



Greenwood

Nottinghamshire's Community Forest bringing Sherwood Forest to your doorstep

GREENWOOD COMMUNITY FOREST & GEDLING

3-YEAR REPORT 2007/08 - 2009/10

Greenwood Community Forest

Since 1991, Greenwood Community Forest has played a major role in revitalising 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 many partner organisations to deliver benefits in areas including health, education and the woodland economy as well as biodiversity.

A diverse range of projects has helped to transform underused and derelict land into wildlife rich woodlands and green open spaces. 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 Gedling Borough Council to outline achievements of the Greenwood Partnership over the last three years.

Overview

Greenwood has continued to deliver and to innovate in a range of areas, including:

- Promoting the concept of green infrastructure and the many benefits of green space.
- Increasing and strengthening our network of Friends groups to enable them to do more.
- Promoting the achievements of individual volunteers to ensure wider recognition.
- Involving people in making a difference, through tree planting, educational and environmental activities
- Trialling new ways of working, testing access for all and the economic management of woodlands.

Improving local landscapes

Promoting “green infrastructure” and green spaces



The concept of “green infrastructure” (GI), and the understanding that green spaces provide a wide range of public benefits, provides an important backdrop to much of our work. Greenwood Community Forest was at the forefront of green infrastructure mapping within the East Midlands and all partners have received copies of the report and data that was produced on our behalf.

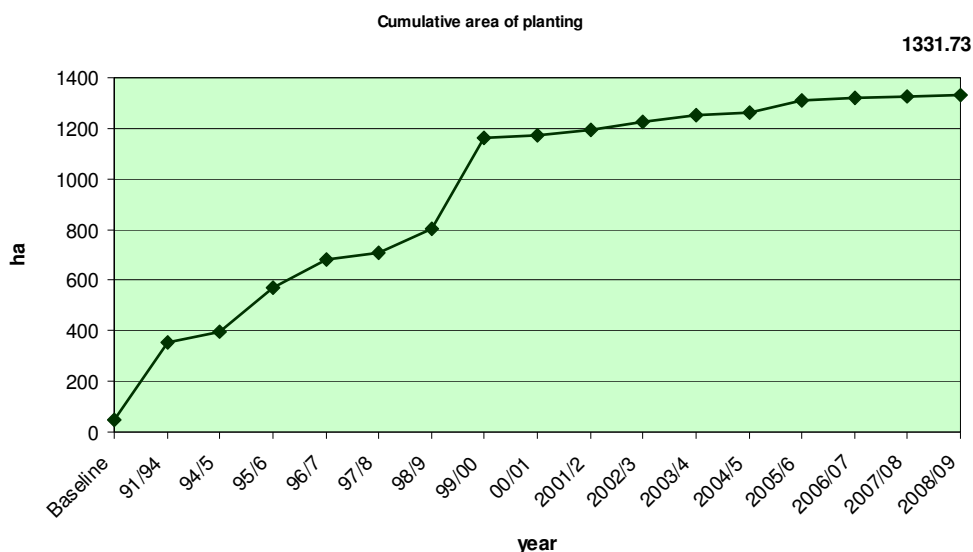
In recent years, the value of GI strategies has gained increasing recognition at a national and local level. Greenwood has actively supported the development of a GI strategy for the 6Cs (3 Cities and 3 Counties) area, so helping partners to access CLG funding for GI improvement works.

Greenwood also helps to care for local green spaces and supports bids for Green Flag status, particularly from our work in encouraging and supporting local Friends groups. We are also active within Greenspace East Midlands, particularly as a member of the community working group.

The Greenwood team made detailed comments to highlight the importance of green infrastructure in our comments on Gedling’s **Aligned Core Strategy**.

Delivering landscape regeneration

Since 1991, the efforts of the Greenwood Partnership have resulted in the planting of over 1,300 ha of new woodland (see graph below). Over the same period, over 1,000 ha of woodland has been brought into management and over 1,300 ha of other non-woodland habitats have been created or brought into better management.



Much of this work has taken place on former colliery sites and publicly owned land, creating a range of community woodland sites available for the public to enjoy, improving the landscape and contributing to local biodiversity targets.

