



Meadfleet Academy
Across England and Wales
Meadfleet Ltd

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

Project overview

As an open space management company, Meadfleet are passionate about providing biodiverse green areas for both people and wildlife. The Meadfleet Academy was created to go beyond this; inspiring and educating our 40,000 customers and the communities surrounding our 320 developments in supporting the environment through a range of initiatives.

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

Meadfleet feel it is important to use our platform to educate and engage all with biodiversity. Our experience is that people can be resistant to habitats that are beneficial for biodiversity as they are not always perceived as 'attractive'. It is important we counter this way of thinking. With Biodiversity Net Gain regulations coming soon, requiring more extensive, longer-term creation and protection of habitats on new developments this will be more crucial than ever. Whilst customer and community engagement are not a requirement of the regulations, Meadfleet believe this is critical to ensure successful delivery by changing hearts and minds.

What were the reasons behind this project ?

Nature is proven to positively impact mental and physical health and it is important to promote interaction with the environment from a young age. Encouraging thought and engagement with key issues will help drive the change required to combat the challenges the natural world is facing. Meadfleet feel a responsibility to go beyond our remit of providing safe, attractive areas of open space by enhancing these for biodiversity and working with our customers in this mission. The Meadfleet Academy aims to go even further, inspiring the younger generation in environmental issues and promoting the importance of biodiversity and sustainability.



Our Ecology & Conservation Manager giving school talk in Yeovil



Planting Day at Green Ridge Academy, Aylesbury



What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Launched in Spring 2022 our 'Meadfleet Academy' aims to engage and inspire a wide audience across the 320 communities in which we work. Primarily focused on the younger generation it provides funds, equipment, activities and initiatives to schools and community groups. So far, we are working with 20 schools across England and Wales and we've given away over 1550 curriculum-based growing packs which support learning and inspire interest in biodiversity. Our Ecology and Conservation Manager provides school wildlife talks and planting days, actively inspiring young minds and creating new habitats in school gardens for nature. Additionally, we supply resources such as gardening equipment, plants and wildflower seeds to ensure the projects are a long-term success. Meadfleet's Community Fund supports the academy's projects, and we donated almost £6000 between 2022 and 2023.

The academy runs in conjunction with Meadfleet's Bee Friendly Campaign which encourages residents to make their gardens more pollinator-friendly, mirroring the enhancements Meadfleet are carrying out on their open spaces at no additional cost. Giveaways of 1000s of bee-friendly seeds, bee hotels and wildlife gardening packs alongside a wealth of resources and advice, volunteer days and wildlife walks help inspire change.

The Meadfleet Academy is fully scalable across the 320 communities we work in. As we take new developments into management they will also benefit from our activities and we will continue to identify schools and groups to work with, donating time and resources to the project. Our initiative is not just targeted to local schools and groups, we welcome all to get involved that express an interest.

Meadfleet are creating a legacy of safe, attractive, biodiverse landscapes for the benefit of local communities and wildlife whilst inspiring future generations to embrace sustainability and biodiversity, something that will be key with the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain this year.



Tree planting event with the Northampton Boys Brigade

“Thank you so much for all the things you have provided to our school. It has been really beneficial to the kids and they have thoroughly enjoyed it!”

**Great Moor Junior School, Stockport
April 2023**

Feedback email from school who received Meadfleet talk and donations

Further information

Following the success of our Bee Friendly Campaign we launched the Meadfleet Academy to harness the reach of our wide platform of customers and the geographical network of our operations with 320 developments across England and Wales. Our twice-yearly newsletter to our 40,000 customers was used to launch the campaign's activities, encouraging nominations of schools/groups to take part and we also actively approach schools to work with us. So far, we are working with 20 schools across England and Wales and aim to double this by the end of 2023.

We've been delighted with the positive feedback received from schools and community groups who we've worked with to date. Whilst we are in a relatively early stage of the project and the results are not easily measurable for such campaigns, we know through our previous engagement activities that projects such as these help improve buy-in and provide opportunities to promote biodiversity issues to an even wider audience through awards such as this, social media, and other communications.

From a recent customer survey:

- 79% agreed Meadfleet being recognised for our ecological contributions and community engagement is a positive feature of our service
- 74% agreed the wildlife advice and information we provide is beneficial

Meadfleet adopt the land we manage so have a unique opportunity to create long-term, ongoing relationships with schools and community groups that inspire future generations and support biodiversity. The project is highly scalable across England and Wales with continual opportunities to keep engaging multiple schools and children.

Project Team

- All Meadfleet team members have been involved, key personnel include:
 - Paul Cassidy MCIEEM, Ecology and Conservation Manager
 - Samantha Hursey, Operations Director
 - Megan Castle – Resident Relations
- Charity Partner – Buglife

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

With such a wide audience of customers, their families and the wider communities in which we work, we felt it was our responsibility to go beyond our day-to-day responsibilities as a management company and both give something back but also educate and inspire in matters that we are passionate about and that are of significance to the wider world. With a focus on the younger generation through our school talks and planting days the project will help lay a foundation for children to be passionate about biodiversity, helping them create a healthy relationship with the environment and nature in perpetuity.



Meadfleet team at community tree planting day in Bedfordshire



Free Wildlife Gardening Packs provided to customers, families and schools – Codicote C of E Primary School