



Prologis Pollinator Project

Prologis Business Park, Heathrow Airport. West Drayton, London, England

Heathrow Airport Ltd

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: *Pollinator Award*

Project overview

The aims of this project were: to replace security fencing around the site including the installation of new access gates and improvements to lighting; to increase capacity of the car park and upgrade the surfacing and access track; and to provide ecological enhancements on the western side of the site.

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

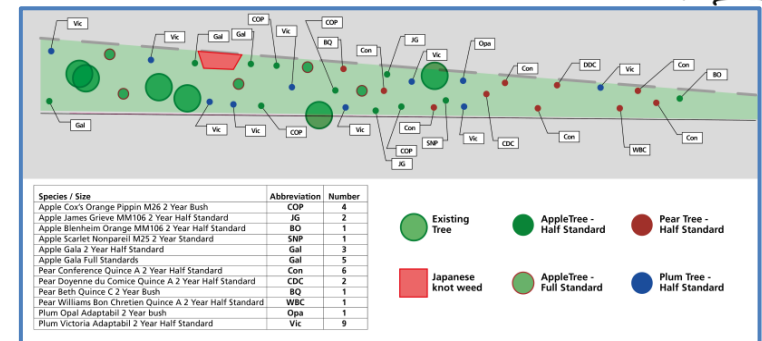
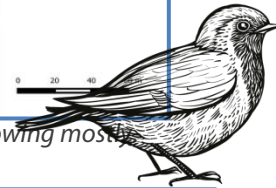
Formerly a temporary car park, the site is bisected by the Heathrow Express railway. An ecological assessment was carried out assessing the quality of habitats on site during the design phase. The eastern side was mainly hardstanding with planted trees along the perimeter, the western side contained low value bramble-dominated scrub with semi-mature trees and poor semi-improved grassland. Japanese Knotweed was noted on site as a project constraint. As a whole, the entire site was found to be of low ecological value and of limited opportunities for wildlife given the quality of habitat present and past use of the site.

What were the reasons behind this project?

The works planned to revamp the old car park were seen as an excellent opportunity by Heathrow to revitalise a brownfield site that was to include biodiversity enhancements. The aim was to increase pollinator friendly habitats by; creating orchard containing local cultural heritage varieties; adding an underlying meadow of native grassland species; creating log piles and to control Japanese Knotweed. These enhancements were driven by Heathrow's commitment to assess impacts to wildlife during development and include enhancement opportunities.



Overview of the location prior to development showing most low value habitats.



Development plan showing layout of orchard with variety of apple, pear and plum trees with underlying meadow and retained semi-mature trees.



What were the biodiversity measures taken?

A detailed impact assessment and project plan were carried out prior to works, completed by Heathrow and EHM Ltd.

It was a key factor that this project be of benefit to pollinating species. It was decided that an orchard containing fruit varieties of local heritage be planted as this region was once renowned for its orchard farms. Creating pollinator habitat is also in line with local and regional BAPs. Beneath the fruit trees a meadow was sown, using a native species mix to further increase habitat coverage and provide additional opportunities for pollinators and other wildlife. The tall grass will provide refuge for invertebrates in the winter and the variety of species in the meadow will provide food sources throughout the year. Log piles were added to provide additional refuge for pollinators.

To ensure existing biodiversity features were retained the semi mature trees on site were retained and protected during construction. In addition existing topsoil on site was retained to be re used on site as this was seen as a more sustainable approach than importing top soil and having to remove the existing soil.

The surface of the parking area was created using grasscrete whereby the cells were swept-filled with topsoil and seeded to further extend the vegetation coverage of the restored site.

The stands of Japanese Knotweed received repeated treatments, mainly by stem injection to eradicate the plant. These areas were marked on site during construction. After completion of the project, visits are still made to monitor for any re-emergence of any new growth.

EHM Ltd maintained a watching brief throughout the entirety of the works to ensure that all ecological aspects of the project were complied with. A programme of maintenance is in place for the long term to ensure correct management of the habitats and monitor the pollinators.



The site prior to planting with retained trees in the back ground.



Top soil being stored ready for spreading. Re using the top soil is not only a cost saving it limits the risk of importing unknown species and reduces lorry movements.





Further information

It was agreed that planting an orchard would be appropriate for this location. EHM Ltd, whose staff has established other orchards, researched which varieties of heritage significance were grown in the area historically particularly those that originated locally. These were then sourced from the National Fruit Collection in Kent and elsewhere. The site was prepared for planting, autumn 2019, and then once the trees were delivered to site they were planted in the desired locations. The species were not planted in groups but mixed to prove a mix of species across the site. The following spring, 2020, the ground was cultivated and a native meadow mix sown. Trees were monitored during the summer and watered as necessary. This project is easily replicated especially if carried out at the right time of year by passionate and competent people.

This spring in 2021 the orchard and meadow has bloomed creating a haven for wildlife in an urbanised area. The trees and flowers appear to attract a number of pollinators as well as species of birds. The Japanese Knotweed has significantly reduced which has been another benefit for local biodiversity.

This project involved excellent communication from design stage to completion between Heathrow, construction companies and ecologists. This was an important lesson; that early and frequent communication is key. The legacy of this project will be a slice of pollinator friendly habitat in an urban environment containing fruit trees that would have once dominated the landscape and been the centre of the local community's lives.

Project Team

Heathrow Airport Limited, Heathrow Express, EHM Ltd

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Heathrow 2.0, the airport's sustainability plan for the future, requires that all development projects protect and enhance sites for biodiversity. The ecological enhancements carried out in this co-operative project will have ensured both, compliance with Heathrow 2.0 and, a positive outcome for biodiversity



First stage site completion showing the trees in their first year. The grasscrete of the car park can be seen on the right.



Site maturing in spring 2021 with a variety of species in bloom creating a diverse habitat for wildlife.

