

Replanting the A14

A14, between Huntingdon and Cambridge, Cambridgeshire

Chevron Green Services, National Highways, Ringway Infrastructure Services

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: Biodiversity Legacy Award

Project overview

Chevron Green Services was appointed by National Highways to review previous landscaping which hadn't performed as had hoped, identify opportunities for improvement and to implement a revised replanting strategy. The initial phase of the revised planting strategy was completed in mid-March 2024.

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

Prior to our enhancements, the key baseline data obtained through soil samples showed lower than expected levels of nutrients required for tree establishment. This is 'typical' when planting on made up engineered ground.

The original establishment of trees was highlighted as part of the Development Consent Order and had been highlighted many times by key scheme stakeholders. National Highways previously identified 'No Net Loss of Biodiversity' as part of their strategy in RIS1 (2015-2020), so the success of trees and species rich grassland sites would be key to that target on this scheme.

What were the reasons behind this project?

The purpose behind the project was to mitigate the environmental impact of building a new road section between Cambridge and Huntingdon. This work contributed to National Highways KPIs. The key driver behind the recovery stage of the work, where Chevron Green Services (CGS) was brought in, with assistance from Ringway Infrastructure Services, was to ensure that the project delivered on the original targets of corporate social responsibility and adhering to planning conditions identified in the development consent order. CGS' approach is putting nature first wherever feasible, especially when working with environmentally proactive clients like National Highways and Ringway Infrastructure Services.



*Plot on the A14 using the certified biodegradable tree guards.
Credit: Chevron Green Services*



*Plot on the A14 using the certified biodegradable tree guards.
Credit: Chevron Green Services*

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Two of the key elements of this project are repeatable and should be incorporated into all projects; the planning of the tree species to give the trees the highest chance of survival, i.e. planting trees which like wetland areas in locations which are more prone to becoming waterlogged. The second being the certified biodegradable tree shelters that were used on the project.

Not only is this project the first of this scale (replacing approximately 165,000 trees) but it has taken long term maintenance activities into account. The Rainbow Terra certified biodegradable tree shelters used are made from 100% recycled materials, the wood fibres used to create the guards are Grown in Britain certified which means they originated in the UK.

The use of certified biodegradable tree guards allows the tree guards to remain in-situ after the trees no longer require the shelters to grow. This reduces the number of maintenance interventions required, therefore reducing traffic management requirements, reducing the risk of harm to onsite staff, and fewer visits to site means a large contribution to the overall carbon footprint of the scheme. As part of replacing old plastic tree guards with certified biodegradable guards, Chevron Green Services sought the support of the Tubex recycling scheme, allowing the old plastic materials to be recycled into other plastic tree guards which are resold through wholesalers.

To support the survival of the trees, soil improvers and slow-release fertilisers were used to counterbalance the previously experienced extensive periods of dry weather in the East of England. The continued maintenance of the newly planted trees as well as the management of the species rich grassland will ensure that biodiversity is thriving across the project for generations to come.



*Rainbow Terra certified biodegradable tree guards.
Credit: Chevron Green Services*



*Certified biodegradable tree guards in use on the A14.
Credit: Chevron Green Services*

Further information

The legacy of this project will be the continued success of the trees, grasslands, protected species and the long-term enhancement of local biodiversity. Local populations will also benefit from this work as trees will screen the roads and the local population of pollinators should increase.

The changes to approach undertaken on this project were ones Chevron Green Services implemented following issues on other schemes. A local nursery was used to hold the tree stock, ensuring the trees spent as short a time as possible out of the ground. We tied this in with 'just in time' deliveries, daily or every other day, a concept which is used commonly in the construction sector. Since the species rich grasslands have been maintained, there has been an increase in the number of pollinators compared to when the areas were unmaintained.

The forward programming of the establishment maintenance required has also been scheduled, allowing National Highways to have visibility of the regime as well as certainty that works will happen in accordance with the programme. This in turn will allow customers and stakeholders to be informed of the project progress. Having clear, open and regular lines of communication with local stakeholders with definite actions has helped with the relationship with the community.

Project Team

Client: National Highways

Contracting Organisations: Chevron Green Services, Ringway Infrastructure Services

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The motivation for carrying out the work was aligned to National Highways' organisational objectives, but using an innovative approach and sustainable products were proposed by Chevron Green Services. Using sustainable tree guards will push the industry forwards, allowing clients to think differently about product selection whilst considering the whole life cost and the overall carbon cost of a scheme. Identifying and doing the species rich grassland maintenance was also important to CGS. Our operational depot is situated close to the A14, therefore for our own and the local environment's benefit, it was particularly important to encourage pollinators in the area.



*Plot on the A14 using the certified biodegradable tree guards.
Credit: Chevron Green Services*