

Northwood Headquarters
Northwood, Herts
 Skanska

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

Project overview

The Skanska team at Northwood HQ has a major role with environmental and biodiversity on site, the team have created their own Environmental and Biodiversity Committee, this is made up of like-minded colleagues who have a passion for improving the environment, wildlife and biodiversity on site. The aim is simple, to improve the overall environment within the local area.

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

The Team identified various areas of focus to improve the biodiversity on site, these include:

- A large pond at the rear of our accommodation which required the removal of vegetation to allow re-oxygenation of the water
- Landscaping in front of our main building required replacement of flower beds and old dying heathers
- The site had scope to introduce further wildlife such as bee's and hedgehogs
- There were no protected areas on site which would help promote pollination
- A resident fox on site has been spotted with mange, the team wanted to explore treatment options .

What were the reasons behind this project ?

While the world went into turmoil due to COVID19 restrictions, here at Northwood HQ we decided to set our sights on improving the biodiversity on site. Bringing together passionate representatives across UK Strategic Command, Northwood HQ, Skanska and Aramark to provide a collaborative, focussed and coherent approach to the challenges of reducing resource consumption, reducing waste and improving biodiversity, this in specific focussed on biodiversity net gain.



Please see above visual, with highlighted sections from the video proposal and images of building 410 Landscaping renovation works



Northwood Officers Mess Pond after renovation works

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The most visible achievement has been the regeneration scheme for the 2 onsite ponds. The Officer's Mess pond is a key social space for Officer's living on site, helping them to enjoy their living environment and to relax from the stresses of their jobs. Improvements to this area have improved the health and wellbeing of those living within this area. The second pond is at the Northwood HQ entrance.

Across six months we painstakingly removed thirty truckloads of vegetation that had taken over the habitat. We took further steps to improve the environment for the fish that included creating special swimming channels and a nursery for spawning. We also engaged with specialists to ensure that the right mix of plants and flowers were in place. The old redundant filter system was removed and replaced with a more economically friendly filter system for both fish and wildlife within the pond area.

As a result, many different types of fish that had reduced in number have bounced back through renewed space and oxygen. Fish species such as leather and grass carp are thriving in their quality environment. The improvements have also attracted wild birds back to the pond, such as moorhens and ducks. As a result, we have welcomed baby moorhens and ducks during 2020 (for the first time in 7 years) and are waiting for this year's nesting brood.

Renovation works have also been completed to the landscape of Northwood Headquarters. The works involved replacing the beds of old and dying heathers with mixed, vibrant perennial and wild-flowers, that will attract pollinating insects and other wildlife. The development of this area includes more seating to create an attractive, enjoyable and relaxing social space, encouraging all personnel on site to get some much-needed fresh air away from the office – providing mental health and wellbeing benefits to all. Item of the planting schedule were based upon recommendations from the site wide ecology report conducted in June 2020.



Grounds Maintenance team hard at work during pond renovations.



New wildflower area outside Building 410

Further information

Lastly, the Environment Sustainability Forum along with the Skanska Environmental and Biodiversity Committee have purchased beehives to sit within the confines of Northwood HQ's perimeter .

Our beehives were installed in March 2021 and will be managed by keen members from across the whole of the Northwood HQ estate.

The new wildflower areas will help the bees pollinate across the local area, not only further promoting biodiversity but also giving us the opportunity to harvest their honey that will be sold in the Northwood Retail Store.

In addition, to help promote the wildlife on site we have recently installed 4 hedgehog hotels and are awaiting the arrival of adopted hedgehogs from local rescue centre CW Wildlife Centre in June 2021.

CW Wildlife Centre have also provided medicine for members of our team to help the onsite fox with mange.

Project Team

- UK Strategic Command, Northwood HQ, Skanska, Aramark and CW Wildlife Rescue Centre

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Skanska are still fairly new to NWD. The coalition between the introduction of Skanska's values 'care for life' and the environmental enabling function joined with Skanska team approach and client engagement.

We also created a baseline with the whole site ecology report to see what we could do to improve site biodiversity.

The introduction of these improved environmental and sustainable practices highlights that Team Northwood fully incorporate their Skanska Values of Care for Life, Be Better together, Act Ethically and Transparently and Commit to Customer.



Resident bee keepers maintain the local bee hives.



The team spreading wildflower seeds in designated protected areas.