



**the BIG
Biodiversity
Challenge**
do one thing

**Eddie and Ellie's Wild Adventures educational programme
Across sites in the South East of England
Thakeham**

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: *Community Engagement Project Award*

Project overview

Eddie and Ellie's Wild Adventures is an educational programme of workshops for primary aged children across the South East, fully funded by developer Thakeham and facilitated with the Wildlife Trust for schools in the areas in which we build homes to engage pupils on the importance of nature and wildlife.

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

Prior to the launch of Eddie and Ellie, there was a scarcity of fully funded, structured learning opportunities for primary-aged children that related to the important issues of sustainability and the natural environment, especially opportunities that tied into the national curriculum and offered a hands-on outdoor experience – the latter being particularly crucial for children in more deprived areas with little access to nature.

The Eddie and Ellie programme goes above and beyond Thakeham's required community engagement activity as a housebuilder, and the usual commitments of most developers, to improve biodiversity over the long-term through exciting education opportunities for young minds.

What were the reasons behind this project ?

According to Hoop, 83% of children cannot recognise a bumblebee.

Delivering social value and enhancing and protecting the natural world is an intrinsic part of Thakeham's culture; we are a Pioneer member of Social Value UK, the professional body for social value, and The Eddie and Ellie's Wild Adventures programme is a fundamental part of our social value strategy, driving one of our key goals – 'Building Future Generations'. Created in consultation with educational specialists, parents and children, Eddie and Ellie is curated to leave lasting impact long after developments are completed through a legacy of children engaged with their environment.



The Eddie & Ellie Wild Adventures educational storybook

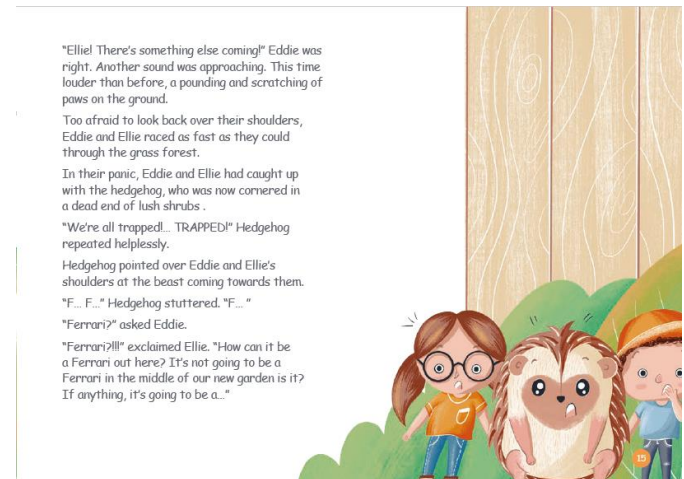
What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Eddie and Ellie’s Wild Adventures is a cross-curriculum educational programme for lower Key Stage 2 pupils built around a children’s story and set of colourful, engaging wildlife characters. Fully funded by Thakeham, including all learning materials and a free Wildlife Trust education day, the programme comprises a series of workshops, site visits and a school trip to a Wildlife Trust facility – featuring activities ranging from pond-dipping to orienteering - that follows a development’s ecosystem journey from planning through to site completion.

Our workshops are delivered by a fully qualified primary school teacher whose knowledge of curriculum science and geography topics supports the local ecology focused content to maximise value. A Google Classroom facility provides safe and secure access to learning materials, with physical books and merchandise also gifted to the children. The result is a greater depth of learning, in line with the national curriculum, via practical and engaging hands-on experiences that children may otherwise miss out on.

The Eddie and Ellie programme is being rolled out across Thakeham’s live sites regardless of tenure or our role on the project, whether the development is a joint venture, if we are a contractor or if the homes being delivered for private sale. Indeed, we believe the programme is particularly important in often disadvantaged areas where we are building affordable housing as children often have less access to nature, such as at St Mark & All Saints Primary School located in a relatively underprivileged ward of the otherwise wealthy Godalming in Surrey. Our community engagement scores for our nearby development, which are generated independently by a third party, are excellent.

The project, alongside our biodiversity net gain target of 20% across our sites, will help improve biodiversity not only within our red line boundaries, but over the long term and across communities.



Pages from the storybook

Further information

Launched in 2021, the programme has been incredibly well received and continued to run even during the pandemic. Five schools in five locations where we build are currently undertaking the programme, with another five due to start in September 2022; 113 children have benefited so far.

Thakeham's ambition is now to roll out the programme across each and every live site, undertaking outreach to the primary schools closest to our developments and engaging with local council partners to increase our reach and bring Eddie and Ellie to as many children as possible in our communities.

"Thank you very much for organising and for delivering today's workshop it was fab! The children had a great time and were so keen to finish their storyboards in the afternoon."
Nicola Moss, class teacher at Lenham Primary School

"These experiences...have equipped our children with the knowledge needed to make informed choices about how they interact with their environments." Caroline Mallet, headteacher at St Mark & All Saints Primary School

"Set up well to engage and interest readers in wildlife and has good detail and touches of humour...well done." Peter Campbell, associate adviser, West Sussex County Council

"Thank you so much, we have had the best time." Sarah Turvey, class teacher at Horsmonden Primary



Children at Woodgate, Thakeham's flagship development in Pease Pottage



Children enjoy an Eddie and Ellie workshop



Project Team

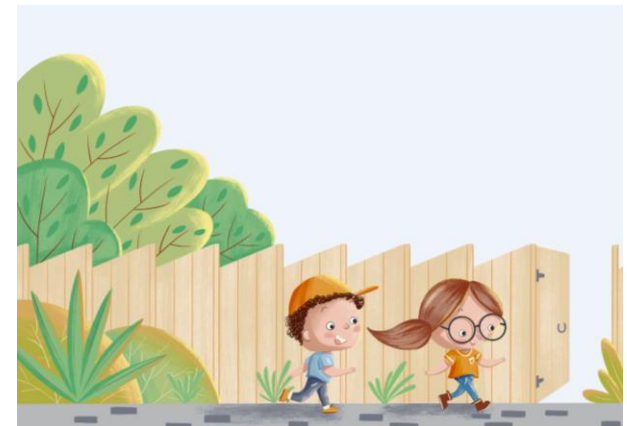
- Thakeham Group
- Thakeham site teams
- Sarah Leedham at Pendulum Training (teaching contractor)
- Wildlife Trusts in Surrey and Kent
- Teaching Teams in Surrey, Sussex and Kent

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Thakeham's CEO Rob Boughton is extremely passionate about ecology, sustainability and improving and enhancing the natural environment in the communities in which we deliver new homes. Concerned by the lack of knowledge of school-aged children regarding biodiversity and environmental sustainability, and proactively looking for ways to support our communities and the educational agenda, Eddie and Ellie – separate from the Thakeham brand – was created and is funded wholly to add a richness of experience to curriculum topics that will inspire young minds and create a legacy of young people who will appreciate and look after nature.



Schoolchildren take part in the education programme



An illustration from Eddie and Ellie's Wild Adventures storybook