

Restoration work hailed a success after orchid numbers grow

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Bournemouth University students (l-r) Rebecca Slade, Harriet Palmer, Beth Milburn and Kate Moysey count orchids at Sembcorp Bournemouth Water's covered reservoir



One of the 8,494 orchids counted at Sembcorp Bournemouth Water's Alderney site in Poole

Restoration work on the grass roof of a covered water reservoir which is home to the green winged orchid has been hailed as "a great success."

The reservoir, at Sembcorp Bournemouth Water's Alderney works in Poole, is a habitat for the perennial which flowers in late spring.

It is part of an area of land designated a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) by the Borough of Poole.

In 2002 repair work started on the roof of the reservoir. That year more than 10,000 flowers had been counted but, from studies carried out elsewhere, it was known the number of orchids would decline after the engineering work.

A management plan was drawn up to minimise disturbance while deep turfs were stripped from the roof of the reservoir and stored nearby. They were put back in early 2004.

Meanwhile students from Bournemouth University (BU), with guidance from their tutor Dr Anita Diaz, helped with the monitoring of the project.

In 2004 the number of orchids had halved from 10,000 to 5,000, while the following year, 2005, they fell further to 2,000.

But from 2006, the site started to recover and this year the students counted more than 8,000 flowers – 8,494 to be precise – on the top of the reservoir with a further 411 orchids around the edges.

Dr Diaz, Senior Lecturer in Ecology, in BU's School of Applied Sciences, said: "The restoration really is a great success and it was particularly pleasing to see the orchids doing so well despite the very dry spring this year."

Roger Harrington, SBW's Managing Director, said: "As a water company we manage a lot of land and are very anxious to ensure that, where possible, we maximise the benefit to flora and fauna.

"In this case I am extremely pleased that the orchids have flourished after we had to carry out essential maintenance."