

Whitechapel Road Vertical Meadow Wrap

Whitechapel Road, Tower Hamlets

London Borough of Tower Hamlets, NHS, Vertical Meadow

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

### Project overview

The Vertical Meadow Wrap was installed on Whitechapel Road in September 2023 in collaboration with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) and the NHS. In their recently published Code of Construction Practice, LBTH mandate greening of hoardings on strategic sites. Our Wrap shows that construction can exist alongside nature.

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

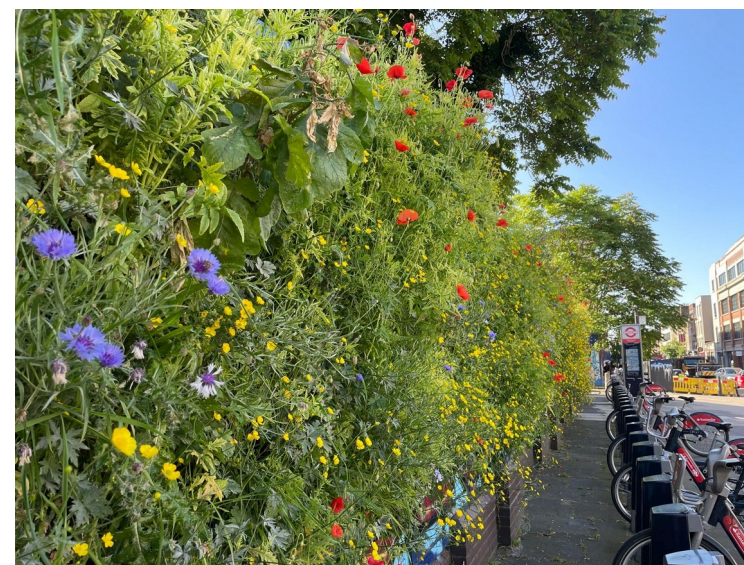
Prior to the installation of the Meadow Wrap, standard ply hoarding surrounded a vacant site that is currently without planning permission. This site is in a dense urban area that suffers from high levels of antisocial behaviour and a lack of green space. Spearheaded by the Council in response to the inclusion of green hoarding in their code of construction, we covered 50 square meters with our Meadow wrap, creating a new habitat for pollinators, insects and birds.

### What were the reasons behind this project?

Tower Hamlets now mandates that large site hoardings include greening to offset biodiversity loss during construction. The council wanted to demonstrate to developers how best to respond to this. We aimed to show that a green hoarding is feasible and need not cost a fortune. Our wrap grows native wildflowers, providing habitats for pollinators. This urban project creates a green space for both the community and wildlife. Collaborating with LBTH, we will monitor the ecological and social benefits using Agrisound an acoustic monitoring tool for measuring biodiversity. We are also doing visual surveys of ecology.



*Graffiti covered hoarding pre-installation*



*Same area a few months later*

## What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The Vertical Meadow Wrap boasts a multifaceted approach to biodiversity enhancement, marked by its adaptability and potential for replication across diverse settings. The plug and play approach means that it arrives to your site ready to go and just needs to be stapled to hoarding and plugged into your chosen water and power source. Due to this, it is easy to adapt to hoarding and sites of all sizes. We have worked closely with the Wildlife Trusts and Buglife to ensure the plant species support urban biodiversity.

With a keen eye on long-term sustainability, we continuously refine monitoring techniques to pave the way for a self-sustaining system, poised for autonomous management in the foreseeable future. Distinguished by its innovative design, our project stands apart as the sole provider of green walls cultivating a calcareous grass and flower-rich meadow, a departure from the conventional pre-grown plant installations prevalent in the market. In our pursuit of ecological enrichment, we aim to align our assessment metrics with horizontal meadows, rather than the traditional small sites criteria stipulated by DEFRA, underscoring the unique habitat value our product offers. When visiting the wall, you will see lots of bees, hoverflies, butterflies and other invertebrates, meaning that we can be confident in knowing that our product will result in biodiversity net gain for this site.

Collaboration lies at the heart of our endeavour, the team at LBTH have been fantastic since the project's inception and have engaged extensively throughout the growing process. Public engagement has been integral to our mission, we have engaged with the construction community in tower hamlets through forums & we have interacted with the public through the interactive web page: [Lets Talk Tower Hamlets Green Hoarding Pilot](#).

The utilisation of a sustainable felt, a growing medium crafted from recycled clothing, underscores our commitment to sustainable practices, exemplifying our holistic approach to biodiversity conservation.



*Bee observed on our wall*



*Various species supporting biodiversity*

## Further information

Our product is designed to be quickly installed by the client. The Vertical Meadow Wrap was brought from our depot in Tufnell Park by bicycle courier to minimise our impact on the environment. The installation was very simple and was carried out by a team of three in just two days. Since installation, the meadow is monitored by the Vertical Meadow team remotely and a local site team visit the wall weekly to undertake a series of basic health checks.

Prior to installation, there was little to no greenery on site. There is now a verdant flowering meadow which attracts a slew of bees, butterflies and other insects. BNG insists on a ten percent biodiversity uplift from pre-development to post-construction. The construction period, which could be up to 5 years, is often neglected in urban areas where existing habitat maintenance during construction is difficult. We want to bridge the gap between pre and post-construction and be a pioneer for greening the construction industry.

Our Wrap was installed in Whitechapel in September. This was later than we would have liked as it meant we quickly entered colder months and growth was slow. The wall came to life in April and transformed this busy part of Whitechapel. It is really exciting to see how it now has become a source of discussion by people who pass by on the street. What was previously a neglected corner has a new focal point.

## Project Team

London Borough of Tower Hamlets, along with the NHS and Vertical Meadow

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

As well as wanting to abide by the Code of Construction, the site was covered with graffiti and litter. In the early stages of the project, we noticed our wrap was also being covered with graffiti but as the plants have grown in, this has been made no longer possible and we've noticed a significant reduction in littering. It showed a form of natural regeneration from a typically heavily graffitied area of London.

Our mission is to bring biodiversity back into urban areas. This location in Tower Hamlets was bereft of green space which affects its residents and visitors as well as pollinators and the impacts of greening are hugely significant.



*Poster that can be found next to the wall, explaining the product and encouraging engagement with the QR code*



*Members of the public passing by and admiring the Vertical Meadow*