

Getting Active in Greenwood Community Forest



PARK
LIFE

The Final Report 2007/08



Greenwood

Nottinghamshire's Community Forest bringing Sherwood Forest to your doorstep



Supported by



Foreword



This year has marked the third and final year of Greenwood Community Forest's Park Life project. This has led the way in delivering new and innovative ways for people to use their local parks for physical activity and so to benefit their health.

Over the last three years, seven of Greenwood's parks have seen activities not previously dreamed of. Toddlers have burned off energy by seeking out Santa and Fidget the Fairy, whilst adults have gained from low impact exercise and structured diet advice.

There have been big, high profile events, like the "Dri-triathlon" which attracted hundreds of children to Bramcote Hills Park, and the "Active8" programme that crammed eight different activities into one weekend at Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve.

There have also been many individual events. Street dance and horse riding came to Bestwood Country Park, whilst Vicar Water Country Park hosted salsa dancing and yoga. Kings Mill Reservoir ran a range of educational activities that gave physical benefits, whilst Bull Farm Park offered football skills for girls. Sherwood Pines organised orienteering and other challenges for school groups that developed teamwork as well as exercise. And this is only a small sample from the 167 events run over the three years!

None of this would have been possible without the support and hard work from many partners. Park Life has encouraged sports development officers to share ideas with park rangers and to work with a range of other organisations. These have included schools and youth groups, Sure Start, a GP referral scheme, walking and cycling groups, individual trainers and many volunteers.

Our grateful thanks go to all these people, too many to list in full. Thanks also to the Big Lottery Fund and Sport England as well as local partners who have provided essential funding and in-kind help to make this all possible.

We are proud of the legacy that Park Life leaves behind. In this last year, we have distributed a new education pack for use by schools, groups and members of the public. Partners have also gained a wealth of knowledge. They will continue to use their new skills in organising events like those that have been piloted under Park Life.

We are currently building ideas for a successor to Park Life – a project that builds on the lessons learned and provides further healthy exercise opportunities for our communities. We will welcome enquiries from any new partners that may like to play a part in such a project.

Councillor Jim Napier, Nottinghamshire County Council, Chair of the Greenwood Partnership Board.



“Active England's main aim was to increase participation in sport and physical activity among all sections of society, but particularly those sections which are typically under-represented. The Park Life project has led the way in demonstrating how effective and innovative partnership working can engage schools and communities, using country parks and green spaces to their full potential in order to increase sport and physical activity levels. With over 12,000 participants taking part over the last 3 years, Park Life has had a tremendous impact on local residents and supporting Sport England's aim of creating an active nation through sport.

Emily Leigh, Assistant Investment Manager, Sport England

Introduction

Park Life has encouraged people to use parks and green spaces for physical activity and so to improve their health. The project, which finished at the end of March 2008, was focused on seven sites within the Greenwood Community Forest in Nottinghamshire.

The project was co-ordinated by Vicky Hudson, Community Physical Activity Development Officer for Greenwood, who worked with six local authority partners and the Forestry Commission. Officers in parks, sports and health departments worked together with volunteers to deliver over 50 innovative events a year.

This document summarises the successes of the Park Life project and details its achievements in its third and final year of operation, from April 2007 to March 2008.



Park Life sites and partners

- 1 **Bestwood Country Park** – Nottinghamshire County Council and Gedling Borough Council
- 2 **Sherwood Forest Country Park** – Nottinghamshire County Council
- 3 **Sherwood Pines Forest Park** – Forestry Commission
- 4 **Vicar Water Country Park** – Newark & Sherwood District Council
- 5 **Kings Mill Reservoir** – Ashfield District Council
- 6 **Bull Farm Park** – Mansfield District Council
- 7 **Bramcote Hills Park** – Broxtowe Borough Council

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Achievements



The first year of the project saw a major change in the services delivered by rangers and sports development officers. Both learned skills of the other in a reversal of their traditional roles. Most of the work in year one was about defining the project, sharing skills and gaining experience. The second year built on these foundations to push the boundaries further and engage more people from under-represented groups.

