

River Afan Port Talbot

Kier on behalf of Network Rail

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Small scale permanent award

Project overview

Maintenance works were carried out to River Afan Bridge on behalf of Network Rail as part of the CP5 Structures Framework. The project was located within an urban area with housing, industrial / retail units and areas of hard standing (i.e. roads and car parks). The work scope involved erection of an underslung scaffold in order to carry out grit blast and paint, handrail replacement and concrete repairs to the jack arch sections. The works were carried out from January – April 2017 and the project value was circa £600,000.

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

The site was extremely small and the welfare compound was approximately 30m in length by 5 m in width. The area where the compound was located consisted of low ecological value scrub including bramble, hawthorn and laurel.



Seven Rowan trees planted along the roadway in the centre of Port Talbot

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 places increased requirements for public authorities to maintain and enhance biodiversity and to promote ecosystem resilience. This also requires public authorities to report on the actions they have taken to improve biodiversity locally. Kier worked with the local authority Biodiversity Officer to implement measures that would help improve the area which is also located next to a Site of importance for nature conservation (SINC).

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Kier were required to de-vegetate an area of approximately 30m in length by 5 m in width to allow space for welfare cabins. The existing vegetation was of low status, mainly scrub and laurel. The project team liaised with the local authority regarding the land as it was under Council ownership. In order to add biodiversity value it was agreed the vegetation would be replaced by native rowan tress with berries which would be beneficial to birds and insects long term, a total of seven 12ft trees were planted. Also, the vegetation removed was chipped and spread insitu under the relevant exemptions, providing a nutritious mulch layer to enhance the existing soil.

During the Phase 1 Ecological Survey an unused nest was identified on the underside of the bridge that required maintenance. As part of an enhancement measure, Kier installed a dipper bird box (see photo to the right) on the underside of the bridge on completion of the works. The bridge is located over the River Afan which is designated as a SINC.



Dipper box installed on underside of bridge

How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

Kier carry out works as part of the Network Rail CP5 Framework which comprises numerous smaller scale projects across a large region, mainly in South Wales. Going forward, Kier will aim to implement biodiversity enhancements, no matter how small as once combined for the framework this could prove extremely valuable.