



White Lion Nature Reserve Penymynydd, Flintshire, North Wales Redrow Homes

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

Project Overview

Redrow's Heritage Park development comprises of 55 high-quality family homes and a popular 0.8 hectare Nature Reserve, maintained by the Amphibian and Reptile Trust with nature and people in mind. The development was shaped by the surrounding natural environment, and carefully landscaped and cultivated to preserve wildlife habitats and enhance biodiversity.

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

The site is positioned just over the Welsh border in the semi-rural setting of Penymynydd. Spanning around 4.4 hectares, the site had previously been home to an active quarry, a pub and also agricultural land. The plot had been identified as having little wildlife value prior to enhancement, although it was noted that the site did have a good potential for rich wildlife habits based on the surrounding ecosystems.

An initial ecological survey identified great crested newts in the site's pond - a significant discovery as these are a European protected species.

What were the reasons behind this project ?

Protecting and creating areas for wildlife close to where residents live is a key element of our Biodiversity Strategy 'Nature for People'. Redrow is one of the first UK housebuilders to embark upon an ambitious plan to achieve verified net biodiversity gain across developments by 2022 and we aimed for this to be one of them. We wanted to go above and beyond the legal obligations to protect the Newts, and change the way housebuilding and biodiversity work together.



Redrow Heritage Park Development

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

We established that the best way to support the declining Newt population was to collaborate with an expert organisation. We approached the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) Trust and developed a long-term partnership. The ARC Trust is a national wildlife charity committed to conserving amphibians and reptiles, it manages more than 80 reserves, each chosen for their significant reptile or amphibian populations.

A specific site management plan was developed for Heritage Park. Under the guidance of the ARC Trust, we opened the White Lion Nature Reserve adjoining the housing development – a tranquil environment featuring six man-made ponds, wildflower meadows, hedgerows and walkways. The landscape work was carefully orientated so as not to disturb the newt population and the pond, which evolved into an important feature of the development in its own right.

It was not a planning requirement to incorporate a Nature Reserve or educational initiatives into the development, but we saw this as an opportunity to engage with the local community whilst also supporting the declining Great Crested Newt population. In the summer of 2018, all the partners involved in the project were invited to the unveiling of a community information board at the reserve, helping better inform residents and visitors of the increasing abundance of wildlife and biodiversity on site.

The ARC Trust manage the nature reserve to a standard set by a legal management plan, including meadow cuts and amphibian surveys. Further to this, we utilised the knowledge of The Environment Partnership (TEP) and Natural Resources Wales, which carried out regular in-depth ecological assessments of the site throughout the whole construction and development phase. This project was designed for longevity, with resources and information for customers, guided nature walks, landscaping and maintaining the site.



Mandy Cartwright from The Arc Trust – holding a Great Crested Newt!



Community Information Board at the Nature Reserve



Further information

This development has resulted in proven ecological advances; for example, the great crested newt population has increased six-fold in the first three years since the development's launch. The White Lion Nature Reserve is now also home to four other native amphibian species, as well as the rare mud snail. The six new ponds, wildflower meadows and hedgerows are ecologically valuable and have created usable habitats from what the land previously was. These new additions have also contributed to achieving biodiversity enhancement and provide homes for a variety of wildlife species such as mammals, birds and invertebrates.

The site is used by people who live within Heritage Park, as well as the wider community and education establishments. This is a unique community setting whereby guided walks, species surveys and pond dipping sessions (delivered by the ARC Trust) take place. Careful, ongoing care and management of the green spaces and features have created places where both residents and wildlife can thrive for the long-term.

Project Team

Natural Resources Wales, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) Trust, Flintshire County Council, Elan Homes (neighbouring developer), Building Wildlife Trust, Paul Sinclair Technical Director for Redrow Homes (NW).

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Our aim was to create a new development with a lasting legacy. Legacy issues were considered from the outset to maximise the health and wellbeing benefits of nature. We ensured this was not only a location to live but a green space haven with immeasurable public benefit. We are working closely with the ARC Trust to try and duplicate the opportunities which have been achieved at The White Lion nature reserve. Through collaboration, planning, development, mitigation and compensation we now have a site that is rich in wildlife and provides opportunities for local people and communities to enjoy nature for years to come.



Paul Sinclair
Technical Director
for Redrow Homes
(NW)



It's not very often you would have two separate developers, Natural Resources Wales, an environmental consultancy and amphibian and reptile charity sat round a table discussing a residential development. It's been a real success and partnership work has helped drive this project to deliver something special.