The final year of the project has seen an increase in ownership of events by partners. Health and physical activity has automatically been built into all aspects of their everyday events and activities programmes. Increased promotion of the health and wellbeing benefits of taking part in physical activities has engaged and encouraged park users, ensuring that everyone is given the opportunity to participate and get active.

This third year has seen 40 events delivered, providing a wide range of new and enjoyable physical activity events on green spaces. These included three exciting large-scale events, the inter-school Dri-triathlon event at Bramcote Hills Park, "Active8" at Sherwood Forest NNR and an inter-schools orienteering event at Bestwood Country Park. This last event also provided the back drop for the launch of the new Park Life education pack.

Events were enjoyed by a total of 3,877 people from all age groups, including 1,304 pupils from schools within the top 25% of deprived wards across the Greenwood Community Forest and including Nottingham City. A total of 21 volunteers helped in the organisation and delivery of events.

Breakdown of Participants

Type of Event	2005		2006		2007	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Community Events	500	2,819	650	3,749	650	2,573
School Events	380	850	500	1,656	500	1,304

Thanks to excellent joint working between partners, community groups and local schools, the project has significantly exceeded the original participation targets set by Sport England.

Park Life has placed particular attention on working to engage hard-to-reach groups. Out of this year's participants, 50% were female. Park Life's non-white ethnic representation is equivalent to twice the representation within Nottinghamshire's population as a whole, where 4.4% classes itself within groups other than white (2001 census).

Walking & Cycling Festivals

Park Life organised two activity festivals again this year, attracting 186 people to take part in a variety of health walks and bike rides across Greenwood.

The two festivals could not have taken place without the support of local community groups and organisations. Our thanks go to local "Walking the Way to Health" groups who helped to make the walking festivals a success. These groups were:

- Ashfield Walk On
- Arnold Golden Amblers
- Mansfield In Step
- Broxtowe Walk & Talk.

Similarly, the Cycling Festival was supported by established organisations including:

- Nottinghamshire County Council's Rural Rides project
- Sherwood Pines Cycling Club
- The Bulwell Outlaws BMX Club
- British Cycling.



Education Packs



Athlete Lisa Dobriskey launches Park Life Education Packs.

A new initiative for 2007/08 was to develop an active education pack. This has been designed particularly for use by schools and community groups but will also be of use for anyone wanting to use one of the Park Life sites for regular exercise.

The packs contain advice to help in preparing to get active, a range of simple exercises that can be built in to a 30-minute visit to any local park, plus a simple four-week log to keep track of progress. There is also site-specific

information plus maps and guidance for orienteering, walking and cycling.

The new packs were launched alongside the schools' orienteering event at Bestwood Country Park. This was supported by one of Sports England's Sporting Champions, Lisa Dobriskey, a local sporting hero who won gold in the 1500m track race at the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

The packs have been distributed to schools across the Greenwood area via their school sports co-ordinators. Packs are also available from the individual sites or at nearby leisure facilities, selected libraries or via the local authority park services or sports development teams. The packs are also available from the Greenwood team or online via the Sport England website.

http://www.sportengland.org/eastmidlands_index/eastmidlands_news_media/iyr_east_midlandsparklife.htm

“The Park Life events undertaken at Bramcote Hills Park continue to draw praise from the regular park users and new visitors to the site. The Park was successful in retaining the prestigious Green Flag award in summer 2007.

Community involvement is one of the key aspects in judging a park for Green Flag and the Park Life events demonstrate this very effectively. The Tri-triathlon event has now become an established feature on the parks' calendar; without Park Life as the catalyst, the first event may have never happened.”

Tim Crawford,
Parks and Environment Manager,
Broxtove Borough Council.



The park services and sports development teams decided to build on the success of last year's school event and go one better. With the Broxtove School Sports Partnership firmly onboard, additional funding was secured to increase the number of schools who could participate in this year's "Tri-tri" event.

The event brought together young people from 27 local primary and secondary schools to take part in this unique physical activity event where each participant took part in running, cycling and rowing heats. The rowing was organised within a marquee that housed 16 electric rowing machines with wheels that didn't stop whizzing round all day. The excitement really reached a peak during the mountain bike leg of the competition, when family and friends cheered on the 331 excited children participating in the event throughout the day.