Gedling Tip

Responding to local demands for a country park on the former site of Gedling Pit Tip, the Greenwood team followed up on its earlier consultation works to complete survey work, to finalise designs and to secure funding totalling £3million for this project to go ahead. As further progress required agreement on land transfer, Greenwood has since stepped back to allow others to conclude agreements but we will be pleased to support implementation of works once land transfer issues are resolved.

Nottinghamshire Landscape Challenge Scheme

In 2007/08, Greenwood delivered the last year of the Nottinghamshire Landscape Challenge Scheme (NLCS). The scheme provided additional support and incentives to encourage landowners to convert agricultural land to new woodlands and other wildlife habitats.

NLCS Year 3 resulted in four projects, one of which was in Gedling. The district benefited from £9k funding to create 1.2ha of new woodland at **Redhill**.

The scheme was funded through Nottinghamshire County Council's Building Better Communities programme and the Forestry Commission's England Woodland Grant Scheme, which recognises Greenwood as a special target area for woodland planting.

Finding Friends for our green spaces

The Friends of Greenwood Community Forum



The Forum visits Gedling House Woods

“Friends” groups have helped to improve, care for and promote the use of many green spaces, carrying out works on site and acting as a link to the general public. We established the Friends of Greenwood Community Forum to support the increasing number of such groups, and it has proved invaluable as a platform for discussion and as a mechanism for groups to support each other. In particular, many newly formed groups have gained confidence from hearing about the experience of others.

The Greenwood team continues to support the *Forum*, both in the organisation of quarterly meetings and throughout the year by sign posting, information giving and problem solving. The Chair of the *Forum* sits on the Greenwood 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.

Over the last three years:

- The number of groups supported by the Greenwood team grew to 30.
- The *Forum* agreed a system for groups to record reporting of anti-social behaviour to their local police.
- We began a process of consulting the Friends about longer-term arrangements to adapt the *Forum* to increasing numbers of members and to offer greater independence.
- We organised a workshop to help groups to consider their training needs, which identified a number of common needs, including the provision of first aid and help in recruiting and retaining volunteers.

The **Friends of Gedling House Woods** hosted a meeting of the *Forum* in January 2007, which included discussion about the monitoring of illegal motorcycle use and anti-social behaviour. The *Forum* returned to Gedling in May 2007, a meeting that first welcomed the new group of **Friends of the Hobbucks** and which included a site visit to **Moor Pond Wood**.

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.

This support also helped the Nottinghamshire Partnership to meet its first Local Area Agreement, as it included a stretch target to increase the number of people engaging in voluntary activities. The Greenwood team was part of the LAA's sub group for volunteer development parks & green spaces and helped to collect baseline and six-monthly monitoring data to prove that this target had been met.

Promoting our Friends



Friends with their roller banners

Greenwood has funded the production of 20 modern “roller banner” displays to promote the activities of local Friends groups. These are high quality and portable displays, which allow individual groups to better publicise their own activities, raising the profile of their own parks whilst also encouraging more volunteers to come forward.

The groups provided with a roller banner include:

- Friends of Bestwood Country Park
- Friends of Gedling House Woods
- Friends of Moor Pond Wood
- Friends of the Hobbucks

Greenwood Community Awards Ceremony

All local groups rely upon the time and effort of their volunteer members. Since 2001, Greenwood has recognised the efforts of these individuals through an annual celebration, and the provision of awards for outstanding effort, as recognised by their peers. The Awards Ceremonies are always a highlight of the Greenwood year, an uplifting opportunity to raise the profile of Friends groups whilst rewarding individual volunteers for their contribution.

The 2007 Greenwood Awards Ceremony took place at the “Making It” Museum, Mansfield. In 2008, the Awards Ceremony was held at Rufford and then in 2009 it came to Bestwood Lodge, when over 160 volunteers, officers and members attended to congratulate award winning groups and individuals.

Councillor Wendy Golland, acting as vice chair of the Greenwood Partnership, presented awards to individuals and groups at both Mansfield and Bestwood events.

