



Congleton A536 is the strongest 'Link'

Crucial Link Road completes despite Covid-19 challenges

The Congleton Link Road Project Team are pleased to announce that the scheme and other associated works are now complete, except for some final landscaping works which will be undertaken later this year.

We faced the dual challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and two extremely wet winters, which hindered progress on the scheme. The pandemic affected many of our supply chain partners with many shutting down during the first lockdown last year. We introduced special measures to keep our workforce safe and worked hard to reduce delays to the programme.



"The opening of Wolstenholme Elmy Way is a cause for real celebration and a fine achievement – not only for the council, GRAHAM and road users but, above all, the people of Congleton. Traffic congestion had previously restricted the town's growth, reduced inward investment and made it a challenge to retain existing businesses.

"The council is delighted this significant and complex project has been successfully delivered – and within budget – despite the added challenges of two extremely wet winters and the unprecedented impact of the Covid pandemic.

"Given the size and complexity of the project, the progress made from drawing board to build completion has been astonishing. Everyone involved in this scheme should feel tremendously proud."

Frank Jordan
Cheshire East Council's Executive Director

Despite these challenges the project was delivered on budget.

The completed scheme which has been named Wolstenholme Elmy Way after Congleton's famous pioneering educationalist and campaigner for votes for women, Elizabeth Clarke Wolstenholme Elmy, joins the A534 Sandbach Road with the A536 Macclesfield Road and also provides a link to the Radnor Park industrial estate, vastly improving connectivity for the 26 businesses currently based on the trading estate.

The Project Team opened the road to pedestrians and cyclists on Friday 16th April to give the local community the opportunity to explore their newest road over the weekend. The official opening took place on Monday 19th April and was marked by a colourful cavalcade of more than 50 classic cars driven by local enthusiasts along the 5.7 km route, which is the largest infrastructure project to date in Cheshire East Council's history.

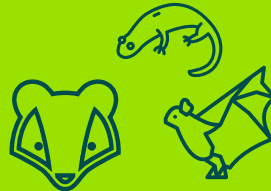
The procession of vehicles, which included a 'Batmobile', high-performance sports cars and vehicles dating from the early part of the last century, was preceded by a small ribbon-cutting ceremony by members of the team from GRAHAM and Cheshire East Council, who were involved in delivering the road.

Since opening to traffic the scheme has reduced congestion in the town and improved journey times for the 28,000 residents of Congleton and surrounding areas. The long term benefits will include improved air quality in the town and bring economic and social regeneration to the area by supporting new residential and business development sites.

WORKS SUMMARY

Archaeological investigations and photographic surveys carried out

Site clearance



Environmental mitigation for Great Crested Newts, bats and badgers

25,000m+
of new fencing erected



Reused

35,000
tonnes of on site material for use as structural fill

3m
wide combined cycleway / footway constructed

8
new roundabout junctions created

360+
lorry movements a day at the height of activities



850,000
tonnes of material excavated, transported, placed and compacted during the earthworks operations

100,000m²+
of new asphalt road and footpaths laid

25,000m+
of new drainage installed

STRUCTURES SUMMARY

- Europe's largest mobile 850-tonne crane was used to lift the 550 tonne River Dane Bridge beams in place, the heaviest load weighing 135-tonnes
- The bridge beams were fabricated using weathering steel to reduce future maintenance



2

equestrian / pedestrian underpasses constructed

4,100m²

concrete poured to construct the projects major structures

156

CFA (continuous flight auger) piles installed on Giantswood Lane, Loachbrook and River Dane structures

248

secant piles installed on Chelford Road structure

835

tonne of steel rebar installed in the structures

36

pre-cast concrete bridge beams delivered and craned into place on the Chelford Road, Loachbrook and Giantswood Lane structures