Thanks to good partnership working and initial support from Park Life, this event has been able to develop from a new idea into an event that local schools can look forward to each year.

Site Profiles

Bestwood Country Park



Bestwood Country Park is home to an annual orienteering event for schools from Bulwell. Funding from the Park Life project meant that even more schools could take part this year. Sport England's Sporting Champion, Lisa Dobriskey, gave the event a boost by cheering on those taking part. The event took two full days to get everybody round the course but the additional day was an all round success attracting an additional 192 children.

The outdoor education team also worked in partnership with Park Life and Gedling Borough Council's sports development team to organise other school events. These included scavenger art trails, mini beast hunts and a Christmas trail. These were enjoyed by 120 children from local schools.



“The Park Life funding enabled over 400 pupils to take part in an orienteering festival at Bestwood Country Park over a two day period. Many had never been to Bestwood Park before, even though they live nearby. All the children and staff had a really brilliant time!”

Linda Abbott (Bulwell Education Action Zone Manager)

This year's showcase event at Kings Mill Reservoir was delivered in partnership with the Ashfield District Council's Park Rangers and DARE, who hosted a mini triathlon event. This saw students from four schools take part in three different events: running, cycling and canoeing. The weather was cold and very wet but everybody had a fantastic time with excitement around the canoeing leg reaching fever pitch.

The new adventure base facilities at Kings Mill Reservoir have enabled Park Life to host a wider range of physical events and other activities at the reservoir. The doors had barely opened when Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) brought along a group of young people to participate in team building skills and have a go at the new climbing wall.

“Park Life has put Kings Mill on the map and there is a noticeable increase in the number of people using the reservoir. Anti-social behaviour has reduced dramatically due to increased daily use by members of the community visiting the reservoir to keep fit. We attract a lot more families cycling as a result of the Park Life cycling festival events and have never welcomed so many walking groups. Park Life's innovative events have really helped to raise our profile and the site is becoming part of the community's daily routine.”

Alan Cordin – Ashfield District Council Senior Park Ranger



Site Profiles

Bull Farm Park



Bull Farm had a busy year, hosting activities for all ages. "Fidget the Fairy" arrived with children from local Crescent nursery school. The children had a super time singing, dancing, finding clues and playing games as part of this year's walking festival in May.

The needs of the 50+ age group were met by a 10-week activity programme, which was provided in partnership with Mansfield's "Get Active" GP Referral Team. The scheme attracted around 6-10 people each week to participate in an hour-long physical activity followed by a healthy eating session. The group enjoyed the sessions, which included boccia, Nordic walking, gardening and armchair aerobics so much that they have continued to meet after the programme finished.

Interested new members are welcome to join in - for more information contact Sandra Alvey on 01623 463470.

Mansfield's sports development team also got together with Nottinghamshire County Council's youth services to bring together different youth groups from across Mansfield. Local youth workers had commented that there are lots of different cliques in Mansfield, so a sports day event was designed to bring them together and to increase community cohesion. Over 80 young people participated in football, archery, tag rugby, boccia and tri golf. The event was supported by Councillor Joyce Bosnjak who attended to show her support and had fun trying new sports herself.

“Park Life provided a valuable exit route for our patients to continue enjoying exercise. The weekly sessions were enjoyable but also very useful for clients to continue and try different types of exercise which we could not offer within our programme.”

Sandra Alvey, Mansfield District Council "Get Active" Co-ordinator

“Bull Farm Park is situated in one of the most deprived wards in Nottinghamshire. The Park Life project offers opportunities to the local community in the form of accessible coaching or recreation opportunities for all. Once again can I say what a fantastic contribution the Park Life project has made to the Bull Farm area in the last three years.”

Shaun Hird, Mansfield District Council Sports Development Officer

“The Park Life project has proved to be a huge success at Vicar Water not only in terms of park user figures but also in seeing members of the public, of all ages and abilities, embracing new healthy activities within a country park setting.”

Rob Gibson, Newark & Sherwood District Council Parks Development Officer

Newark and Sherwood District Council's parks and sports development services have continued to find new ways to encourage people to get physically active at Vicar Water Country Park.

