

# Building for Nature

## PROJECT - PROGRESS SUMMARY

WINTER 2002

**Since the launch of the project in August 2001, excellent progress has been made working with SEEDA development managers, conducting biodiversity workshops, investigating best practice and promoting biodiversity issues within the construction industry.**

### Introduction

Increased development pressures are affecting the whole South East. The challenge facing the Building for Nature (BFN) Project is not only to minimise the impact of building development on the environment, but also to seek positive gains for our wildlife in new developments. While it is often held that any development means environmental destruction, this is not necessarily the case. With correct guidance and advice at the design and planning stages, developments can protect and enhance our natural environment.

***"Increasingly, we are rediscovering the close links between our health and the environment. The Building for Nature Project is essentially about improving the quality of life for all who live in the South East."***

***Kit Oliver OBE DL,  
Chair, SEEDA Sustainable Development Committee***

The BFN Project aims to help the construction industry to deliver environmental enhancements by:

- n Providing a focus at regional level for biodiversity and development issues by seeking, evaluating and collating a portfolio of knowledge, research and examples of best practice.
- n Ensuring that SEEDA gives a lead by developing and implementing best practice techniques within its own developments.
- n Acting as a source of advice to professionals in the development sector throughout the region.
- n Championing biodiversity issues within the development sector, especially by promoting best practice.

### The BFN Project is working with:

- n Developers
- n Architects
- n Biodiversity Officers
- n Ecologists
- n Construction Industry Environmental Forum
- n Building Research Establishment
- n Planning Departments

### Funding and contributing organisations

The Building for Nature Project is funded and supported by key organisations from the conservation and construction sectors:

- n South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)
- n English Nature
- n Environment Agency
- n Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
- n House Builders Federation
- n Civil Engineering Contractors Association
- n Wildlife Trusts
- n Association of Local Government Ecologists



*Designing with nature adds value and leads to a better quality of life for everyone*

SEEDA is engaged in an integral number of key developments across the South East. The Building for Nature Project is working with development managers, architects and contractors to ensure biodiversity is part of the design process.

Developments include:

### **Buckland Paper Mill, Dover, Kent**

A valuable chalk river runs through and under this former mill site. The BFN Project is working to restore the river to its former status by removing the culverting, reinstating the banks and creating sheltered backwaters and wetland habitats.



*Concrete casing being removed to return the River Dour to its natural state.*

### **Hastings, East Sussex**

Broomgrove, site of a former power station, now plays host to one of the largest lizard populations in the South East. Before demolition could take place, a relocation site had to be found to accommodate the lizard population. With help from the Environment Agency, a new home is now being prepared with suitable habitats and a hibernaculum. The lizards will be relocated in early spring 2003.



*Remaining section of the power station providing a home for common lizards.*

***"The nature conservation and development communities, particularly in the fast developing South East, often come into conflict over the nature and scale of development but, through the leadership of SEEDA, Building for Nature will improve the quality of developments whilst enhancing biodiversity and the local environment."***

***Helen Doran,  
Sustainability Adviser, English Nature***

# The Building for Nature Project is helping a host of private developers to enhance the quality of their developments

## **Ropetackle, Shoreham, West Sussex**

Ropetackle will provide a mixed use development adjacent to the Adur estuary SSSI. Working with architects and Berkeley Homes, the BFN Project is designing swift boxes, bat roosts and house martin nesting areas into the development. Not only will these features enhance the development, but will also contribute to the Sussex biodiversity action plan (BAP) and target a national priority habitat



*Ropetackle, Shoreham, West Sussex*

## **Betteshanger Colliery, Kent**

This 112 ha development scheme will incorporate a sustainable drainage system (SUDS) with reed bed filtration, an 80ha nature park, new woodland, walkways and cycle ways. The BFN Project is working to ensure that the existing areas of wildlife value are protected, and that enhancements contribute to biodiversity targets.



