indeed years.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The 'Do One Thing' strapline is helping us shift from doing less harm towards doing more good, that's our motivation.

We wanted to do more for our neighbours and in order to create long term biodiversity, we have to inspire today's young people to respect the environment and consider careers in sustainability.

Video link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPsfDkdOkgY>