

Perfect bedfellows - concrete producers and nature charity

Written by Luke

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Cement production, quarrying and batching concrete don't seem likely 'bed fellows' with nature. But this month, CEMEX UK announced that it had created 660 hectares of conservation habitat, equivalent to more than 850 football pitches, to encourage wildlife on its land.

The company launched a Biodiversity Strategy in partnership with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in 2010 and made a commitment to create 100 hectares a year to give nature a home. This target has been well exceeded with 660 hectares produced in 5 years and has resulted in some rare and endangered species, as well as the more common species, making their homes on CEMEX land.

The Small Blue butterfly has started to flourish, saved from the brink of extinction, with five new colonies established at Southam and Rugby cement sites. The fast-declining Turtle Dove which has decreased by 95% since 1970 in the UK, is being given a chance through land around three of CEMEX's quarries being seeded with a special flower mix to provide the bird with its ideal food.

But it's not only rare species but ones that are thought of as everyday such as the 'cockney' House Sparrow. Colleagues at sites throughout London have been involved in putting up special feeding boxes, sowing wildflowers for food and monitoring the population around them. Surprisingly, House Sparrows too are on the decline with almost 70% decrease in the last 20 years.

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On a larger scale, quarry restoration gives an opportunity to deliver significant priority habitats. For example, Rugeley Quarry close to Cannock Chase in the Midlands is gradually being restored after quarrying sand and gravel that has been used in local construction projects. Working with the RSPB, the land will deliver substantial heathland mosaic habitat and a wonderful area for the community to see nature at home.

Rob Doody, CEMEX UK Aggregates Operations Director “The creation of biodiversity habitats is an important part of nature conservation for us. It’s a balance between providing the building materials that we all want and need to build homes, hospitals, schools, roads and much more and the impact on the natural world around us. We own over 4000 hectares of land in this country which, in partnership with the RSPB, gives us a great opportunity to enhance the natural environment.”

Sam Tarrant, who leads on CEMEX’s partnership with the RSPB comments “CEMEX has achieved a great deal for nature over the last 5 years. Businesses are now playing an ever important role in delivering biodiversity conservation. We are delighted to be working with CEMEX helping to give nature a home.”