*Betteshanger Colliery, Kent*

***"We had no idea what to do or who to go to with regard to the pond on one of our development sites. The Building for Nature Project has been invaluable in providing advice and information on the wildlife issues. Their communication with the planning authority has ensured we deliver what the authority wants in terms of environmental improvements."***

***Mark Saunders,  
Project Engineer, Croudace Homes***

**The Project is also working with private developers throughout the region. Croudace Homes approached the BFN Project for advice regarding a pond within a proposed construction site. The housing development will now benefit from a valuable wildlife habitat, adding value to the properties and offering residents a better quality of life.**

# Best Practice

A number of developments have been recognised for designs that find the balance between development and environmental needs:

## Oxford Science Park

Oxford Science Park has proved to be a great example of combining native landscaping with commercial development. Many wildlife habitats have been created, providing a 'natural' context for the Science Park, which now commands premium rates.

*Plan of the Science Park displaying the extent of woodland and wetland habitats included in the development.*



## Great Notley Garden Village

Great Notley Garden Village has won numerous awards for its quality design. Incorporation of existing natural habitats into the village design has added to the value of the new village and habitat enhancement work has created landmark features helping to create this unique development.



*Information centre at the country park created as part of the Great Notley Garden Village.*

## Construction and Biodiversity Workshops in Kent and Surrey

About 30 industry professionals attended each of the workshops that identified and addressed the barriers to the construction industry delivering biodiversity gain. The main message received from the workshops was that "there is no shortage of information out there - it just needs to be simplified and disseminated in the construction industry language."



## Working with planning departments

Many authorities are now developing landscape and ecological supplementary planning guidance. To help planners understand and use this guidance the BFN Project has worked with tree/landscape officers in producing simple biodiversity checklists for planners to use.

# The Future

## **European knowledge**

Many lessons can be learnt from our neighbours in Northern Europe, who for years have been building developments with nature as a central theme. The BFN Project intends to form partnerships with several European organisations and import their knowledge to assist the South East to build developments with nature in mind.

## **Construction industry indicators**

As part of 'Movement for Innovation', (the Government's initiative to improve and modernize the construction industry), Environmental Key Performance Indicators (EKPI) are being developed. Biodiversity is one such indicator. The BFN Project is working with the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) and The Building Research Establishment (BRE) to establish effective and practical indicators for the industry.

## **Awards**

It is encouraging to see how some designs have achieved the balance between protecting/enhancing wildlife and quality building. To promote this idea and the use of the industry biodiversity indicators, the BFN Project is looking to establish a set of Building for Nature awards in conjunction with industry bodies such as the BRE.



***"With regional housing allocations to be met and as a result of the buoyant economic situation in the Region, the pressure for development is not going to disappear and it will be increasingly important to work with developers to ensure that it is done in an environmentally sympathetic manner with benefits for both people and wildlife."***

***Phil Griffiths,  
Environment Agency***

## **Guidance and standards**

Developers have approached the BFN Project with the same question - 'How do we consider biodiversity in our designs?' The Construction Industry needs information to guide it in the right direction. Evidence from the biodiversity workshops highlights that the information already exists, but not in a form easily understood by the industry. The Project plans to compile relevant information and present it in a step-by-step guide.

## **Competency in professional institutions**

A number of institutions play major roles within the industry and have the potential to assist in delivering the aims of the BFN Project. Ecology and Landscape are two differing disciplines, yet they are increasingly working with the same areas of land. The Project aims to draw together the two relevant professional bodies and, using SEEDA owned sites, investigate how to achieve the aims of each organisation. In doing this the Project will develop best practice, to deliver quality landscapes of greater ecological value.

# Working in Partnership

SEEDA's Building for Nature Project is supported by:



ENVIRONMENT  
AGENCY



***"The 'Building for Nature' steering group enables us to contribute and benefit from knowledge shared with like-minded people, whose aim is to broaden the awareness and importance of building, in a socially and environmentally responsible manner."***

**Chris Crook,  
Countryside Properties PLC**



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