

Bristol Water – Barn Owl Box Holcombe Depot, Mendip, Somerset

Kier (Utilities)

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Small Scale Permanent

Project overview

The aim of the project was to enhance the biodiversity of local village within a few miles of the area in which the depot is situated on land owned by one of the staff working out of the Holcombe depot. The barn owl population on the Mendip hills is under pressure due to the use of pesticides, the conversion of barns into residential properties and the number of birds killed by vehicles on main roads. Although there are a number farm buildings in the area there was no evidence that barn owl's roosted in the locality.

The ambition of project is to provide a purpose build nest box next to a stream with meadow grass in every direction to attract a breeding pair of barn owls. The cost of the nest box was circa £3 for the fixings.

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

The site in which the depot is located is a mixture of old and new buildings which has been developed by the landlord to create industrial units for local businesses. The team at Holcombe all had input into the final decision on location of the owl box which they decided the best location would be by a stream in a village close to the depot.

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

The depot is located in a rural setting next to fields which are a mixture of arable and permanent pasture.



Barn Owl Box Delivery

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Nigel Beaver (Safety Advisor) made the barn owl box in his spare time using a mixture of new wood and wood which had previously been used on building project.in another of Kier depots in Cheddar.

The box has been erected on a tree overlooking meadow grassland in readiness for the 2017 breeding season.

When designing the external nest box Nigel had to consider the size of adult barn owl's, **the amount of wood available and the fixing of the box to a tree.**

All the materials used in the construction of the box are for external use meaning the barn owls could use the nest box for 10 or more years.

Kier staff erected the barn owl box onto the tree one weekend in there own time with the landowners permission and help as well.



Barn Owl box in-situ

How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

The next box has been designed with an removal panel to allow the annual cleansing of the box.

Kier staff are enthusiastic about the project and look forward to monitoring the next box for any signs of barn owl activity.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

My motivation was that I had the opportunity to use some of the skills I have learnt to benefit wildlife in the area in which I live.



Barn Owl box in-situ