

The Central Park Nature Trail

The site is tasked with constructing a community of 360 No houses, incorporating a series of storm water attenuation facilities; these will form three wetlands in order to encourage wildlife.

Upon their own initiative the site team investigated the various species of birds, bats, wildlife and flora which characterise the area and have set out to further attract these species to the SUDS arena.

Within the areas of retained habitat and the open space, a number of additional habitat enhancement measures will be implemented. The new habitat creation will focus on the native scrub/tree and grassland mosaic; the SUDS wetlands will be created within the site boundary, the design seeking to maximise value for breeding and foraging birds. A new hedgerow, scrub and tree planting exercise will utilise a range of native species. To further enhance the value of the site for nesting birds, 45 No bird boxes will be erected within the site.

The site team wanted to know how something more could be done for the ecological plans already put in place and to extend environmental “value”.

After a great deal of thought, the site team realised that they needed to raise interest right from the start so decided to involve the community in its production as well.

The initial survey revealed that some 13 No’s species of birds were prevalent in the area in pairs and a further ten species were seen but not breeding. It was discovered that most of these birds were on the RSPB “endangered” list; in addition two species of bat were also found; they both needed protection and encouragement.

Together with the community the site team undertook to provide a 2 km Nature Trail alongside the SUDS ponds with signage and information of the various birds, shrubs, bats that may be seen and recorded. Strategic places were located for “low podiums” so that children could be involved; and an apprentice bricklayer laid the bricks for the various podiums and appropriate signage/identification information attached. A meandering footpath allows children with tricycles to travel along the nature trail.

In order for the trail to appeal to all ages, technology was introduced and QR codes linking a particular podium to a website is also in place where further information in respect of that species of wildlife can be found. A small clue is also left on the webpage as to the location of the next podium and QR code. This in itself will lead children who constantly use technology into what is termed as “accidental exercise”, in other words they don’t need to stop playing on their phones and before they know it, they will have spent an hour or so walking the Central Park Nature Trail, being educated in a subtle manner and enjoying a walk that they might never have had.

The nature trail is not yet complete; this will be completed prior to the completion of houses on the project.