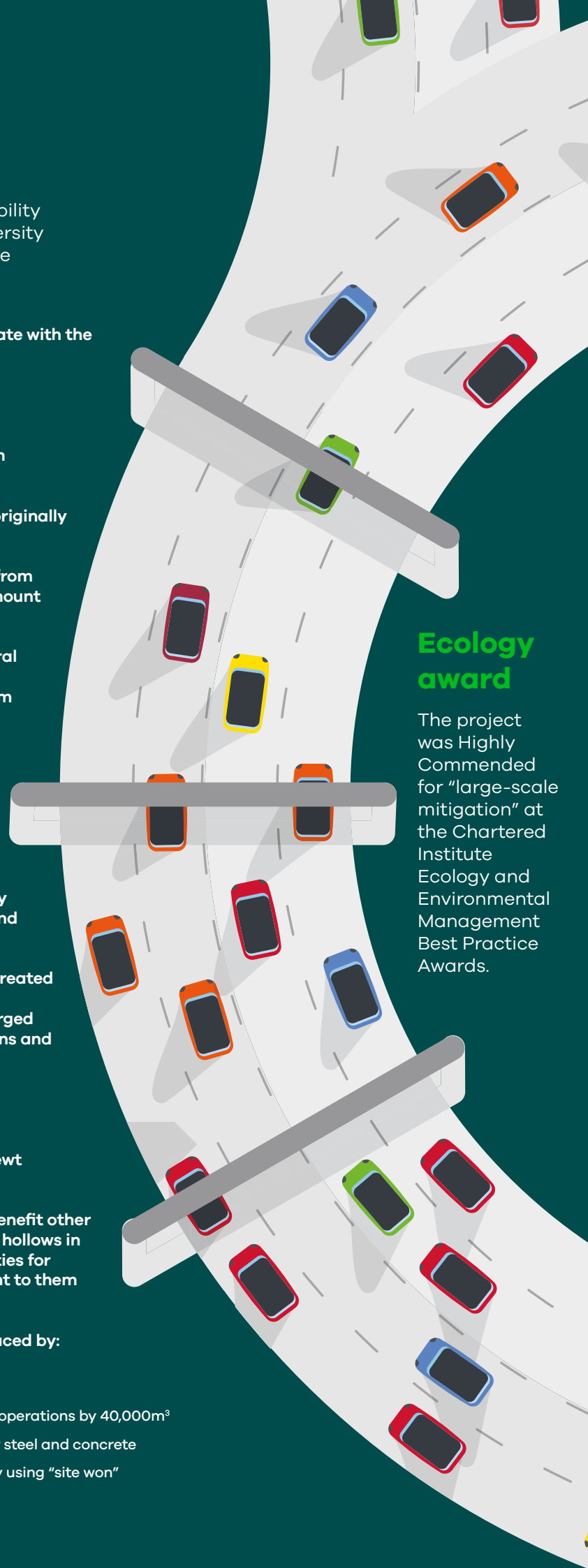
ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMARY

GRAHAM is committed to environmental sustainability on all the projects we carry out to increase biodiversity in order to increase habitats for wildlife and reduce pollution for years to come.

- 1 40% of 15,000 new trees and shrubs planted to date with the final planting taking place later this year
- 2 13+ hectares of new woodland; 33+ hectares of new grassland created
- 3 2,900m of extra hedgerows planted with 16,000m planted in total
- 4 645m of existing hedgerows retained that were originally earmarked for removal
- 5 A change in the design to the River Dane Bridge from a 3-span to a 2-span allowed us to reduce the amount of ancient woodland translocated by 68%
- 6 Surplus fill material was used to achieve a "natural profile" at the River Dane's "Ancient Woodland Creation Zone" - translocating the woodland from the steep hill to the flat plain at the top of the escarpment
- 7 41 wildlife habitats have been created with the project creating significantly larger habitats with a total area of 2300m² generated
- 8 Wildflower meadow seed mix was sown on hibernacula and mitigation areas as soon as they were completed to ensure a species-rich grassland was established early.
- 9 9 Great Crested Newt (GCN) and wildlife ponds created
- 10 10 different native marginal, floating and submerged aquatic plant species were planted on the margins and within each of the nine mitigation ponds.
- 11 Enhancement of an additional 5 ponds equating to 3700m² extra surface area
- 12 62,855m² of land designated as Great Crested Newt mitigation areas
- 13 The team modified the hibernacula's design to benefit other species, including facias which were attached to hollows in exposed tree trunks to create nesting opportunities for birds and bare sand banks been created adjacent to them to promote small mammal excavations.
- 14 The project reduced the amount of carbon produced by:
 - Reusing site material for structural backfill
 - Lowering embankments reducing the earthworks operations by 40,000m³
 - Engineering structures to reduce requirements for steel and concrete
 - Eliminated the need to import 10,000m³ of sand by using "site won" material

Ecology award

The project was Highly Commended for "large-scale mitigation" at the Chartered Institute Ecology and Environmental Management Best Practice Awards.



Community Engagement Summary

At GRAHAM we strive to make a difference, our impact is measured not just in the quality of the Congleton Link Road we delivered, but the longer-term impact on the Congleton community, people and environment in which we operated.

The Project Team are extremely proud of the positive impact our work in the community has had with the social value outcomes and community benefits. As a leading contractor we made engaging with the community at the core of the project to keep people informed of our works and answer any questions in a timely manner.

Over the life of the project we received:

3031 Enquiries and complaints

359 Compliments

The project Team consistently achieved more compliments than complaints.

KEY STATS

- **11** Project Newsletters
- **3496** resident letters
- **40,255** project website hits
- Engaged with **7** Town and Parish Councils
- Supported **5** schools with community projects
- **Meet the contractor** event
- **Over £12,000** donated to local charities and projects including sponsorship of the Congleton Half Marathon
- **£70,000+** in social value supporting community projects and donating to charitable causes
- **50+** community activities undertaken
- **6** work experience placements
- **4** graduates spent time on the project
- **9** year out placements
- **2** apprenticeships
- **527** training weeks provided for new employees and apprentices
- **15** new jobs created
- **10+** careers advice and employment events
- **45** level 2 qualifications achieved for staff working on the project

Marlfields Allotment Project Completed!

On Monday 26th April the Congleton Link Road Project Team officially completed and opened the allotment project at Marlfields Primary School, Congleton.