Recent awards have included:

Friends of Gedling House Woods, Volunteer Group, 2007

This group has taken on the responsibility of the management of woodland and meadows around Gedling House. The Friends have organised the production and implementation of a meadow management plan. They gained countryside stewardship funding to manage the meadow and have co-ordinated visits by schools and groups to promote the importance of this area to the local community. Despite being next door neighbours to a secondary school, they have also maintained a relatively litter free site.



Arnot Hill School Award Winners

Arnot Hill School Duke of Edinburgh Award Students, Young Team Award, 2008

Sue Macdonald, ranger at Bestwood Country Park, nominated this group. She told us that on the face of it they are a group of young people just like any other. However, the combination of willingness to work, enthusiasm, initiative, attitude, teamwork, sense of fun and comedy banter made a winning combination and made even the most onerous tasks do-able!

Sylvia Sadler, Golden Amblers, Arnold, Non-Environmental Volunteer 2009

Sylvia is tireless in her dedication to the over 50's walking group called the Golden Amblers. She has been involved from the inception of the group approximately 8 years ago and has freely given her time and efforts to swelling the group's membership to around 80 members who now enjoy weekly health walks and companionship.



Friends of the Hobbucks

Other support to local groups

We worked with Gedling Borough Council to set up the **Friends of the Hobbucks** at Killisick, and helped to fund early meetings of the group. The group has steadily grown in confidence and played a real role in achieving major changes to the park and the way that the area is perceived. The site now has better access and is getting more use, being recognised as a community resource that is well respected by local people.

We also helped to establish the **Friends of Bestwood Country Park**, setting up the initial meeting and inviting representatives from an established Friends group to allow the new group to benefit from their experience. We provided guidance on setting up a bank account and obtaining insurance and advice about promotion.

We also provided information to a number of other existing or potential new groups, including:

- Friends of Gedling House Woods
- Friends of Moor Pond Woods
- SWAG at Stoke Lock
- Transition Arnold
- The Friends of Arnot Hill
- Potential group for Jackie Bells Park.

Helping everyone to enjoy their environment

Supporting community tree planting

The Greenwood Community Tree Planting Grant (GCTPG) scheme was established in 2000 and has since provided grants totalling £44, 850 for over 150 projects across the Greenwood area. We've helped nearly 6,000 adults and children to plant over 15,000 trees.



Tree planting at Woodborough Woods

In 2009/10 we shifted emphasis to trial the concept of "Trees for Shade", encouraging carefully located planting around school playgrounds, playing fields, and publicly accessible green space which would help in adapting to climate change. Such planting can provide a range of benefits including shading from harmful UV rays, reducing temperatures and providing safe, shady and cool areas for play, outdoor study and recreation.

Over the last three years, GCTPG has supported 25 projects in Gedling, providing grant aid of £2,558 to result in 1,506 trees being planted by 813 participants.

Greenwood Events Programme

Greenwood's annual events programme delivers activities that are carefully designed with partners to add value to their ongoing projects. The events also develop community involvement on sites and help to build relationships with community groups that have not previously been involved.

Whilst each event will vary, all involve working closely with people to embed a strong environmental message. Using themes of health, arts and the environment, the team prioritises work with schools and hard to reach groups from wards within the top 25% Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

Many of Greenwood's events have been concentrated around **Killisick**, which has been identified as a priority area by the Gedling Partnership. Greenwood actively supports the Killisick Intervention Team, being a member of the Community Cohesion and Health working groups and having led two health walks at last year's launch.

In 2007, we combined art and education with messages about the environment, healthy living and eating. First, we introduced Pinewood Infants School to their nearby allotments, to look at the creatures living there, and to taste growing fruit. This led to schoolwork that created poetry and giant willow sculptures of insects. This in turn was displayed at the Gedling Show to promote the use and benefits of allotments.

"The workshops gave me a chance to observe the children working and learning from artists. The class applied their skills and were able to work with comfortably with adults out of school."

– Michelle Ward, Pinewood Infants School, talking about the allotments sculpture workshops



Exploring the Hobbucks

In 2008 and 2009, we supported the newly formed **Friends of the Hobbucks** in developing skills for working with local schools. We worked alongside the Friends to support Pinewood Infant School in making four visits to the Hobbucks, allowing children to complete educational activities based on the changing seasons. Activities ranged from studying animal tracks on a snowy day, to using a colourful summertime meadow to inspire artwork.

