

CASE STUDIES

Community Ownership and Engagement

Community forestry organisations:

Green Light Trust: Community-owned WildSpace Scheme

Red Rose Forest: Nutsford Vale

The case studies from Green Light Trust and Red Rose Forest are from two mature projects which have grown and developed over a number of years. Green Light Trust is a woodland initiative based in the East of England, the WildSpace Scheme works with a wide variety of communities in different settings, urban and rural. Red Rose Forest, covering Greater Manchester, is one of the original 12 Community Forests and has 20 years experience working with urban communities. It is clear from the two different approaches to Community Ownership and Engagement that community development is more challenging in an urban setting, particularly within deprived areas and areas with high crime but with the right amount of time, development work, support, engagement, partnership working and resources a long term solution is achievable.

CASE STUDY ONE

Location: Green Light Trust: Community-owned WildSpace Scheme: East of England

Partners: B & Q, Forestry Commission, Suffolk County Council.



WildSpace Scheme Project Success Rates (projects 3 years and older)

Project Age	Rural Projects		Urban Projects	
	Established No. (%)	Failed No. (%)	Established No. (%)	Failed No. (%)
3 to 6 years	19 (86%)	3 (14%)	4 (100%)	0 (0%)
Over 6 years	11 (91%)	1 (9%)	2 (66%)	1 (33%)
Totals	30 (88%)	4 (12%)	6 (86%)	1 (14%)

Background: The Green Light Trust was born out of visit to a community in Papua New Guinea. The tribesmen asked what was happening in the UK to protect woodland and wild spaces for future generations. The Trust was established in 1989 as an environmental charity based in Lawshall, Suffolk. In 1993 a small group of people living in Lawshall decided to create their own woodland, they called it “The Forest For Our Children” and so the project started life and created more woodlands. In 2001 the project changed its name and shared its experience and skills with more community groups, becoming the Community-owned WildSpace Scheme.

- Objectives:**
- Motivating children and young people to become responsible custodians of their natural environment
 - Galvanising community spirit and pride through long-term involvement with their project
 - Creating accessible and enjoyable wildlife habitats to enrich biodiversity
 - Forging links with communities overseas to reinforce the significance of the natural environment to humankind.

Green Light Trust: Community-owned WildSpace Scheme

Actions:

- The WildSpace Scheme schools programme often begins with an inaugural celebration involving local schools, parents and guardians
- From Seed to Tree programme – curriculum linked environmental presentations and tree planting activities for schools
- Planting and managing a community wild space bringing local people together, generating pride and ownership
- Local groups encouraged to carry out a baseline survey to see what the current biodiversity value of their site is, which helps them plan their site management to increase biodiversity
- Each community group is encouraged to establish its own overseas link.
- A Toolkit was developed to help local groups from initial formation to practical issues for looking after the land.

Achievements:

- The Scheme has helped to establish 58 projects in the East of England. Forty one of the projects are 3 or more years old, 81% have developed well and are benefitting from ongoing support and aftercare by the local community
- Forty six of the projects are managing over 80 hectares of land
- Groups receive some training and networking opportunities but they have sought and funded additional training themselves – showing a commitment to the longevity of their projects
- New groups have received assistance from more established ones
- Regular work parties on sites attract up to 1,500 participants. Surveys suggest around 10,000 people now use or pass through and enjoy the sites each year
- The Papua New Guinea story about the inspiration for the Scheme has encouraged a small number of groups to foster their own links and demonstrates to schools the relevance of local action to addressing a global challenge
- A parallel business WildSpace Scheme has been created to help businesses achieve Corporate Social Responsibility objectives.

Lessons Learnt:

- Important to select the Chair of the each project Steering Group as projects succeed or sink according to the leadership skills of the Chair
- Promoting the project to the whole community helps to reinforce the long-term, inter-generational significance of the issues
- Community spirit often develops when a common task is shared and everyone sees the improvements they are helping to achieve
- A small amount of time at the start of a project spent on the administrative formalities paid dividends during the life of the project. Support from the Green Light Trust helped groups not to be distracted by the formal arrangements
- More time and money needs to be spent in urban situations and outside support needs to be recruited to ensure success
- Importance of ensuring the projects have a high profile and strong political understanding and support from local politicians and officials.

