

## Eco-Thriving Fairy Garden for Hope House Hospice Oswestry Redrow Homes

**BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category:** Community Engagement

### Project overview

Redrow could not be prouder of our team of 13 graduates who undertook a biodiversity improvement project for Hope House Hospice by creating an eco-thriving fairy garden. The project was to regenerate a fairy themed garden, which is used as a sensory, relaxing and learning area for the resident children and visitors to the hospice in Oswestry. The garden was set as an environmental project management task for our graduates to help the children be inspired by nature whilst the graduates get a greater insight into how they can improve biodiversity within construction.

The key objective for the regeneration project was to keep the children's positive relationship with nature at the heart of the design. By reusing materials from Redrow's construction sites and receiving kind donations from suppliers for paint, tools, signage and skips for use during the project the cost was kept to zero!

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

Prior to the project, the area had sparse thorn bushes around the perimeter and high fences making the area inaccessible to residents in wheelchairs and blocked a significant amount of light. The hospice wanted pollinator friendly plants to promote wildlife to the area as this was currently limited.

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

There were no specific requirements to undertake this community engagement project. Volunteers from the Redrow Graduate team and subcontractors undertook the task who worked closely with the hospice to ensure all their needs were met. As the hospice has a specific requirement to be an accessible and peaceful location for its users every aspect of the garden was agreed with them prior to the work being undertaken.



*Our popular new addition to the garden, an insect hotel made from reused site materials.*

The biodiversity improvement project worked as training to enable the Graduates to learn new skills to take on larger construction projects and maintain a positive biodiversity focus in the future.

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

To ensure improving biodiversity was at the heart of the project the hospice's children were educated in how important biodiversity is to them through the "Redrow Green" book that was read to the residents within the reading section of the garden. All new additions of bug hotels, bat boxes, bird boxes, hedgehog homes and herb gardens were all signposted with easy to read pictures to help educate visitors about biodiversity. The creation of these new habitats is what ensures the project is replicable as it has taught our Graduates and subcontractors how to make these habitats from reusable materials, something that will now be continued through biodiversity projects in each of the Graduates regions.

Every plant and herb that was placed in the garden was carefully considered to ensure it met the needs of the local pollinators and eco-systems, the Graduates sought expert advice from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust's list of suitable plants for local species. With a range of varying habits in the garden planting was selected according to the soil, light and access required. The plants vary with season and act to enrich the soil as they grow, this helps to mitigate previous damage caused during vandalism of the area. Throughout the garden each new habitat has been created which supports the idea that a garden can be both practicable and serve as a biodiversity net gain for the area.

Engagement was a key factor of the project as it taught the Graduates the importance of listening to the local community's wants and needs regarding biodiversity. An example of this occurred as the garden is adjacent to a fenced off public footpath that has now been uncovered to allow more light to the area, allowing them to appreciate the garden and learn how homemade habitats can be created.



*Above: before*



*Below: after*



*The before and after pictures of a section of the garden*

### How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement

### Further information

To ensure the project was completed successfully within three days the graduates learnt how to assemble the homes for nature with reusing waste offcuts. The small homes were created off site before the project began, whilst the larger bug hotels, hibernacula and hedgehog homes were made during the renovation of the garden. The graduates ensured that the members of staff within the hospice are able to maintain the garden with minimal effort whilst still allowing the area to thrive with plants and habitats that support biodiversity through training.

The long term benefits of the project include the improvement of knowledge to improve biodiversity whilst keeping in mind that an area must meet the needs of the community. This was met throughout the project by discussing ideas with the hospice workers, biodiversity specialists for the local area and Redrow senior management who had success in similar projects previously. The garden was received with fantastic success; the residents at the hospice were thrilled with the result. The education day was a key to our success, as it allowed the garden to be used by those whom it was intended, whilst they were taught about the new homes built for wildlife and the plants and herbs that will support pollinators.

Since the project was undertaken we've had reports of the habitats used by insects and an increase in bees, around the herb garden. Our top tip is to always listen to the community you're engaging with and meet their local needs for biodiversity.



*Pollinator friendly plants and herbs planted around the garden*

### What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

We wanted to create an area that could be used by everyone in the hospice and provide peace for the community whilst meeting the year round needs of nature. Sharing Redrow's passion and knowledge for biodiversity with our graduates ensures this project can be replicated within other communities.