This year's Sunday Fun Day provided various sports activities for all to try. These included mini tennis, football skills, aerobics, Tai-Bo, Nordic walking, traditional English playground games and tri golf. The sessions encouraged over 350 participants to have a go and get active throughout the day.

Vicar Water has also continued to develop its range of active educational activity for schools, attracting 215 pupils from local schools via the Park Life project. All school visits included "Fun in a Box" activities, including orienteering, mini-beast identification trails, pond dipping, shelter building, team challenges and problem solving.



Site Profiles

Sherwood Pines Forest Park



The rangers at Sherwood Pines Forest Park have relished the opportunity to engage with schools from the more deprived areas across Nottinghamshire. Park Life has enabled rangers to host five active educational visits during 2007/08. Often these events were the first opportunity some children had to experience a real forest environment and take part in some of the active environmental activities that Sherwood Pines can offer.

Sherwood Pines also hosted a physical activity day for the suitably named group "Fit Chicks", which encourages women over 16 years old to improve their health through healthy eating and regular exercise. Twelve women took part in team-building challenges including orienteering, and finished the day's adventure with a mountain bike ride along one of Sherwood Pine's many trails.

To finish the year's event programme with something different, the site hosted its first ever 50+ Park Life event, for members of the Sutton Seniors Forum. The event was a great success with 55 members aged from 50 to over 80 years old, enjoying both a wildlife walk and Tai Chi sessions.



“Park Life enabled our ladies from “Fit Chicks” to take part in activities that they had not tried since they were children. The orienteering was received with competitive enthusiasm, the second activity of mountain biking, caused a few to be apprehensive mainly due to never being on a bike since school. All fear was quickly erased from their minds as they dashed through the forest, squealing as they went.”

Mandy Finch, Fit & Active Braunstone mentor

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“Thanks to Park Life the 'Active8' event at Sherwood has gone from strength to strength. All our staff and volunteers have really got behind the project and, as a result, our visitors have been able to take part in a variety of new active events. As a direct result of this we now incorporate the 'Active8' theme into our annual events programme.”

David Wright, Sherwood Forest Ranger Team

Park Life has allowed rangers at Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve to develop their concept of “Active8” into a successful format. The idea behind these activity days is to offer participants the opportunity to choose between eight different physical activities running on the same site over a single weekend. Over the last three years, Active8 events have encouraged over 3,000 visitors to participate in a physical activity.

This year, Sherwood successfully hosted not one, but two Active8 events, with “have a go” physical activities offered over weekends in June and August. There was an activity to suit everybody, from archery, medieval scavenger arts, Robin Hood outlaw walks, costume making and re-enactment workshops, combat skills, a Robin Hood fitness challenge and a children’s mini beast hunt.

In December, Santa and his forest helpers sprang into action to welcome pupils from local schools to take part in a magical Christmas trail around the forest. To add extra festive cheer Santa was waiting at the end of the trail with lots of activity-based goodies, including hoola hoops, skipping ropes, bean bags and frisbees to give away to the good girls and boys.

School Travel Fund



Park Life's school travel fund has been essential to engage with schools from the top 25% deprivation wards across Nottinghamshire. The fund has made up to £200 available to schools to cover transport costs. This has allowed 50 schools to participate that otherwise wouldn't have been able to benefit from the project's many active environmental education activities.

“From the point of Leamington Primary School perhaps the most valuable part of the day was the coach travel and the rangers which Park Life paid for. Without this we would not have been able to participate in the experiences you provided for us. Ours is not a wealthy catchment area and the cost of the trip is always a key consideration when providing off site education.”

Sheila Adamson, Leamington Primary Year 3 Team.

