



# Greenwood

*Nottinghamshire's Community Forest bringing Sherwood Forest to your doorstep*

## **GREENWOOD COMMUNITY FOREST & MANSFIELD** 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 Mansfield District 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*



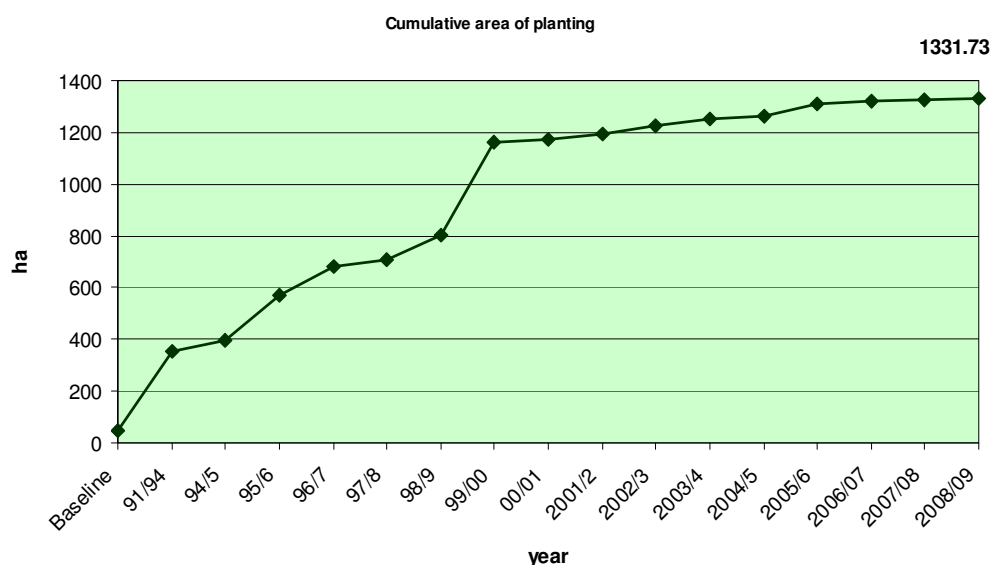
The concept of “green infrastructure” (GI), and the understanding that green spaces provide a wide range of public benefits, provides an important backdrop to much of our work. Greenwood Community Forest was at the forefront of green infrastructure mapping within the East Midlands and all partners have 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 drew on its experience of green infrastructure to help us to be an active member of Mansfield’s green infrastructure steering group. This led to the production of the district’s **Draft Interim Planning Guidance Note 11** (Green Infrastructure).

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 raised awareness of community involvement at **Carr Bank Park** during visits by Green Flag judges. We are also active within Greenspace East Midlands, particularly as a member of the community working group.

### *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.

## Finding Friends for our green spaces

### *The Friends of Greenwood Community Forum*

“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 Forum visits Quarry Lane*

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 Peafield Park** hosted a meeting of the *Forum* in July 2008. The *Forum* returned to Mansfield in October 2009 for a meeting hosted by the **Friends of Quarry Lane**.

## 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 new 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 Peafield Park
- Friends of Quarry Lane
- Friends of the Hermitage
- In Step Health Walks
- Maun Conservation Group
- Oak Tree SAFE

## 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. The evening was attended by 125 people, including officers and councillors as well as representatives from many of Greenwood’s Friends groups. Ten awards were presented to individuals and groups nominated by their peers.

In 2008, the Awards Ceremony was held at Rufford Country Park and was attended by over 160 guests to celebrate the presentation of twelve awards to volunteers from all areas of Greenwood and including awards for individuals and teams of all ages and abilities. Councillor Veronica Goddard helped to present the awards in her role of Greenwood Partnership Board member.



Recent awards have included:



*Jennifer and Leah with award winners*

### **Jennifer Levy and Leah Rodgers, Oak Tree SAFE, Young Team Award 2007**

Jennifer and Leah took part in a youth art sculpture project on Oak Tree Heath. The project helped a team of young people to create eight woodcarvings for the entrance to this green space. Jennifer and Leah gave 100% of their effort to make sure the project was completed.

