

**PHEONIX MARKET GARDEN  
WHITE CITY ESTATE, WEST LONDON, UK  
TAYLOR WOODROW**

**BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category:** Community Engagement

**Project overview**

Taylor Woodrow's Old Oak Common team have a well-established programme of community investment at The Pheonix High School Farm Garden. The ¾ acre farm is located in the middle of the White City Estate, west London. Taylor Woodrow have been volunteering 3 staff members every month since the summer of 2014 totalling 57 staff which will continue until at least 2018. The students have been involved in every part of the process, from researching the initial ideas, to helping with construction, to growing the majority of the plants from seed.

The great success of the project led to further, more specific volunteering time which was focused on building a prize-winning garden for the Hampton Court Flower Show. It depicted a London Market Garden in the 18th century and was designed by Phoenix High School 6th Form students and their teacher, gaining a gold and two silver gilt medals.

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

The development of the site commenced in 2007 which previously was just a left over piece of land post construction, housing only tool sheds and very little, if any wild biodiversity. The area is densely populated with little green space other than the Wormwood Scrubs, Hammersmith Park and back gardens.

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

Taylor Woodrow is the Civil Engineering division of VINCI Construction UK, who commit to supporting the local community through a 'Stand Out Make a Difference' scheme which enables employees to use a full day away from work to support projects in the local community.



Mirel Manolache (Milo), pictured, spent 3 days assisting in the preparation of the garden

Contractually there is no obligation for Taylor Woodrow to undertake community work, however it is important to us to actively engage with the communities in which we work and leave a lasting legacy. It is also a key part of our commitment under the Considerate Constructors Scheme to make a positive contribution to the natural environment.

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Taylor Woodrow's participation into the Pheonix High School Urban Farm has been since the Summer of 2014, with a commitment of continued volunteering until 2018. This has enabled a sustainable increase in the level of biodiversity of the farm, centrally located near the A40 and the White City Estate.

The continual management of the project has been ensured by the SOMAD programme where every month at least 3 members of staff volunteer. One of the greatest measures that has been taken to increase the biodiversity of the project was with the development of a bee hive which has ensured the longevity of the vegetation growing on the farm.

Furthermore, a study carried out by Deelstra & Girardet (2000) has showed that urban beehives are now producing more honey than those in the countryside. The organic waste that has produced on site is composted on site to enable those nutrients to be put back into the nutrient cycle and educates the students about nutrient recycling. Urban environments are increasingly having higher levels of biodiversity compared to rural farmland due to the lack of pesticides and fertilizers.

A large variety of species has been planted to encourage a wider variety of wildlife which are perfect for nesting, whilst the wild pond attracts birds as well as providing a habitat for other species to colonise. Promoting biodiversity and conservation is embedded at all stages and aspects of the site's management by avoiding the use of chemical inputs.



*Phoenix School students helping out on the garden farm*

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Bee and butterfly friendly methods of planting are used to ensure that existing biodiversity are not harmed. Another method which is practiced on site is sustainable and responsible sourcing of external materials; for example, any organic compost which is used in the garden farm is sourced ensuring that it is peat-free ensuring wide-spread sustainability.

### How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement

### Further information

By the age of 11 there is a 25% obesity rate in the school and therefore a need to educate the community about where food comes from and healthy eating. The urban farm is used to educate young people, parents and the wider community on food production, its journey from the farm to your plate, and the impact that sustainable organic farming can have on the local biodiversity.

One of the greatest benefits is educating the students about nature and the food system and why we need to care and look after our local biodiversity. As the majority of the students who go to this school are unable to have pets or have had any contact with animals due to the dense apartment environment in the White City Estate, the range of farm animals and wildlife enables this exposure, this really aids in the sustainability of the project by building vested interests. Recognition at the Hampton Court Flower Show truly helped to give the students a sense of pride and achievement in their work.

Jan Parnell head of 6th Form said ***'without the expertise of the contractors on board I don't think that we would have been able to contemplate a project of this scale. It is a fantastic opportunity for our pupils to get practical hands on work experience.'*** The positive impact that the farm has had on both the community and students at Phoenix School has made this a project we are proud to be part of.



*The Gold medal awarded at the Horticultural Show at Hampton Court Flower Show*

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

The work is enjoyable and enables some team building away from the normal working day. Furthermore, carrying out projects such as these enables helps build relationships with the local community whilst construction projects are in progress, and leave an additional positive and lasting contribution for once they have been completed.