

A120 Bypass
Little Hadham Essex
GRAHAM

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: *Habitat Creation – (< 5Ha small scale)*

Project overview

The project included the creation of a bypass to alleviate traffic congestion and building a flood defence for the neighbouring community. Biodiversity was at the forefront of the scheme exemplified through the plantation of wildflowers and hedgerows to protect rare native Barbastelles, Red-kites and Kestrels.

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

Prior to the enhancement the embankment was eroded by the river and needed strengthening to ensure survival of existing species such as rare Roman snails (*Helix Pomatia*) found here. The air quality of Little Hadham had been weakened due to pollution as a result of traffic congestion and the uninspiring grass verges were of low ecological value. Hertfordshire Council wanted to protect native species and improve the visual quality of the area, ensuring that flood defence measures were made a priority for the safety of the community. The Council’s policy drivers included regeneration of the area with a focus on environmental enhancements to ensure longevity and survival of protected species.



Roman snail (*Helix pomatia*)



New Wildflower Area for 200 relocated Roman Snails

What were the reasons behind this project ?

This project presented an opportunity to achieve a net gain of biodiversity around Hertfordshire improving habitats for species native to the area. Through the development of the bypass, it helped to ease traffic congestion and acted as an instrument for flooding mitigation which stands to improve the quality of life surrounding the area. In addition, through the unique landscaping opting for plantation of wildflowers this sparked attention from locals engaging people in the project by highlighting the importance of biodiversity and protection of endangered species.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

This project is an innovative example of how biodiversity measures once piloted can be replicated. In the long term the costs of maintaining wildflowers are much less than traditional plantation of trees as they do not need cut and managed in the same way common plantation does. In addition, having a large area of hedgerows alongside the bypass has provided an area for rare native species such as Barbastelles to survive and grow. The wildflowers are a much-needed space for native birds such as Red-kites and Kestrels to breed as wildflowers attract small mammals such as mice and voles, which the birds feed on. To stabilise the area and perform the required flood alleviation measures protection of Roman snails (*Helix Pomatia*) was of high importance as they were moved to a safe space so that work undertaken did not harm them. We seeded 12,000 m² of wildflower annuals mix and a special calcium carbonate mix in a specific wildflower turf. The wildflower area was created within 36 hours but took nine weeks to fully establish itself.

Local biodiversity action plans included the conservation and protection of native species to Hertfordshire which this project demonstrably achieved through a net gain of biodiversity in the area. Through careful consideration workers had to design plans which enriched the potential for a diverse habitat. This involved having a sustainability champion on site who was responsible for educating and helping worked to become informed on how their role is influential to the preservation of rare species and the development of biodiversity. As this project worked with the local council the community was engaged through newsletters and personal contact to raise understanding of how protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the built environment is significant.



New Wildflower Habitat:



Sod Cutting

Further Information

Residents were also engaged in the project as the public were encouraged to count and input details of sightings alongside The Hawk Conservancy Trust which monitor and gain insights into Kestrel biology, particularly the movements of juveniles after fledging.

Project Team

- Hertfordshire County Council
- Environment Agency
- The Hawk Conservancy Trust

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

GRAHAM firmly believe in sustainability and conservation of the environment to enable continued development of the world. Therefore, in all projects the aim is to continually evaluate the possible opportunities and challenges associated with biodiversity and how to achieve an outcome which exceeds expectations. The drive and passion for enhancements in biodiversity is at the core of the organisation's belief of integrity and responsibility. This project was successful in helping to spread educational awareness of biodiversity and to inspire others to work with the environment rather than against it.



Public Information Event attended by over 100 local residents who are engaging with the Client, Environment Agency and the Project Team.



GRAHAM Team joined with Hertfordshire County Council and the Environment Agency in the A120 Bypass collaboration workshop