



Greenwood

Nottinghamshire's Community Forest bringing Sherwood Forest to your doorstep

GREENWOOD COMMUNITY FOREST & NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

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 Nottinghamshire County 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



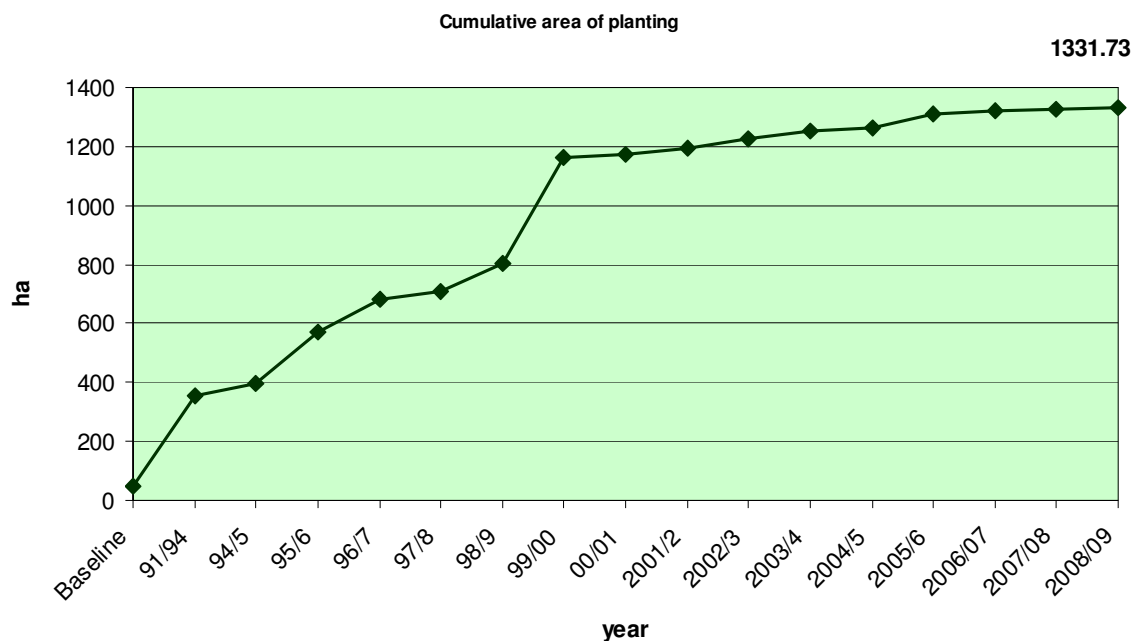
The concept of “green infrastructure” (GI), and the understanding that green spaces provide a wide range of public benefits, provides an important backdrop to much of our work. Greenwood Community Forest was at the forefront of green infrastructure mapping within the East Midlands and all partners have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

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.

Nottinghamshire Landscape Challenge Scheme



NLCS planting

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, which created over 5ha of new woodland and improved the management of 3ha of existing woodland. One pond was created, another was restored, and further planting was carried out to create hedgerows and water-edge habitats.

The scheme was funded through Nottinghamshire County Council's

Building Better Communities programme, which levered in a further £13k of grants from the Forestry Commission's England Woodland Grant Scheme.

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 Greenwood team continues to support the *Forum*, both in the organisation of quarterly meetings and throughout the year 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.

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 Forum visits Rufford

In April 2008, the *Forum* met at **Rufford Country Park**, bringing together 33 people from 19 Friends groups. This meeting helped the Biodiversity Action Group to recruit volunteers to help at the upcoming “Bioblitz” event, and included a walk and talk on the history and future developments of the park.

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 in parks & green spaces, and helped to collect baseline and six-monthly monitoring data to prove that this target had been met.

