

Torrington Depot
Torrington, Devon
Kier Utilities

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: *Project of the Year (up to 5 ha)*

Project overview

Torrington depot is one of the Kier Utility permanent sites for completing work on behalf of Western Power Distribution. As a permanent site that Kier manage the site manager, Wayne Cook and the operations team have made numerous enhancements to attract wildlife for the foreseeable future.

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

The depot is sited within an old dairy factory site utilising some of the vacant yards. The contract and residence has been ongoing for many years and the team currently have one office block and a portion of a shared hard standing yard. The depot is surrounded by scrub habitat and the River Torridge runs south of the site. The area is known to support common and protected species, including the brown hairstreak butterfly.

What were the reasons behind this project ?

The nature of the depot and what it is used for is very practical and requires a lot of space for materials, equipment and constant traffic. However, the site team recognised the importance of leaving space for nature and using this space as an enjoyable relaxing area for the men when not on projects. This project was solely driven by the site team wanting to work somewhere that suited wildlife and their own health and well being.



Photo of a brown hairstreak butterfly

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The site team at Torrington undertook their own environmental assessment and spoke to local people and ecologists to identify what sort of wildlife were in the local landscape and how they could attract them to the edges of the depot without interrupting the function of the site.

It was identified that the adjacent area was a hotspot for the brown hairstreak butterfly. After carefully researching and discussing with the landlord, it was agreed that the south facing banks around the depot office would be scraped of the current unmanaged vegetation and reseeded with wildflowers which would benefit the species. The site team used recycled coffee cups from the kitchen to plant and grow wildflower seed packs each of them had collected in their spare time. The wild flowers, once growing were planted into the cleared bank side. The site team have been monitoring and managing the bank for weeds ever since, maintaining the high quality habitat.

Adjacent to this area, the site team set aside an area from the active depot to add bird feeders onto the overhanging trees to attract in small birds. The team then added a bench to this area to enjoy this area on their lunch breaks. This area is kept quiet and is proving to be beneficial to the team's site and well being, relaxing them and allowing them to enjoy the encroaching wildlife.

A biodiversity net gain of removing scrub and bare ground to replace with wildflower meadow and grassland is a positive change from this small scale and low budget project that gave the site team at Torrington a sense of ownership and responsibility to improve their working environment.



Part of the bank acquired for butterfly enhancement works – before wildflower sowing.

Further information

As the environmental advisor for the contract, going to a depot, expecting to find a busy, completely functional site usually just hard standing and buildings, it was refreshing to find the level of thought and effort the site team had gone to, without any support or instruction. The enhancements were done with no budget and used what resources they already had at home and in the depot. The steps taken were well informed by talking to ecologists and the local community which has made the enhancements successful, now attracting in many invertebrates and animals, including the brown hairstreak butterfly. The addition of a bench nearby has given the site team accessibility to enjoy the result of their hard work which in turn improves their health and well being whilst in the workplace, something Kier heavily endorses and will be encouraging the rest of the depots to consider. The enhancements at Torrington have set a precedent for the other depots to follow and make their own changes.

Project Team

- Kier Utilities
- Wayne Cook, Site manager

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The motivation behind the enhancements was to improve the depots ecological value in a way that wildlife and the team could benefit from. The site team went above and beyond their requirements to take responsibility for their working area.



Quiet wildlife corner created behind depot building.