

## » Case Study

# ATTENBOROUGH NATURE RESERVE

Working with the local Wildlife Trust, CEMEX UK has turned disused gravel pits at its Attenborough quarry in Nottinghamshire, UK, into a 145-hectare nature reserve that attracts rare wild birds and has an award-winning education centre.

### Rare species found at the Attenborough Nature Reserve:

- » Grasshopper Warbler
- » Willow Tit
- » Tree Sparrow

### BACKGROUND

CEMEX relies on raw materials such as limestone, sand, gravel and clay to make its cement and concrete products. These are essential for building the roads, schools and homes that society needs, but quarrying the materials has the potential to degrade habitats and damage species unless the land is carefully managed. We are determined to have a positive impact on nature by promoting a diverse range of habitats and species while quarries are active, and by rehabilitating disused sites. By restoring former quarry sites we also provide communities with new nature reserves and education and leisure facilities.

One example of how rehabilitating our sites can benefit local biodiversity is the Attenborough Nature Reserve in Nottinghamshire, which comprises a series of flooded former gravel pits. Quarrying began in the area in 1929 and, once the site was exhausted, we set the area aside to provide a protected wildlife habitat.

### ACTIONS

Attenborough owes its unique landscape of islands, lakes and ponds to the excavation and extraction activities that took place when it was a quarry. The material left over from the quarrying process formed islands and shallows and with careful planning and land management, we created a mosaic of habitats for a variety of flora and fauna over 145 hectares.

CEMEX UK has worked closely with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust for forty years to rehabilitate the Attenborough site. In 1966, Attenborough became the first nature reserve established by the Wildlife Trust.

One important objective of our restoration work was to ensure the local community would benefit from the rehabilitated site. The nature reserve now boasts an award-winning Nature Centre that houses meeting rooms, education facilities, a shop and a café. A nature trail and three hides for watching wildlife help visitors to observe species in their natural habitats.

### OUTCOMES

The new landscape has created habitats including wetlands, grassland, scrub and open water. These provide ideal conditions for a range of plants, birds, insects and animals, enhancing the area's biodiversity.

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# ATTENBOROUGH NATURE RESERVE (CONT)

A wide variety of insect species, including several types of butterfly, are attracted by the reserve's wildflowers. Areas of open water provide the ideal habitat for other species such as dragonflies and damselflies that patrol the water's edge.

The reserve is best known for its birdlife and it is an important site for migrant and wintering birds. Regularly sighted species include mallard, teal, reed and sedge warblers, while rarer birds such as the grasshopper warbler, willow tit and tree sparrow also nest there.

Described by David Attenborough as a 'lifeline to the natural world,' the Attenborough Nature Reserve provides a unique opportunity for the local community to learn about biodiversity. Visitors can follow sign-posted walking routes, join guided tours, or use an audio guide to make their way around the reserve and learn about its wildlife. The Nature Centre provides extensive education facilities for school children and in May 2011, the site welcomed its 20,000th school pupil. Speaking about the visits organised for school children, the centre's education manager, Karen Bennett, said "it's all about inspiring them to protect our wonderful wildlife and environment".

The reserve has won a number of prestigious accolades and CEMEX UK was awarded the Cooper Heyman Cup in 2006 by the Quarry Products Association now the Mineral Products Association, an award that recognises outstanding restoration work in the quarrying industry. In 2007, the Nature Centre was listed in the top ten eco destinations in the world and awarded the Gold Award for sustainable tourism by BBC Wildlife Magazine.

### LESSONS LEARNT

- » Initial planning for restoration should take into account the adjacent land so it is viewed on a 'landscape' scale rather than focusing on the extraction area alone. This enables a mosaic of appropriate habitats to be planned that enhances biodiversity on a wider scale.
- » When working in a flood plain with restoration based on lakes, ponds, islands, mudflats and wet grassland, the importance of pre-extraction groundwater levels is of major importance. A minimum of 5 years borehole logs is required to project meaningful restoration levels
- » High quality restoration and subsequent awards can only be won in partnership with other parties in the community for the long term benefit of the wildlife, community and the quarry operative themselves.

### BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

With help from experts at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), we have developed an ambitious ten-year biodiversity strategy. This sets challenging targets, including our goal to create and maintain, by 2020, 1,000 hectares of habitats identified by the UK Government as conservation priorities.

### CONTACT

For more information contact [biodiversity@cemex.com](mailto:biodiversity@cemex.com)