The team were contacted by Sandie Isherwood, the Headteacher at Marlfields Primary School back in 2019 to ask for support to help create an allotment for the pupils and community within the school grounds. Following a meeting with Dan Cawthra (Stakeholder & Communications Officer) and Patsy Evans (Social Impact Business Partner) it was decided the team would support the school with their project. Works commenced shortly after with the erection of stock proof fencing and gate to form the boundary of the allotment.

The team have continued to work on the project including the construction of concrete footpaths and base for the shed, created planters and supplied and erected a tool shed and poly tunnel, with all the works been carried out to the pupils detailed design drawings.

The children and staff have commenced vegetable planting and are awaiting a delivery of chickens, which will be cared for by the pupils and have their eggs harvested.

The staff plan to use the produce from the allotment in the school kitchen as well as make up hampers for the local community, while making pupils and their families more ecologically aware of how we can sustain the important eco-human balance needed for future generations.

Mrs Sandie Isherwood said:

"The allotment is now coming together with the support from GRAHAM and the children have started the cycle of growth with the planting of vegetables. This facility is going to bring a new dimension to our children's experiences and support us being self sufficient for some of our lunch and baking activities."

"It has been a tough 16 months for us all, but we cannot thank GRAHAM enough for still supporting us under these difficult times. we are well on our way to seeing our first shoots of growth really soon."





Parish Council Engagement

Since arriving on the project in January 2019 the Project Team have engaged with and built strong relationships with the local Town and Parish Councils. We carried out regular meetings to keep them updated on the progress of the scheme and discuss potential impacts our works may have for residents and commuters.

Arguably the most affected was the Parish of Somerford with large sections of the link road passing through the Somerford area. The Project Team have worked closely with the Parish Council and supported them with various community projects, including their Rheads Meadows nature reserve.

The largest project undertaken by the Parish Council saw 10 acres of land bequeathed to the RSPB and Somerford Parish Council by local resident Lavinia Rhead been developed into a community nature reserve to benefit wildlife and not be used for housing development.

The project Team supplied and installed 250m of stock proof fencing and gate along the boundary of the nature reserve following an approach from Somerford Parish Council Chairman Geoff Bell.

The team have also supported them with the planting of a new Norwegian Spruce tree on Holmes Chapel Road and the donation of the remaining blocks of stone from the historic Somerford wall for re-use in the parish, following sections been removed and stored to accommodate the link road route.



Cllr. Geoff Bell, said:

"Although the Parish Council was never a great supporter of the road, we resolved to make the best of it and to try to ensure that the construction phase was no more disruptive to local life than was inevitable. To achieve this objective we set up regular meetings with the principal contractors, GRAHAM, and were able to influence a number of decisions which might otherwise have caused greater disruption to our parishioners and others."

"We can also claim to have also had a positive impact on various aspects of the road and side roads which might otherwise have been overlooked – these include the routing of some footpaths, the Chelford Road/ Blackfirs Lane junction and the speed limit on each of those roads."

"It has to be said that we do not think we could have had a more friendly and co-operative relationship with the construction team than we had with the team at GRAHAM, and, through them, with the Jacobs/Cheshire East Highways teams. They were always willing to listen to our views, which were expressed on behalf of Somerford residents, and, whilst we did not always achieve the full extent of what we wanted, we were listened to and always received a reasoned response."

"We were also grateful that GRAHAM supported us with our Rhead's Meadows project, fencing the land from the lane when we first took ownership and subsequently with other minor contributions. And so, as this major construction project takes its place as a significant landmark in the long and distinguished history of Somerford Parish, we will also remember the friendships which were constructed along the way."



SOCIAL VALUE AWARD

The Project Team are proud to have been awarded the Social Value Business Award for Cheshire and Merseyside. The award provided independent recognition of the project teams commitment to delivering social, environmental and economic benefits while working in the Congleton and surrounding communities.

Customer Survey

Throughout the project the team implemented our core commitments:

- Work with our neighbours to reduce the impact our work has on local business and the community
- Ensure the traffic management system is in place and maintain a safe working environment at all
- Monitor noise, vibration and dust to ensure they are kept within the permitted levels
- Support the local community through proactive stakeholder engagement

At GRAHAM we're committed to listening to our stakeholders and act on the feedback we receive.

We have prepared a short survey to help us to make improvements in how we can improve while working in communities and manage and respond to customer correspondence and complaints in the future.



To Complete the feedback survey please click on the below link:

<https://survey.communicator.co.uk/314bd14e-3cc0-4f43-9204-7f208d3cb917>



Alastair Lewis, Contracts Manager, said:

"Seeing the Congleton Link Road open to traffic was a fantastic moment for the whole construction team, its partners and the local Congleton community.

Despite the impact of the pandemic and some tough winter weather, we continued our works in a safe manner, while following government and public health guidelines, and have delivered the link road as close to the original schedule as possible and within budget."

Dan Cawthra, Stakeholder & Communications Officer, said:

"I would like to thank on behalf of the entire team the landowners, residents, businesses, commuters and any other affected stakeholders for their patience, understanding and kindness while we delivered this major infrastructure programme.

The team have built strong relationships with affected residents, Town and Parish Councils and community groups and we would like to wish everyone all the best for the future."