Promoting our Friends

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 a number of groups that help to look after NCC sites:

- Friends of Bestwood Country Park
- Friends of Moor Pond Wood
- Friends of Tippings Wood
- Friends of Quarry Lane



Friends with their new banners

Greenwood Community Awards Ceremony

All local groups rely upon the time and effort of their volunteer members. Since 2001, Greenwood has recognised the contribution 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 2008 and 2009 Awards Ceremonies were held at **Rufford** Country Park and **Bestwood** Lodge. At Rufford, Nottinghamshire County Council offered valuable support by providing a marquee with sound and vision equipment. Many guests commented that the venue was excellent and that it contributed to the “buzz” of the evening’s celebration. The Bestwood event saw volunteers from Rufford Country Park, Bestwood Country Park and Quarry Lane all receiving awards in front of over 160 people.

Recent awards have included:



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!

Maureen Barker, Friends of Moor Pond Wood: Outstanding Contribution Award 2008

Maureen Barker has been a member of the Moor Pond Wood steering group since its inception in 1999. She has been a major driver for the group, working tirelessly for the project in so many ways. She is a committed professional as secretary and organiser, undertaking many meetings, representing the group, raising awareness, organising events and joining in the various practical works as well.

Above all her great energy, reliability and sense of humour are never defeated especially in the face of adversity. If you say no to this lady she just finds another way to force you to agree with her, and always with a smile and a twinkle in her eye!

Environmental Volunteers Recognised at Greenwood Awards

Volunteers working in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council were recognised for their hard work and commitment at the Greenwood Community Awards Ceremony 29 June at the Bestwood Lodge Hotel, Bestwood Country Park.

Nominations were received from many groups, organisations and schools, for environmental work carried out throughout 2008, working towards the creation of Greenwood, Nottinghamshire's Community Forest.

Greenwood Community Forum, decided the dedication of both groups entitled them to be presented with a joint award.

Lesanne spoke with real emotion when she told of Rufford Country Park's volunteers and how much they were valued. After listing all their achievements over the past year she said: "I could go on a lot longer but we'd be here all night. We think our volunteers are fantastic and deserve an award. Most of the time we have trouble stopping them working and many have been helping out at the park for some years. It's because of them that the park is what it is and how a lot of the conservation work gets done."

Four schools were also recognised with school involvement certificates. They were:

- Ashfield School, Kirkby-in-Ashfield
- Garbolds School, Forest Town
- Sutton Road Primary School, Mansfield
- Humby School

Friends of Greenwood, thanked everyone volunteers for awards. He said: "Thank you for coming tonight, for nominating people you know deserve it particularly for continuing to turn out in good of your local community and the environment for the community's benefit."

Groups receiving awards included:

- Rufford Country Park's Volunteering Task Group Award
- Glen Hosson, received an E achievement at Bestwood
- Bestwood Country Park Volunteering Task Group Award
- Friends of Quarry Lane, Award

Sue Macdonald, Ranger at Bestwood Country Park, presented the award to the 160 invited guests why it nominated deserved an award and in the end Colin Barson presented the award to the volunteers.

Friends of Greenwood Awards

The Greenwood Community Forest Team held another successful Greenwood Community Awards Ceremony in June at Rufford Abbey Country Park.

Over 150 volunteers, officers and members attended a presentation of Friends groups achievements over the past year, given by Colin Barson, Chair of the Friends of Greenwood Community Forum. Certificates were presented to those volunteers nominated by their peers and officers from Greenwood's local authority partners.

Greenwood Partnership Board members, Cllr Veronica Goddard and Cllr Ivor Walker presented awards in 10 categories to community groups and individual volunteers, towards improving their environment.

This year, three of the awards went to deserving recipients who work on green spaces managed by Nottinghamshire County Council.

Sue Macdonald, ranger at Bestwood Country Park, presented Arnot Hill School Duke of Edinburgh team, with a richly deserved award for their hard work.

Sue Macdonald, ranger at Bestwood Country Park, presented Arnot Hill School Duke of Edinburgh team, with a richly deserved award for their hard work. Amongst many things, Sue praised their enthusiasm, initiative, attitude, teamwork and sense of fun, which together made a winning combination.

