

WILD GLADES green roof revival
The Glades shopping Centre, Bromley
 LA SALLE Investment Management

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: *Habitat Creation – (< 5Ha small scale)*

Project overview

The Wild Glades project has turned a major shopping centre, The Glades in Bromley, attracting over 20 million visitors a year, into a place where wildlife flourishes on the outside, and ecological engagement and learning is celebrated on the inside, becoming a beacon for sustainability in action!

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

The focus of biodiversity gains has been the green roof alongside a main entrance to the shopping centre. This had been largely forgotten after its creation as a planning requirement. It was species-poor, with only 10 main species of grass and forb. Vacuum sampling indicated an impoverished fauna, with no pollinating insects present, no molluscs or other ground-dwelling invertebrates and small numbers of aphids and Braconid wasps. The nearest formal beds and planters, at ground level below the roof, were dominated by evergreen shrub varieties with little or no flowering herbaceous planting and therefore minimal supplementary foraging value for wildlife.

What were the reasons behind this project ?

Wild Glades is inspired by LaSalle's '4 Pillars' of sustainability and ESG: net zero carbon, reduce/reuse/recycle, social value and rewilding. The project focusses on social engagement and biological enhancement as ways to optimise the built asset and its grounds, boosting local biodiversity AND enriching the visitor experience. The rewilding project is intended to demonstrate that it is possible to revisit, reimagine and revive, low-value green infrastructure, boost its ecological function, enrich both biodiversity and bioabundance, and create a template for replicable retrofit interventions across the urban estate at The Glades, and elsewhere across LaSalle's property portfolio.



The original green roof at The Glades

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The roof rewilding covers a plot of 200m² and delivers a dense cover of new lifecycle wildlife resources for urban biodiversity, boosting pollen and nectar, fruit and seeds, adding 50 new foodplant species from sowing and planting, installing nest box arrays for house sparrows and house martins; bug boxes and timber 'biototems' for solitary bees and wasps and their associated communities; micropools to catch rainwater for drinking and bathing, and sand piles for warm, bare-ground habitats with the variety of slope and aspect necessary to create a wide range of different niches. One innovation has been to use some bird boxes at a much lower level along the boundary fence to the green roof; these are intended to attract other users, such as nesting bumblebees and communal wren roosts. The roof was divided into 3 areas according to their characteristics – a dry sunlit outer strip, the central taller vegetation along the roof drip line, and the dry shady inner margin beneath the roof overhang. This approach enabled us to maximise small habitat creation across the roof garden as a whole, by choosing flora suitable for each zone and placing built features and fixtures for wildlife where they could perform best. The roof garden work was also carefully planned to ensure maximum visibility from the customer access alongside, making wildlife encounter more likely and creating conditions that will ensure that an experience of the natural world becomes part of a visit to The Glades. The seed mixes and foodplants selected for the green roof include species that we expect to disperse down from the elevated site into the beds and gardens on the restaurant terraces below, creating continuity and spreading useful (and attractive) flora. Wildlife using the green roof will be likely to then move between it and the gardens below.



The redesigned green roof as part of The Wild Glades project



Further information

Wild Glades has followed the original rewilding and social impact audit commissioned by LaSalle. Direct action for wildlife and sharing this ambition with a network of stakeholders is the foundation of the project. Enriching the ecosystem of the shopping centre's urban habitats and enriching the ecosystem of local organizations, companies and communities that surround and permeate the centre, have been LaSalle's twin strategic objectives. Already there has been measurable change in both. A survey of the green roof just months after improvements found nesting solitary bees and wasps, ground bugs (heteropteran) and visiting dragonfly and butterfly species together with the rapid germination of new flower-rich sward. Surveys later in 2021 will add further data and this will be repeated annually. Similarly, there is a new vitality to the way in which The Glades communicates with tenant businesses and its customers, driven by new content and a focus on engagement, sharing stories, successes and ambitions on the shared themes of sustainability, rewilding and positive change. The key lesson from the project is the critical importance of a determined local management team keeping up persistent positive pressure. The connection between strategic goals and real change on the ground can be weak; The Wild Glades has shown how it can be strong. Entering The Wild Glades for a Big Biodiversity Award has been a great way to celebrate what has been achieved so far, look forward to what is still to come, and to thank everyone who has contributed to this fantastic project.

Project Team

- Client / funders: **LaSalle Investment Management**
- Other design team members: **Arc Consulting**



*The new green roof comes to life!!
Featuring the Artecology and Arc teams working
with The Glades centre manager Mark Haynes.*

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The Wild Glades project and the ecological enhancements and wide-angled public outreach it has delivered, have been a very important project for LaSalle, and for The Glades centre itself. Firstly, we wanted to show how a major company can successfully move 'beyond compliance' and into positive social and ecological impact in its approach to the environment it manages. Secondly, we wanted to demonstrate that imaginative work for wildlife and community can not only be integrated into effective asset management but can become a significant advantage in a competitive business field, boosting ESG performance and opening new opportunities for investment.