2007/08 Events Programme



Kings Mill Reservoir

Climbing wall & team building skills	PAYP – Positive Activities for Young People - Bilborough	16
Schools triathlon event - run, ride & canoeing	Kingsmill Primary School Kirkby College Mapperley School	12 22 30

Bramcote Hills Park

Dri-triathlon Event	Bramcote Schools Partnership	331
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Vicar Water Country Park

Fun In A Box (FIAB) activity day - orienteering, mini-beast identification trail, pond dipping & shelter building	Kirkby College	115
FIAB activity day	Sherwood Hall School	35
FIAB activity day	Leamington Primary School	65
Sports taster activities	Vicar Water Sunday Fun Day	353
Multi activity taster day Feb Half Term 2008	Open community event for 8- 16 year olds	24
Active environmental art activities - Feb Half Term 2008	Open community event 8 – 16 year olds	19

Bull Farm Park

5-a-side sports day – football, tag rugby, archery, boccia and tri golf.	Nottinghamshire Youth Services	84
Short walks, boccia, armchair aerobics, bowls, gardening introduction and nutrition advice	GP Referral Partnership 10 week x 2 hour sessions	9 per week

Bestwood Country Park

Inter-school cross country 2 day event	Bestwood & Bulwell Education Action Zone	192
Orienteering, minibeast hunt, scavenger art	Killisick Primary School	87
Christmas trail in the woods	Derrymount Special School	39

Sherwood Pines Forest Park

Shelter building, orienteering & mountain biking	PAYP	15
Pond dipping, shelter building, orienteering & mountain biking	PAYP	31
FIAB activity day	Healdswood School	53
FIAB activity day	Kirkby Woodhouse School	37
FIAB activity day	Kingsway Primary School	110
FIAB activity day	Jeffery's Primary School	55
FIAB activity day	Church Vale Primary School Warsop Vale Play Safe	24
Tai Chi & ranger wildlife walk	Sutton Seniors Forum	55
Team-building day - mountain biking, orienteering	Fit Chicks	12

Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve

Active8 weekend 1 (June) 4 different events each day	Combat skills, Robin Hood fitness challenge scavenger art & children's mini beast hunt.	187
Active8 Weekend 1 4 X events each day	Archery, medieval scavenger arts, Robin Hood outlaw walks, costume making and re-enactment workshops,	200
Active8 Weekend 2 (August) 4 X events each day	Orienteering, shelter building, discovery walks & fitness trails	130
Active8 Weekend 2 4 X events each day	Parachute games, Maid Marion's treasure hunt, archery and skittles	126
Christmas trail & grotto	Robin Hood School	76
Christmas trail & grotto	Killisick Junior School	85
Christmas trail & grotto	Beeston Fields Primary & Nursery School	31
Christmas trail & grotto	Mapplewells Primary School	98

2007/08 Events Programme



Walking Festival 2007

Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve		
History of Robin Hood walk	Open community event	40
Vicar Water Country Park		
Introduction to Nordic walking	Open community event	10
Bestwood Country Park		
Midday stroll & healthy lunch	Open community event	33
Bull Farm Park		
"Fidget the Fairy" story telling walk	Crescent Nursery School	24
Bramcote Hills Park		
Introduction to Nordic walking	Open community event	28
Kings Mill Reservoir		
Wildlife walk	Open community event	12

Cycling Festival 2007

Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve		
Sunset ride	Open access community event - bad weather	11
Sherwood Pines Forest Park		
Family fun ride	Open access community event	1
Bramcote Hills Park		
BMX introductions	Open access community event	19
Vicar Water Country Park		
Mystery tour of Sherwood	Open access community event	1
Bull Farm Park		
BMX introductions	Open access community event - bad weather	7

Park Life has adopted a number of approaches to gain information about participants and their views on the project.

583 people provided feedback on organised events. Findings included:

- When participants were asked if they had enjoyed the Park Life event they had taken part in, all 583 said yes.
- Over half of the participants (305 people) had never been to that particular green space before attending the Park Life event.
- As well as meeting new people, the main reasons for participating were trying new activities (151), team building (132), and skill games/challenges (103).

During the third year of the project, external facilitators (Sports Structures Ltd and Forest Research) organised focus groups that gained further qualitative information about participants' thoughts and feelings. The first meeting was for the "Get Active" group from Bull Farm Park. This revealed that participants were very positive about the experience: they had enjoyed the scheme and felt that they had benefited physically, mentally and socially from attending.

