



Greenwood

Nottinghamshire's Community Forest bringing Sherwood Forest to your doorstep

GREENWOOD COMMUNITY FOREST AND NEWARK & SHERWOOD ANNUAL REPORT 2011 – 2012

Greenwood Community Forest

Since 1991, Greenwood Community Forest has played a major role in revitalizing Nottinghamshire's landscape and communities, as expressed by its shared mission:

“To work in partnership to enable Nottinghamshire's communities to create, care for and to use woodlands and other high quality accessible green spaces in a sustainable way that benefits the environment, landscape and the local economy.”

A small team is employed by Nottinghamshire County Council to work on behalf of the partnership. The team works closely with partner organisations to deliver benefits in areas including health, education and the woodland economy as well as biodiversity. Greenwood also works closely with its local communities, introducing new audiences to the environment and encouraging everyone to enjoy and appreciate green space. Individuals and groups are helped and supported to play an active role in caring for the green spaces on their doorstep.

This report has been produced for Newark & Sherwood District Council to outline achievements of the Greenwood Partnership over the past year. The report focuses on activities in the 2011/12 financial year but also makes reference to more recent events where this helps to provide a current position.

Overview

At the beginning of the year, the team was settling into changed office space and revised working arrangements as part of Nottinghamshire County Council's new department of Policy, Planning & Corporate Services. Reductions in core funding led to team members dividing their time between Greenwood and other related responsibilities.

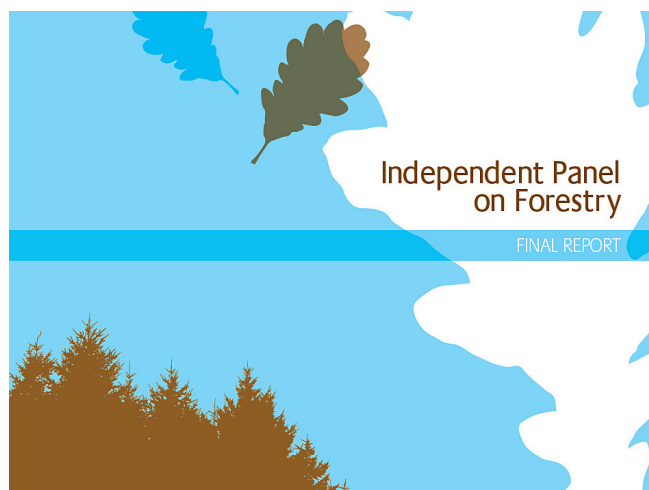
Nonetheless, the year was a productive one for Greenwood, with highlights including:

- A renewed **national recognition** of Community Forests
- Local work to increase **partnership working** with a range of organisations and in response to a variety of agendas
- Another **motivational** evening at the Greenwood Awards
- Delivery of community **tree planting** grants

National recognition for Community Forestry

The **Independent Panel on Forestry** was established in 2011 to advise government on a new approach to forestry policy in England. In November, four members of the Panel visited Nottinghamshire as part of their fact-finding tour. The panel was particularly keen to hear more about community forestry so Greenwood joined representatives from other organisations for a meeting at Rufford Country Park. Panel members showed a good understanding of the value and successes of Community Forests such as Greenwood and much of the discussion revolved around how to better make the case for support and recognition at a national level.

The final report of the Independent Panel has since been published and makes a number of comments supportive of community forestry. It highlights the fact that woodlands provide many public benefits, which added together have a greater value than the cost of their establishment. It re-states the need to see a significant increase in woodland cover in England and notes that community forests show how partnership working can deliver this.



The report also recognises the importance of local communities, saying that the Panel wants people of all ages, to have the opportunity to be more engaged with their local trees, woods and forests.

“There is a significant body of evidence ... that community forestry, where trees and society are brought together, transforms people’s lives.” - Independent Panel on Forestry, Final Report, 2012

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/reports/>

Community Tree Planting

In the decade from 2000, Greenwood’s Community Tree Planting Grant scheme provided grants totalling £44,850 and supported over 150 projects across the Greenwood area. In total, over 15,000 trees were planted, involving nearly 6,000 participants.

Over the 2011/12 planting season, the scheme provided a further £3,528 to support 17 more projects. 1,934 trees / hedging shrubs were planted and 716 participants were involved.

Even where we received a request for a project that was considered ineligible, we provided telephone guidance and sign-posted groups to other sources of advice or funding where appropriate.

In Newark and Sherwood, our grant of £250 supported the planting of 185 trees and hedge plants at **Python Hill Primary School**.

Friends of Greenwood Community Forum

“Friends” groups help to improve, care for and promote the use of green spaces, carrying out works on site and acting as a link to the general public. In August 2000, we established the Friends of Greenwood Community Forum to support and encourage such groups, and the *Forum* has proved invaluable as a platform for discussion and to provide support to groups. Many newly formed groups have gained confidence from hearing about the experience of others and even longer-standing groups benefit from new ideas. The Greenwood team has supported the *Forum*, by organising meetings and by “sign posting” sources of advice, giving information and solving problems.

