Bees, Bugs, Birds and Biogas
Hibaldstow, Lincolnshire

Merlin Renewables Ltd

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Pollinator

Project overview

Once the Anaerobic Digester plant had been built on the old Second World War runway at Hibaldstow Airfield Merlin Renewables was not only committed to fulfilling its planning obligations but was keen to play an active role in increasing the biodiversity of the site.

The site consists of 13.7 acres. Part of the site was taken from part of the tarmacked runway and the rest was intensively farmed land and is situated next to a farm yard.

Other than labour the cost of two barn owl boxes at £100 each the trees cost £2650 the reeds £90 and two bags of meadow/clover/vetch seed where the only expense.

The two telegraph posts for the barn owl boxes and the woodpile where donated by interested local farmers who where keen to support this initiative. The wild flowers seed were collected from locally sourced seed some of it within a hundred yards of the site.

Photo: Bee hotel

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

The site prior to development was very poor in Biodiversity and consisted of a tarmac runway and intensively farmed arable fields.

Only the field edges supported a few arable weeds which played a minor biodiversity enhancement.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

The Ecological Appraisal that was carried out on the site before construction stated "The proposed development area at Hibaldstow Airfield is relatively small and there is little scope for biodiversity enhancement."

Merlin Renewables wanted to prove this negative response was debatable. Other than the screening of the plant with trees and shrubs and a 140m2 area of wild flowers to screen and mitigate and discharge the

planning obligation. It is hoped the site will be an inspiration for other similar sites.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The works carried out on this site can with a little thought can be easily replicable to other sites.

The site is monitored with any new species recorded and sent to relevant Conservation Bodies.

The Site plans to and has participated in Surveys such as Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust Farmland Bird Count (February 2015), Big Butterfly Count (August 2015).

A bumble Bee hotel has been made from waist wood from site. Wood has been donated from a local farmer to create a log pile.

A wild meadow clover vetch mix has been sown and this is already proving an important nectar source for bees and butterflies. Species have been targeted such as Barn Owls Bees and Butterflies.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

Photo: Bees on site

Further information

Before the site is made have a vision of what biodiversity enhancements you are aiming for and when the site is being constructed utilise the heavy machinery onsite we did this to create the bunds and the two swales on the site.

Once the site work is completed implement the planned biodiversity features. The site is and will play a small but important part in the local areas biodiversity.

Already in its first year numerous bees have been seen feeding on the clover, vetches and other wildflowers that have established on site.

Barn Owls and kestrels have been observed hunting on site. Mallards, sky larks and pied wagtails have already nested on site.

Even in its first year it is remarkable what biodiversity improvements can take place on site. Use the machinery on site have a design plan and biodiversity objectives. Get the local community involved.

Already the local gardens clubs have asked for another visit next year. Merlin Renewables has created a Landscaping and Environmental Report which is handed out to any visitors to the site.

An active web site explaining the biodiversity features and benefits is being worked on and should be completed by mid August.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Passionately believe that construction does not have to create a negative impact on the local biodiversity and with a little thought and imagination and not at great expense can create ecological habitats that offer more biodiversity post construction than before.