The second focus group involved participants from the walking festival

at Bestwood Country Park. This suggested that whilst the walking festival could be a valued resource for those attending a structured walk for the first time, many participants were existing walkers who chose walking for wider health benefits.

The evaluation also confirmed that a variety of media and promotional sources had attracted people to attend events. However, general publicity didn't always reach the main target audiences and targeted mailings or word of mouth was more effective.

Lessons Learned



The schools transport fund has enabled high levels of involvement from younger age groups, especially from disadvantaged areas. The project has had less success in attracting the 50+ age group. The Bestwood focus group suggested that one factor was the location of sites. Even though most of the Park Life sites were selected because they were located on the urban fringe, some participants noted that they still had problems accessing these sites. The Bull Farm Get Active scheme, with its events carefully tailored to the needs of a specific group, perhaps offers a way forward for this age group.

The project has been tremendous in bringing partners together, allowing the sharing of both information and resources. The Park Life steering group has provided regular opportunities for project partners to share their own ideas and examples of good practice.

The dedicated Community Physical Activity Development Officer has been the heartbeat of the project. Vicky's hands-on approach, event management skills and the ability to adapt ideas to new situations have all proved crucial to the delivery of the project.

Park Life has demonstrated how the provision of new and innovative activities can encourage people to make more use of their local green spaces. This contributes not only towards individuals' health and well being but can also offer a new lease of life for parks as people learn to recognise and care for the assets on their own doorsteps.

What next?

Funding for Park Life finished in March 2008 and partners are currently considering proposals for a new project to build on Park Life's success.

It is clear that green space can provide a resource for health benefits. However, there are still barriers associated with travel and access to information that can reduce participation by some groups. Park Life's successor is likely, therefore, to be more locally focussed, with activities more closely tailored to specific groups. We are hoping to develop a programme that uses local green spaces, perhaps smaller than Park Life's sites, situated in the heart of hard-to-reach residential areas and where there is poorer provision for 50+ or other specific groups.

Potential new partners that would like to help us in developing such proposals, are invited to contact the Greenwood Community Forest team.



Greenwood Community Forest

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Greenwood is set in 161 square miles of west Nottinghamshire from Mansfield in the north to Nottingham in the south, and from Eastwood in the west to Farnsfield in the east. It joins historic Sherwood Forest in the northeast and curves round to Attenborough in the southwest.

These new green spaces are right in the heart of communities and are used for informal recreation such as walking, cycling and enjoying nature. Funding for the Park Life project from Sport England via the Big Lottery Fund has meant that we can offer a programme of activity to suit groups, schools and individuals and encourage people to continue to use the sites for physical activity.

The Greenwood Partnership is made up of:

Nottinghamshire County Council, Ashfield District Council, Broxtowe Borough Council, Gedling Borough Council, Mansfield District Council, Newark & Sherwood District Council, Nottingham City Council, The Forestry Commission and Natural England.

With a working partnership the Community Forest is transforming the local landscape to make it a greener and healthier place to be. We are creating green spaces around towns for recreation and sport, providing new habitats for wildlife, making outdoor classrooms for environmental education and much more on the doorsteps of over a million people living in and around the towns of Nottinghamshire.



Greenwood Community Forest's mission:

To create a multi-purpose forest with a rich mixture of woods, farmland, open spaces and settlements in Nottinghamshire, contributing towards sustainable development and providing a better environment for people to use, cherish and enjoy now, and for generations to come.

Our Funders

Park Life is funded with support from Sport England and the Big Lottery Fund through the Active England Programme.

Sport England

Sport England is the strategic lead for Sport in England and invests Lottery and Exchequer funds into sport. Our aim is to encourage people of all ages to start, stay and succeed in sport at every level and make England the most active and successful sporting nation.



The Big Lottery

The Big Lottery Fund distributes half of all national lottery good cause funding across the UK. The fund aims to improve the lives of disadvantaged people and the well being of communities through fair and open funding of people, projects and programmes.



Our Partners

Partners that have contributed both cash and in-kind help are: Nottinghamshire County Council, The Forestry Commission, Newark & Sherwood District Council, Mansfield District Council, Broxtowe Borough Council, Ashfield District Council and Natural England.