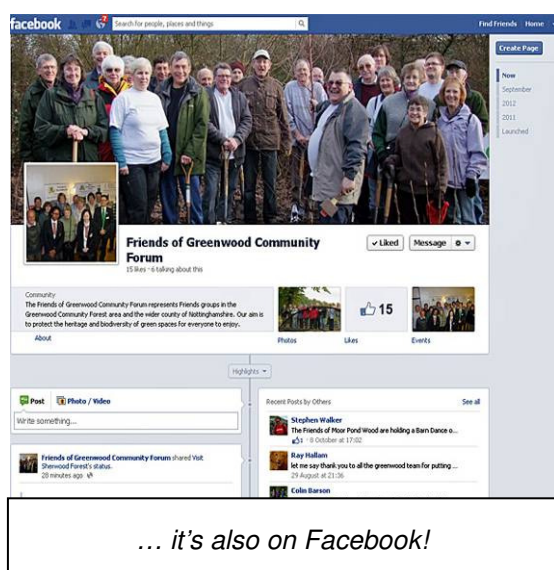
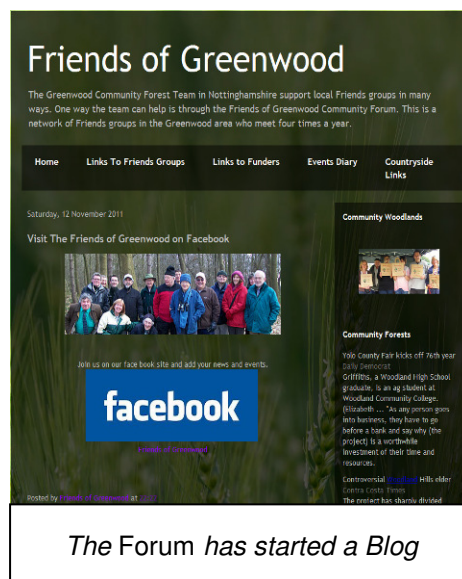
The Chair of the *Forum* sits on Greenwood’s Partnership Board, ensuring a strong link between Greenwood’s governance and its community support. In return, Friends groups have supported Greenwood partners, helping several sites to gain Green Flag status by virtue of demonstrable links to the local community.

In 2010, the *Forum* celebrated its 10th anniversary and recognising its maturity, we helped it to consider its long-term sustainability. Forum members agreed that it should become more self-supporting and we helped the group to move towards a greater level of independence. Initial steps were to agree a new constitution and to elect officers and members of the new committee.

This committee met for the first time in March 2011 and again throughout the year. Members agreed that their first objectives would be to raise funding for start up and publicity, develop the *Forum*’s profile locally and to establish a presence with national bodies like the Woodland Initiatives Network and National Federation of Green Spaces Forum.

Through the year, meetings of the *Forum* included a range of speakers and topics for discussion including:

- Consideration of first aid and risk assessment
- Control of invasive non-native species and the work of the Biodiversity Action Group
- A presentation by Framework about their Gateway to Nature project
- The value of social media and the availability of training to make use of these new promotional techniques
- A local writer, promoting his perambulation of the ancient boundary of Sherwood Forest
- A presentation about community involvement in green infrastructure



Supporting local groups

The Greenwood team also works with individual groups, helping to set up new groups where partners or the local communities have identified opportunities, and offering guidance and support to established groups on a range of matters. Over 2011/12, we supported eight groups from Newark & Sherwood, including “Friends” and walking groups:

- Friends of Kings Clipstone
- Friends of Rufford Country Park
- Friends of Southwell Trail
- Friends of Thynghowe
- Friends of Tippings Wood
- Friends of Vicar Water Country Park
- Rufford Country Park Health Walks
- Sherwood Foragers

As well as receiving invitations to the *Forum* and Greenwood’s annual celebration, all groups gain regular information and support where needed.

Of particular significance this year, has been Greenwood’s support to the **Friends of Thynghowe** in developing a funding bid for £49k from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Having been successful in their bid, we are now helping the group to deliver a community involvement project based on the archaeological features and heritage of the Birklands Forest.

The group launched their new project in March 2012. In the same month, we provided administration and promotion for the introductory workshop at Sherwood Pines, as well as for the group’s annual perambulation walk and archive training workshops. Greenwood is continuing to support the group with several elements of the project, including the encouragement of hard-to-reach groups, organisation of school workshops and preparation for a celebratory event in 2013.

Greenwood awards



Anticipation builds at the start of the Awards

All local groups rely upon the time and effort of their volunteer members. Since 2001, Greenwood has recognised and encouraged these individuals through the organisation of awards for outstanding effort, as nominated by their peers. 2011’s Awards Ceremony was a highlight of the Greenwood year, providing an opportunity to raise the profile of Friends groups whilst rewarding individual volunteers for their contribution.

The Ceremony took place on 24 August at Red Brick House, Mansfield. County Councillor John Cottee, chair of the Greenwood Partnership, welcomed 125 invited guests before Colin Barson, Chair of the Friends of Greenwood Community Forum, presented a review of achievements. Colin and John then presented awards, with support from Newark and Sherwood District Councillor Linda Tift.