### **Joan Thomas, Maun Conservation Group, Senior Volunteer 2008**

Joan patrols Oakham LNR and Quarry Lane Walkway every day. She paints a striking picture on her bicycle as she works her way around picking litter and snipping unruly twigs and brambles as she goes. But her main connection is with birdlife. For years she has produced a comprehensive list of all the birds she sees on her travels. In spite of her 80 years she turns out for all work activities and is an inspiration to the entire group.

### **Other support to local groups**

Groups supported with advice and information have included:

- Oak Tree SAFE, where we have supported the production of a walks leaflet.
- Mansfield Woodhouse Society
- The Friends of Quarry Lane.

## 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.



*King Edwards School tree planting*

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 30 projects in Mansfield, providing grant aid of £1,849 to result in 359 trees being planted by 267 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).

Greenwood has organised a number of events at **Titchfield Park**, both to support Green Flag bids and to widen the use of the park by younger people.

In 2007, we organised a poetry workshop to complement paintings produced by children for the East Midlands in Bloom competition. Both poetry and paintings were displayed during a visit by Green Flag judges.

In 2008, we led an innovative youth consultation project, to consider how young people used the park. Preparatory work required partnership working with a wide range of other services, including the Police and neighbourhood wardens, youth services and community development officers and Mansfield District Council's parks officers and community officers. We attracted over 100 participants to take part in the resultant event, including homeless teenagers and local children. We used a range of consultation techniques to encourage all to express their views and many young people left their contact details for involvement in later projects on the park. Success at Titchfield has encouraged MDC to use a similar format at other parks.



*Youth consultation at Titchfield*

***“There was an excellent turn out and we would like to thank all the young people who were involved and gave their informative comments. We will use this information to help us develop and enhance the park.”***

- Flis Washbrook, Parks Officer for Mansfield District Council, talking about the youth consultation evening.

In 2010, we linked to the *Change4Life* national project to use Mansfield’s parks to encourage local schoolchildren to use them for healthy exercise. Working with Mansfield Community Hospital, we organised workshops for three schools, to identify “green kilometres” on three of Mansfield’s green spaces. The children used pedometers to record the number of calories burnt whilst walking the routes. Later, the children produced posters and leaflets to encourage local people to use their local green space to improve their health.

***“It’s really important to get children involved in the park and to get them to input their ideas. Anything like this project that gets children out into the fresh air is brilliant!”***

- Colin Etches, Volunteer, Maun Conservation Group, reflecting on the Green Kilometre workshops.



*Green kilometre at Carr Bank*

Other events organised over the last three years have included:

- A visit to **Carr Bank Park** by pupils from Newgate Primary School. The pupils gained inspiration from nature to produce artwork for the East Midlands in Bloom painting competition.
- An activity at **Oak Tree Heath**, when young children were enabled to make bird feeders to celebrate Local Nature Reserve Week.
- Working with 290 children from Crescent Primary School, who planted trees at **Bull Farm**, and visited **Pleasley Pit** to use textures in the creation of artwork.

***“The children learned new art techniques and improved their knowledge of the local environment. They also enjoyed drawing frosty spiders’ webs using pastels.”***

- Yvonne Cooper, Crescent Primary School, talking about the visit to Pleasley Pit.

## Linking education with the environment



*Teachers try out Lesson In A Box*

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. We have produced LIABs for three sites, with a fourth in progress. We are also talking to more Friends groups about seeking grant aid to support LIAB production for their own sites.

We are currently working with **Oak Tree SAFE** and the Sherwood Forest Trust to seek grant funding for community activities, to include the production of a LIAB for this site.

## 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

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 hope to audit more partner sites in the period ahead.



*Measuring up for access audits*



## 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.

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.



*Fidget the Fairy at Bull Farm*



*Mansfield In Step*

The Greenwood team also supported the original formation of a number of **Walking the Way to Health** groups and continues to offer help. We helped Mansfield "In Step" to submit a successful application to Nottinghamshire Community Foundation for the purchase of equipment valued at £500.

## Improving the woodland economy



*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.

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 Mansfield

We have commented on draft policies such as Mansfield's draft **tree policy** and the **RSS Strategic Development Paper**.

## 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
- Youth consultation at Titchfield (2009)
- In 2008, the Spring edition of "Living For Tomorrow", included a four-page feature article on the Friends of Greenwood. This highlighted green spaces within Mansfield and promoted the Friends groups who look after the sites.



## ***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***

### **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.