Other support to local groups

We worked with NCC officers 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 were pleased to welcome a representative of the group to their first *Forum* meeting soon after their formation.

We organised a visit to Pleasley Pit for the volunteers at Bestwood Winding Engine House, so that Bestwood volunteers could find out how the volunteers at Pleasley are organised.

The team also helped Nottinghamshire County Council to improve its understanding of support to community groups by inputting details into the PRIDE database.

Helping everyone to enjoy their environment

Supporting community tree planting



King Edward's School tree planting

Greenwood's 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, many on school grounds.

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.

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).

A number of Greenwood's events support activities delivered by other parts of Nottinghamshire County Council. In 2009, we spent five days working with four teenage girls, helping them to organise the "**Mayfield Summer Slam**", a family fun day on their local recreation ground in Kirkby in Ashfield. We linked to Notts County Council's youth workers as well as to officers from Ashfield District Council. We passed on skills relating to consultation and advised on the type of activities that were safe and feasible. The day itself included environmental workshops provided by the Greenwood team, as well as sports and physical activities.



Mayfield Summer Slam!

"I think it's fantastic what these girls have achieved and they really pulled out all the stops on the day. It's too easy to criticise young people today.."

– Dave Wilby, Ashfield District Council Parks Development Officer

"We had a really great time and everyone really enjoyed it. All the Mums came out and had a good natter, and there was no fighting or falling out between the kids. It's what this street really needs."

- Emma Gray (14), one of the young organisers.

Other recent events have included:

- Leading a training event together with NCC staff, to provide Ashfield teachers with the skills and confidence to lead tasks in practical conservation work on greenspace sites.
- Helping teenagers with behavioural problems to produce tree dressings and willow lanterns at **Teversal Trails** Visitor Centre. The youth group then led a lantern walk and helped smaller children to place bird feeders in the trees to celebrate National Tree Dressing Day.
- Working with many local schools, to stimulate understanding of environmental issues. One example was **Bramcote Park School**, where a willow sculptor helped pupils at to produce a giant sculpture of "Eco-man" that was used to raise awareness of climate change issues.

Team members also supported NCC officers in running workshops for local children to help in naming the new Ashfield-Bolsover trail network.



Getting excited about the Teversal Trail

Linking education with the environment

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, so includes 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 Friends groups about seeking grant aid to support LIAB production for their own sites.

Boundary & Tippings Wood is one of the sites to have benefited from a LIAB resource pack.



Teachers try out Lesson In A Box

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.



Measuring up for access audits

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.

Our initial work looked at three sites managed by Notts County Council: **Bestwood Country Park**, **Moor Ponds Wood**, Papplewick and part of **Rookery Park**, Huthwaite.

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.



Physical Educational Pack launched at Bestwood

Improving the woodland economy



Surveying the Ranges

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 metres 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.

Notts County Council's Green Estates team manages four of the sites assessed: **Dob Park, Kirkby North, Sutton Meadows** and **The Ranges**.



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.

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 the 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

The Greenwood team produces, distributes and promotes a "Green Gateways" leaflet to support NCC in promoting activities and events at Bestwood Country Park and green estate sites within the Greenwood Community Forest.

Greenwood also takes care to promote its activities within County Council publications:

- In 2007, an article about our Events Programme appeared in NCC's Eco Schools Newsletter. We also generated articles for Planning & Property Briefing, County News and In Contact.
- In 2008, the Spring edition of "Living For Tomorrow", included a four-page feature article on the Friends of Greenwood. This highlighted green spaces and promoted the Friends groups who help to look after them.
- In 2009 we provided an article to NCC's Eco Education News and helped the Friends of Bestwood Country Park, to publicise their tree planting.



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 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**.
- Completion of initial works at **Rookery Park** cost over £210K; Greenwood obtained £97K of grant aid to match funds from Notts County Council.



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; encouraging 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.