"We were thrilled that the Greenwood team invited the school to come down to the Hobbucks to learn about nature. Now that the Friends group is growing in numbers we have been able to do some really good work on the site and it is changing from a rubbish strewn no-go area to a lovely community resource and outdoor classroom."

- Josie Blackstock, Friend of the Hobbucks.

Linking education with the environment



Supporting the KIT launch

Greenwood has promoted the concept of “Lesson in a Box” (LIAB), a site-based educational resource pack. LIAB is intended to make it easy for teachers to use a specific site for environmental learning, including ideas for activities linked to the national curriculum, together with guidance and any equipment necessary to run the activities. So far, we have produced LIABs for three sites. We are also talking to more Friends groups about seeking grant aid to support LIAB production for their own sites.

Thanks to support from the Gedling Partnership, we have begun to prepare for production of a Lesson in a Box education resource for the **Hobbucks**. This will be produced over 2010/11, drawing on expertise of educational specialists and linking with local knowledge from Gedling Borough Council, local schools, and the Friends of the Hobbucks.

Access for all

It is important that green space sites are as far as possible, accessible to all. Unfortunately, a number of barriers can prevent individuals from making use of a site, ranging from physical barriers associated with choices in countryside furniture, to issues around the provision of information both on and off-site.

Greenwood has trialled the idea of conducting access audits on sites to provide a consistent approach in assessing problems. Thanks to student placements, we have been able to test a methodology for checking physical and intellectual accessibility and identifying options for potential improvements.

Our work to date has found that the most common issues are:

- Lack of pre-visit information about accessibility
- Car parking issues
- Condition of footpath surfaces
- Width of gates and stiles



Measuring up for access audits

Officers from the Greenwood Partnership have considered our key findings and recognised that the audit process could provide data to help in improving access for all and supporting quality assurance schemes such as Green Flag.

We have audited the routes promoted within the “Greenwood Walks 2” pack, which includes walks on Burton Joyce riverside walk, Linby Trail and Mill Lakes, Bestwood.

Greenwood and health

Park Life was Greenwood's project to encourage people to use parks and green spaces for physical activity and so to improve their health. The project ran until March 2008 and was delivered in partnership with officers and volunteers from the fields of parks, sports and health.



Launch of activity pack at Bestwood

Overall achievements of the project include:

- Over 9,100 participants in 162 events
- Over 3,800 school children participating from schools in the top 25% IMD
- Improved access for 50 schools thanks to funding from the School Travel Fund
- Production of physical education packs to provide a legacy material about how the key sites can continue to be used for healthy activities.

Improving the woodland economy

Greenwood recognises that good conservation management of woodland sites can be restrained by costs. Thanks to funding from the Forestry Commission, we started research work in 2009 to consider the potential for woodland management to earn income from timber sales or by accessing conservation grants.

We engaged a woodland consultant to assess 15 local authority sites, with a total woodland area of 186ha. The study resulted in:

- A **generic report** outlining options, opportunities and constraints, income from timber sales and grants, opportunities for joint working and economies of scale.
- **Specific information** for each of the sites assessed, with compartment descriptions and maps, management proposals and financial summaries.

The study confirmed that most sites would only generate low volumes of poor quality timber quality at present, however active management would improve this and there are potential funding sources to offset costs. It also estimated that the sites assessed could produce approximately 2,500 cubic meters of round timber to support the local wood fuel market.

We will be meeting with each partner to discuss the findings as they apply to their own sites, and considering how we can best support practical management.

Two of the sites assessed were within Gedling: **Burnt Stump Country Park** and **Gedling House Woods**.



Green gluing: finger jointing and finished frame

Green Gluing

Research by Greenwood's partners has suggested that "green gluing" – a process whereby low quality timber is re-engineered to increase its functionality and value – could offer a new opportunity for local enterprise. In 2007, we distributed a market analysis which we had commissioned to assess the market for green glued products. As these research findings were broadly positive, our working group decided to look into options for establishing a new enterprise to create green glued products. We worked with *emda* to meet with business people from the timber sectors, then commissioned a development plan to identify stakeholders and provide guidance to support the development of a business plan.

