

Best Practice at London Bridge – Minibeast mansion



Overview

The London Bridge project staff began and completed two high rise buildings for local residents at the rear of the project offices. Six staff members and 50 nursery pupils aged 4yrs – 5yrs with their teachers built the structures over 1.5 metres high to house thousands of new residents. The new buildings, known as 'mini beast mansions', were constructed in the wild garden area of Snowsfield School as part of the on-going partnership with the school.



Innovation

Materials were donated from the project, the pupils and from the gardens of some of the project staff. This included old pallets, bricks, untreated wood off-cuts, carpet, hay, bamboo, ceramic pots and dried leaves. The minibeast mansion provides damp cool conditions for many invertebrates in the summer and a place for them to hibernate in the winter, encouraging the following inhabitants:

- Rolled up carpet - stays damp to support invertebrates such as centipedes, woodlice and beetles;
- Untreated wood – entices woodlice and centipedes
- Old bricks – form refuge places for invertebrates
- Hay/dry leaves – provide dry nesting sites
- Cut stems (like bamboo) – provide homes for solitary bees and other insects such as lacewings.

The pupils assisted the build by placing materials into the pallet structure, but their main task was rounding up the new residents. With 50 youngsters scouring the garden for residents, we soon had a community being gathered together and passed around between the children for closer investigation. Amongst the new residents gathered where slugs, snails, worms and numerous ants along with a large number of stones which apparently, according to many of the children, also need somewhere to live. The whole session was enjoyed by both the children and Project staff in equal measure and the serious, but not too serious, aim was to show the children the importance of looking after our environment and wildlife.

Benefits

- Engagement with the local community at a young age, helping the on-going relationship between the project and local stakeholders;
- Helping develop an interest in the construction industry
- Educating the children about the need to conserve their environment



Targets & Objectives

The construction of two minibeast mansions has helped us meet our targets and objectives in the following areas:

- CEEQUAL – ecology; relations with the local community and other stakeholders
- London Bridge Sustainable Delivery Statement – community involvement; biodiversity
- London Bridge objectives & targets – community improvement project; habitat improvement.