Nominations were received from many groups, organisations and schools, and the award winners included:

- Luke Mason (Friends of Tippings Wood) - Young Volunteer
- Jamie Murfin (Forestry Commission volunteer) - Young Volunteer (Under 18)



Jamie Murfin (left) and Luke Mason (right) receive their Awards

Places and People

The Greenwood team is experienced in delivering activities that are tailored to the needs of partners to add value to their ongoing projects. Such events help to develop community involvement on sites and to build relationships with community groups that have not previously been involved.

“Breath of Fresh Air” at Vicar Water

“Breath of Fresh Air” was a project linked to the Cultural Olympiad, with the aim of encouraging people to get active, to enjoy their local natural environment and to learn new skills. **Vicar Water Country Park** was one of eleven sites chosen to host events in this region and we worked alongside Groundwork Cresswell and Newark & Sherwood District Council to organise a “walking crocodile” to take place at the Vicar Water Fun Day.

On the day, poor weather unfortunately resulted in a low turn out. Around 50 people took part in the crocodile walk, following a samba band out from the arena. Whilst it is unfortunate that participation on the day did not reflect the months of careful work by Greenwood, Groundwork and Newark & Sherwood, there were still benefits from the preparatory activities themselves:

- Three schools visited the Country Park for a nature walk and to gather items, which inspired work with artists to create a banner and flags.
- Walking for Health groups were able to take part in a shared meeting to celebrate their achievements as part of the fun day.
- Vicar Water gained contacts with schools and walking groups that had not previously made use of the country park.

Time Travel Trent Vale

Following the success of the 2010 event, the Greenwood team once again supported NCC's Community Archaeology Team and the Trent Vale Landscape Partnership to deliver the second "Time Travel Trent Vale". This is a major family event, which helps to raise awareness of Newark Castle and the Trent Vale.

The first event had attracted around 3,000 people to engage with re-enactors from throughout history. This year's count of visitors suggested that around 4,400 people attended.

Local Improvement Scheme

The Greenwood team actively promotes Nottinghamshire's Local Improvement Scheme to Friends and other community groups. Greenwood team members also directly supported a number of the funded projects, eight of which were located within Newark and Sherwood District:



Local residents join County Councillors in celebration of Bleasby's Glebe Field

- **Averham and Kelham** – Lych Gate restoration
- **Balderton** – picnic area and environmental improvements
- **Bleasby** – new orchard, interpretation and celebration of the Glebe Field
- **Blidworth** – interpretation
- **Newark** – 3 allotment improvement projects
- **Rainworth** – hedgerow.

Working in partnership

All of Greenwood's activities are achieved by effective partnership working between different organisations. The Greenwood team also takes part in a number of local, regional and national networks to promote our experience and to learn from others.

Greenwood is a member of the network of **England's Community Forests (ECF)** and so shares experience with other initiatives set up to enhance urban fringe landscapes. ECF has helped us to share intelligence about initiatives like the Big Tree Plant and to seek stronger national support from organisations like the Forestry Commission and Natural England.

We also sit on the steering group for the **Woodland Initiatives Network**, which aims to support initiatives concerned with issues such as maintaining or increasing woodland cover, helping communities and groups to enjoy woodlands, and working to secure the economic and environmental benefits of trees, woods and forests.

Greenwood is also an active supporter of the proposed **Sherwood Forest Regional Park** and is now taking a leading role in its future development.

We support the **Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (NBAG)**, particularly via the *Forum*. We promoted NBAG's annual conference and were pleased that four Friends groups were able to attend. These were: Friends of Thynghowe, Warsop Footpaths Group, Friends of Colliers Wood and Friends of Kings Mill Reservoir.

The BAG conference included discussion groups to consider the requirement for new **Local Nature Partnerships** to make links between biodiversity and other sectors. We took part in workshops to share Greenwood's experience of linking greenspace activities to health and we hope to continue to play a role in development of a local LNP.

We also attended meetings regarding a pilot project - "**Sherwood Natural Connections**" - carried out by Natural England, to look for ways of bridging the gap between the national landscape character analysis and the need to engage with people at a community level.

Funding for the future

Greenwood is working with a number of other organisations to make shared funding bids for more significant grant aid. In 2011/12, we supported a bid for Sherwood to be one of the first twelve **Nature Improvement Areas (NIA)**. In the event, competition was very high and this bid was unsuccessful. Nonetheless, the process allowed us to develop a number of outline project ideas and to make stronger with other organisations.

The organisations that came together to develop the NIA bid have since reorganised as a working group of the Regional Park Board and are working cooperatively to pursue funding for a Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Scheme. Greenwood has taken on responsibility for chairing this working group and if successful, we anticipate support of projects valued to a total of up to £2million.

Promoting our activities

The Greenwood team regularly issued media releases to ensure coverage for a range of initiatives, including:

- Friends of Greenwood Community Forum 10th anniversary tree planting event
- The launch of the Greenwood Community Tree Planting Grants

Media releases were also uploaded to our own website.

Greenwood Community Forest Partnership

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