

## Al Fresco

**Michael Drayton Junior School, Nuneaton**

**Kate McRae (Wildlife Kate), Michael Drayton Junior School**

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

### Project overview

The Al Fresco project took place at Michael Drayton Junior School in Nuneaton. It was organised by Kate McRae (Wildlife Kate) and Fortem. The idea was to implement outdoor classrooms for the children where they can be taught the curriculum and learn about wildlife and the environment.

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

Before this project began, there was already an outdoor classroom and a bird hide. The area was used as a field for the children with a few trees and flowers, so did not offer much in the terms of biodiversity. There was and still is a pond adjacent to the area, which the bird hide overlooks, which has different types of wildlife and plants inside and surrounding it.

### What were the reasons behind this project ?

The client approached us with the idea of creating two more outdoor classrooms in the area near the already existing one. This was not a part of the contract but we are part of the Considerate Construction Scheme (CCS), which means we score higher on the audit. However, as a company we try and invest into the community as much as possible, as we believe we have a responsibility to give back to the communities we work in.

*Dens and classroom with the fencing around*



*Volunteers from Fortem working through the rain*

## What were the biodiversity measures taken?

These outdoor classrooms are a creative way to get children outside and learning about local plants and wildlife. This means that children will be closer to their local environment by sitting outside next to hedgerows, trees, ponds and a country park next to the school. By teaching children in these outdoor classrooms, then this mean that the area will be maintained to a high standard with the potential of new additions to help make it even better.

Local businesses were encouraged to get involved, either by donating materials or labour. The local community was invited to join as well, with the school's pupils' parents also getting involved with the construction of the classrooms, digging holes, painting, and planting. Parents and children got the opportunity to plant flowers in the area and put labels around them so they knew which ones were theirs. This encourages them to look after the flowers and have a greater respect for plants and wildlife. Fortem employees also volunteered their time over three days to help complete this project.

The area will have new flora which will attract butterflies and other insects to the schools garden, which will increase biodiversity. In turn, these insects will attract additional wildlife to the area. With the country park next to the school, this could entice the insects to enter the country park and live in there.

The materials that were used were either reused or donated. We reused logs from the Harthill Hayes Country Park, which is next to the school, for posts for the fencing around the area. Pallets which materials were delivered on were used as dens for the children to work in. Wood previously used at the school was used for flower beds.



*Fortem Apprentice planting trees along the fencing*





### Further information

The project was installed using mobile plant donated by the Fortem site team. Diggers were used to scrape the top soil to form the area for the classroom. This top soil was then moved to create a mound to separate the classrooms, forming a natural barrier. A pile driver was used to dig the holes for the fence posts.

The legacy this project will leave is to teach children about wildlife and the environment. This is important as it will teach the children to respect and nurture animals and plants, which will last their entire lives. Furthermore, these children can teach other children/people they meet in their lives to spread knowledge and respect for the environment. The school will also allow external groups, such as brownies, scouts to use the new spaces we have created. With this, the area will be maintained and managed by the school.

Currently, it is too soon to tell if there has been an increase in animals and insects, but with the new flora being planted, this has increased biodiversity on its own, with the potential to increase it further with animals and insects being attracted to the flora.

### Project Team

- PLAZA Ltd
- Providence
- Travis Perkins
- Paint360
- Fortem
- Michael Drayton Junior School
- Parents of MDJS students

**What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?** This project was designed by the client, who were able to draw out and plan the project with help from Fortem's site team. The site team helped plan the timescales and plant needed to deliver this project. The project was not part of the contract, but we are part of the Considerate Construction Scheme (CCS), which means we score higher on the audit. In addition, as a company we try and invest into the community as much as possible as we believe we have a responsibility to give back to the communities we work in.



*Finished project with tree saplings*



*New outdoor classroom*