



Railway Embankment
Barnsley Road, Goldthorpe, Barnsley S639AE
Railway Embankment Group

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: *Community engagement*

Project overview

The project is about Turning a disused piece of railway embankment into a useable area for all of the community to enjoy.

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

Conditions on site were bleak, it was a dark and dirty area. Trees flourished in the area but not much plant life or species were on the site, there where plenty of rats. There was a naturally occurring spring that was full of litter and human waste that you could smell from the bottom of the hill.

What were the reasons behind this project ?

The reason behind this project was that it had been an area of blight for many years and reported as an health hazard by the BBC, bringing negative publicity to the area. A community group came together in order to develop a sustainable environmental initiative. Which in turn met our team objectives, corporate social responsibility, and corporate priorities “protecting the environment for future generations.”



The site prior to the group starting work on the site



The same area now as above:

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The project is replicable the approach has been from a bottom up approach and not only meets our council priorities but came from the community itself, because of the bad TV coverage they wanted to do something positive for the area. It's innovative because not only has it dealt with the flytipping issue but also used as an educational space for future generations. We have had so many people, residents and services involved that they now feel they own the site which in turn makes the project more sustainable. Schools and local services have different areas on the site which they are going to maintain.

The commissioned environmental service will also continue to undertake activities down there and recruit volunteers from the wider community. The area is already a ecological valuable habit, with different species of birds including mallards using the space.

As the project has developed the biodiversity in the area has increased massively. Volunteers and staff have been down there twice per month for the last couple of years putting hours into the project. Dearne valley landscape have brought in experts to undertake a ecological survey but also train the volunteers on the best location of hedges, trees and plant life. Before the actual project on site commenced we did a lot of background work which included working with students from Sheffield to assist us with local consultations, of which some of the ideas have been implemented into the project.

We have used lots of the materials off site such as tyres, twigs, logs and bricks. These have assisted us which seating, stepping stones and bug hotels.



Volunteers bluebells and the last of the rubbish, view from bottom



View from Orchard volunteers planting into the new boxes

Further information

An ecological survey was undertaken right at the beginning of the project and now the project is complete (although we feel it will never be complete because it will develop further) we will undertake another one shortly. The group have worked with services and schools to clear the site of tons of rubbish, plant the orchard, flowers, bedding boxes for herbs and vegetables as well as installed a memorial stone for two boys that died on site many years ago. The schools and services will maintain the site and use for their community initiatives and environmental learning. It is clear that there has been a big increase in biodiversity on the site. Birds are using the boxes, butterflies are on site and insects are using the bug hotels we have created from waste onsite As well as all the flowers that are now on site, a great variety and range, including a newly planted orchard. The natural spring is now clear, which had frog sporn in it, so is clearly being used. Flytipping no longer happens on the area and I would not do anything differently, we have taken the community with us on this journey. This is a great legacy and community space for the whole of Goldthorpe to use. Over the last couple of years the area has developed and so has the groups knowledge around bio diversity.

Project Team

The group consists of local authority officers, local residents, RSPB volunteer, Dearne valley landscape officers, local group members and school staff. All of which have contributed to the design. Funding was sourced from section 106, Tesco, Barnsley Bonds and area council.

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The motivation for carrying out the enhancement was initially just to respond to bad TV coverage and decades of fly tipping. Biodiversity is one of the priorities for other teams within the council but prior to this project never one for us. The fact that the teams and groups have been learning and enhancing the environment along the way has been fabulous.



Lush grass with natural poppies and water tower in the back ground



Some of the Group members on site with services who developed the new access road