Whilst we have demonstrated that green gluing can deliver a business return, it has proved difficult to find partners or venture capital companies who are willing to put in funds. We are now considering ways to pass on our research for use by a privately owned company.

Greenwood and partnerships

All of Greenwood's activities are achieved by effective partnership working between different organisations. In addition to the projects already outlined, the following local initiatives have also been supported:

Notts Biodiversity Action Group

Greenwood actively supports the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group.

In 2008, we supported the "**Bioblitz**", which aimed to raise awareness about biodiversity by involving the community in events, talks and walks focusing around a 24-hour count of plants, animals, fungi and other organisms found at one site. The event took place at Rufford Country Park and the Greenwood team was involved in promotion, sourcing materials and in running an educational workshop.



Worm surveying at the Hobbucks!

We co-ordinated bookings for the two-day training event "**Big Bag**", also supporting organisation on the day and running a workshop on how to work with the media. We were pleased that seven Friends groups were able to attend and their feedback to the *Forum* confirmed that they had learned a lot from the event.

The team is also leading a campaign to survey the invasive plant Japanese Knotweed, publicising the issues and recruiting members of the Friends of Greenwood Community Forum to record occurrences of the plant in the Greenwood area.

In Gedling

Greenwood is an active member of the **Gedling Partnership Board** and has helped to shape the new LSP strategy.

Promoting the partnership

The team takes care to promote achievements of the Greenwood Partnership and its individual partners. We distribute 1,500 copies of each edition of our newsletter "Growing Success". We have also redesigned our website to provide a more modern look and to add ability to include regular news items.

We seek opportunities for wider recognition and are pleased that Greenwood was identified as one of the "best practice" examples within the 2009 publication "A Green Infrastructure Guide for the East Midlands". We also produced an article on the Friends of Greenwood for the national "Ranger" Magazine.

We issue regular media releases to gain coverage in local press. Local tree planting schemes are well covered: in 2009/10 there were 35 press articles in local newspapers, magazines, journals and publications. Other coverage included:

- Greenwood Community Awards Ceremonies
- Greenwood events programme
- Partner activities for "Love Parks Week" (including coverage on radio Nottingham)
- Coverage in the newsletter of the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group
- Hobbucks events (2009)
- Coverage in both the "NG5" Magazine and the Nottingham Journal.



Sustaining the Greenwood Partnership

2006/07 represented the last year of central government support for Community Forests, marking the end of funding provided by Defra and channelled via the Forestry Commission. From 2007/08 onwards, our core funding has been provided by our local authority partners and the team has attracted external funding to provide further project funding. Examples include:

- Our 3-year **Park Life** project received £178K from Big Lottery/Sport England to support partners' activities during the project.
- Research into **green gluing** was made possible by £25K provided by the Forestry Commission, Notts County Council, Greater Nottingham Partnership and *emda*.
- **Economic Potential for Woodlands** research has also been funded by the **Forestry Commission**, which also provided £15k to fund the first phase of our project.
- **Ikea** provided £4,275 to support a team volunteering day and to promote access to the countryside.
- The Greenwood team also secured £2.7M of external funding ready for implementation of **Gedling Country Park**.

Supported by



The Greenwood team

Project Manager: Malcolm Hackett

Manages the team and supports the Partnership Board and Executive to agree and implement Greenwood's strategy.

Project Development Officer: Nic Wort

Leads on site-based and area-based environmental and countryside management projects.

Community Liaison Officer: Gill Grievson

Leads on community-based work, including community events and co-ordination of the "Friends of Greenwood Community Forum", also co-ordinates promotion and marketing.

Community Physical Activity Development Officer (to 2008): Vicky Hudson

Responsible for Park Life project, working with partners to develop and deliver projects; encourage involvement of school groups and volunteers.

Administrator and Administrative Assistant: Janet Valenti and Lynn Sergant

Both assist with activities relating to community engagement, marketing and promotion, as well as providing essential administration support to the team.