



Prudential in the Park
Prudential Assurance
An Outdoor Classroom in West London

Background

The project site was the Pen Ponds Plantation within Richmond Park. This discrete area, situated next to one of the larger ponds, is one of the Park's enclosed woodlands providing a variety of high quality habitats such as reed beds and quiet woodland glades for a range of wildlife e.g. deer, herons and a range of other aquatic birds.

The aim of the site is to provide an educational interactive viewing area mainly for school children and special needs groups, who enter on structured supervised visits. The theme of this particular access programme was "special needs in a special place." and as such, the site still fulfils important educational, social and environmental needs.

The construction of a bird hide next to the pond and a pathway leading to it improved access to, and use of, the Pen Ponds site, however, the work remained unfinished and the use of the facility was restricted as a consequence.

Over time, the hide had fallen into a state of disrepair and the paths were starting to deteriorate, also, the area directly in front of the hide was overgrown and the sight lines to the main features of the ponds obscured.

In order to justify proper investment in repairs and renovation, the actual usage of the site needed to be demonstrably increased. However, in order to attract more visitors to the site, there needed to be something of value and interest to see and to experience. There existed, therefore, a Catch 22 situation in that the two aspects would need to be developed concurrently if the site were to fulfil its educational potential.

The project suggested for the team of managers from Prudential addressed these issues directly in a novel and imaginative way. The project had been designed to confront the candidates with a portfolio of tasks requiring prioritising and choice so that in fact there were a number of potential tasks that were not attempted or completed. The main priorities, however, were ground clearance, the renovation of the hide and pathways to it including wheelchair ramps as well as organising the visit by a local user group.

The Conservation Project was a jointly devised and delivered programme involving the following agencies and organisations:

The Royal Parks - the 'host' client who gave permission for the project to take place in Richmond Park and who provided staff, resources and materials.

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) - who provided specialist staff and equipment and who supervised the technical aspects of the project

Land Use Consultants - who provided a discussion forum, advice and facilities in the early development stages of the project.

Response Development Training Ltd. - who facilitated the overall shape, direction and co-ordination of the project and the associated training programme on behalf of their client, the Prudential.

Prudential Assurance - the 'external' client who provided the project team plus training staff who participated in the facilitation process.

The Programme

The programme prepared by Response Development Training for the Prudential had the following objectives:

- ✦ To create a company / team ethos and a sense of group cohesion
- ✦ To promote cross functional communication and integration across sections and divisions
- ✦ To facilitate self development and self awareness
- ✦ To broaden and develop personal and professional team work experience and skills
- ✦ To demonstrate key competencies in action

Learning Outcomes

At the close of the course, candidates were expected to have:

- ✦ Demonstrated their ability to work co-operatively on a series of tasks and projects
- ✦ Practised the giving and receiving of detailed feedback on personal and team performance
- ✦ Demonstrated their ability to meet certain competencies
- ✦ Reflected on their personal behaviours over the whole programme
- ✦ Shown suitable evidence that they are self aware of their team working and inter active styles and behaviours
- ✦ Produced realistic targets and action plans for personal and professional self development over a defined time period
- ✦ Three days of hard work, fun and well co-ordinated project activity culminated in the local Multiple Sclerosis Society (several in wheelchairs) paying the site a visit to view and give feedback on the work undertaken by Prudential Managers. The seal of approval was warmly given!

Post Course Review

The multi-agency approach worked very well, the staff from the various partner organisations had shown considerable flexibility, goodwill and professional expertise in collaborating and working together. The mixed teams supporting, facilitating and guiding the project had been able to design and deliver a high quality project experience.

The Prudential, stressed that the project had "exceeded our expectations" and therefore, as the external client, had seen their aims fully realised.



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lifelong learning?
...think response!