

Woodgate Wildflower Meadow Maze
Pease Pottage, West Sussex, United Kingdom
Thakeham

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: Community Engagement Project Award

Project overview

Thakeham has created a wildflower meadow maze as part of the village green at our Woodgate development in Pease Pottage, West Sussex. Planted in October 2022, the maze is now flourishing; not only boosting biodiversity but inspiring the local community, especially schoolchildren, to understand and become involved with promoting biodiversity.

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

Thakeham has taken a raft of measures at Woodgate to increase biodiversity, including 50 boxes for dormice, swift bricks integrated into the walls of homes, and hedgehog highways through gardens, all designed to attract and protect wildlife.

The village green, in the heart of the development, is a wide-open space lined by beautiful mature trees which is regularly used by residents as part of the daily walk to school, for village fetes, and even weekly boot camps. However, the careful mowing meant that the biodiversity in this area scored low on its support of wildlife.



The seed ball making activity run by Buglife



Local schoolchildren at the unveiling of the wildflower meadow maze

What were the reasons behind this project ?

Whilst the planning application pre-dates our sustainability commitment of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, as this development was the first to benefit from our Eddie & Ellie's Wild Adventures education programme, we wanted to make sure that this site didn't miss out on our vision for wilder places and work into bringing people closer to nature.

For this project, we worked in partnership with Plantlife, the UK's leading conservation charity for wildflowers, plants and fungi. We planted the maze in the shape of the Thakeham fingerprint, which symbolises Thakeham's unique people-centred approach to sustainability.



The wildflower maze in the shape of the Thakeham fingerprint

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Woodgate's wildlife meadow maze has created a new habitat that features at least 50 different varieties of wildflower to attract pollinators, including bees and butterflies.

The maze has ecological significance as a B-Lines project, a nationally recognised solution from Buglife that seeks to create and restore at least 150,000 hectares of flower-rich habitat across the UK. This approach forms part of the National Pollinator Strategy; the Government's ten-year plan to help pollinating insects survive. We were inspired further by Plantlife's annual No Mow May campaign, which encourages wildflower development by asking people to put away their mowers during May.

Two information boards at the entrances to the maze highlight to visitors the value of wildflowers and pollinators, integrating extracts from our Eddie & Ellie's Wild Adventures programme and co-written by both Plantlife and Buglife.

The unveiling of the maze, in National Gardening Week 2023, was used to engage with local people and promote biodiversity. Residents and the wider Pease Pottage community joined in the event, including local primary schoolchildren under the Eddie & Ellie programme.

Using an Eddie and Ellie themed activity sheet, children explored the maze in search of different bugs and plants on activity posts throughout the maze, collecting each etching and learning about different species.

Guests were offered the opportunity to join in a seed ball making activity run by Buglife, receive planting advice from the local Hilliers garden centre and talk to Thakeham staff about how they could create space for nature in their own gardens. Thakeham's Gardening for Wildlife Guide was handed out for further inspiration.

Thakeham hopes that events such as these will inspire visitors and residents to support our drive to increase biodiversity by incorporating wildflowers and features to attract wildlife into their own gardens.



An information board at the entrance to the wildflower maze

Further information

The maze was created from turf supplied by Wildflower Turf Ltd, a fellow member of Plantlife. This Wildflower Native Enriched Turf includes more than 50 types of wildflowers in a mix of native wildflowers and naturalised annual and perennial species, chosen to appeal to pollinators, insects and species that feed on them. At £15,000, the total project cost came under budget, demonstrating a huge amount of value to nature and the community.

Thakeham hopes that the meadow maze will inspire visitors and residents to incorporate wildflowers and other spaces for nature in their own gardens. To encourage people to get involved, in the summer of 2022 Thakeham launched our Gardening for Wildlife Guide produced in partnership with Surrey Wildlife Trust. The guide breaks down the key concepts when designing a new garden by creating four corners, designed and ready to plant, each with a specific benefit to wildlife. From the forager and kitchen corners to the pollinator and wetland corners, the guide makes it easy to create a wildlife-friendly garden. These guides were available for existing residents at the event and are gifted to all new residents when they move in to inspire them to make space for nature in their own gardens.

Josie Cadwallader-Hughes, Sustainability Director at Thakeham said: "We know nature is more complex than the Biodiversity Net Gain calculation alone. Our vision for wilder places aims to implement more projects like this that bring people closer to nature, especially as this has been such a resounding success."



Thakeham's Gardening for Wildlife Guide

Project Team

- Thakeham employees from our Nature Recovery Task & Finish Group
- Plantlife
- Buglife
- Hilliers Garden Centres

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Thakeham constantly looks for new innovative ways to boost nature recovery across our developments, going far beyond our current commitment of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, rising to 20% from 2025. The wildflower meadow maze at Woodgate enhances the biodiversity of the village green, but most importantly it brings people closer to nature on their doorstep. Engaging with the local community and schoolchildren will enhance its impact long after Woodgate is completed, providing a long-term legacy that will mean people in the area, including young children, are more engaged with their environment as part of their day-to-day experiences, as a result.



Children in search of bugs at the wildflower meadow maze