

Press release: M5 Oldbury viaduct team gives gardeners a helping hand

A team working on the M5 Oldbury viaduct repair scheme is helping to transform a former derelict site into a community garden so it can be used by local charity, Ideal for all.

The derelict land, near junctions 1 and 2 of the M5 at Oldbury, is part of a programme of projects to give something back to local communities where work is currently being carried out by contractors BMV on behalf of Highways England to repair the viaduct.

Highways England is working with Ideal for All, a registered charity run by disabled people for disabled people in the Black Country, to create a fully functioning therapeutic garden and community learning space at Barlow Road in Wednesbury.

Ideal for All, through its award winning Growing Opportunities project, has already successfully developed two existing gardens; Salop Drive Market Garden (Oldbury) and therapeutic unit Malthouse Gardens (Smethwick). They are now working alongside the local community, M5 Oldbury viaduct team and Power to Change Community Business Fund to expand the project into Wednesbury (Barlow Road).

The site has already undergone phase one and one of development, being initially overgrown and unused for many years. Since the start of the Oldbury viaduct scheme, the team are carrying out further phase three development works and clearance across the Barlow road site.

In July, workers from contractors BMV attended the Ideal for All 'volunteer day'. This involved working alongside local volunteers and project participants, weeding and hedge trimming around the existing orchard. More recently the team has been back on site carrying out some rotovating and larger scale orchard clearance work.

Highways England senior project manager, Zbigniew Twarowski, said:

We appreciate the impact that M5 Oldbury viaduct project currently has on the local community.

We are always looking to minimise the disruption, but we know that there is a limit to what we can do. We are therefore looking to create a lasting legacy for the project. We will return a refurbished viaduct but we also want to support communities and improve lives.

Ideal for All's CEO, Khatija Patel, said:

We are excited to be working with local people, businesses and Power to Change. Together we're working hard towards the final transformation into a full functioning local asset, complete with community gardens, accessible buildings and community spaces.

The project will provide health, mental health and wellbeing opportunities alongside employment and skills training; benefiting local people, protecting the natural environment and creating opportunities to support and sustain economic regeneration of the area.

Seeing the project develop through the generous support from the Oldbury viaduct scheme has been fantastic and we cannot thank you all enough!

Ideal for All provides a range of social and health care services for disabled people, carers and disadvantaged groups.

The aim is to help people to learn new skills and live as independently as possible, regardless of background or additional needs. The charity offers a range of services to promote independent living, health and wellbeing and employment and skills and brings people together through peer support and social events.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.