Quotes:

“Green Light’s help was essential in setting up and sustaining our group. The assistance we received cannot be measured in time or financial terms.”

Wereham Wildlife Woodland

“We’re still bursting with ideas – a community orchard, pond restoration, more land! I wonder what our snapshot will look like ten years from now?” Lukeswood

“Over the last 10 years Green Light’s Community-owned WildSpace scheme has pioneered an environmentally led approach to community action. It has been a real success in helping to deliver the tree and woodland agenda in the East of England”.

Steve Scott, Forestry Commission

Critical Success Factors to take forward:

- Support strong community leaders and provide the tools to develop governance
- Involve and motivate all sectors of the community as custodians of green space, work across the generations and within local government
- Support training and mentoring to understand management and biodiversity
- Create opportunities and encourage links with international communities.

CASE STUDY TWO

Location: Red Rose Forest: Nutsford Vale: Gorton/Longsight area, City of Manchester

Partners: Manchester City Council, Newlands: Setting the Scene for Growth, Forestry Commission; NWDA, Access to Nature, Natural England.

Nutsford Vale Site Map



Background: Red Rose Forest, established in 1991, is the Community Forest for central and western Greater Manchester, working with local communities, businesses and partners, to develop well-wooded, multipurpose landscapes and improve the quality of life in the area. The area of Nutsford Vale (Gorton South) has 2 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are in the top 1% and 2% most deprived in the country, scoring poorly in terms of crime and disorder. In Manchester City Council's Quality of Life survey 2007, the area had the lowest percentage of residents who were satisfied with their life compared to all other wards in Manchester. Used heavily as a cut-through to local schools and shops, the green space at the heart of the project site was seen as unsafe by local residents and a history of antisocial behaviour has blighted the site for years.

Objectives:

- Complete a programme of capital improvement work
- To inspire people to cherish new green spaces on their doorstep
- To increase the number and diversity of users making their first steps into their local green spaces and encouraging them to continue to use them
- To change local people's perception, increase understanding and instil a sense of ownership of natural spaces within the project sites
- To enable local communities to come together through a new found and shared interest in their natural environment.

Actions:

- Late 1990s planted 1.5 ha of woodlands to assess the success rate of tree planting on ex-landfill sites. Great success rate
- Greentips Project installed perimeter fencing to deter fly-tipping, joyriding and the site being a burglary get-away route
- Worked with local schools to improve the grounds around the schools and get children involved in planting woodland wildflowers on site. Several major scale clean-up events with the private sector
- 2007–2010 Newlands and EU funded the Green Streets project to plant 50 street trees in the streets adjacent to the site to create green links to the site
- 2010–onwards: *Setting the Scene for Growth* Capital Improvement work now almost complete
- 2010-2013 Ongoing community engagement programme through Access to Nature funded *Setting the Scene for Nature*
- FUTURE: possibly acquiring an extension to the site through the purchase of a section of land currently owned by GMWDA.

Red Rose Forest: Nutsford Vale

Achievements:

- A resurrection of Friends of Nutsford Vale Event is now established
- The Grange, a local school for children and young people with additional needs continues to engage with the site through Forest Schools and curriculum related activities. Other local schools engaged in activities onsite
- Over 100 Children and parents involved in night time lantern parade
- Relationship building has started with local parents and their children attending the Sure Start Centre
- A programme of Tai Chi has continued to attract older residents to use the site as a group and gain confidence
- Partner organisations incorporate the use of the site into their own work. Training and development opportunities support their work in engaging communities on site and nearby sites. For example, woodland crafts, woodland management.

Lessons Learnt:

- Even in 'tight' times investment in Brownfield land results in significant spend and commitment from Local Authority
- Cost efficiency in high quality capital improvement work can be achieved through the right design and good partnership work to maximise resources available
- Allocating money towards maintenance of a site within the project budget, commitment
- Investing time in partnership development is important in ensuring that activities and engagement in the site continues beyond the life of the project
- Do not under-estimate the amount of community development work (through partners or as part of the project) required to tackle some of the bigger issues facing the local community which impact upon the site – e.g community cohesion, anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping etc.

Quotes:

"New footpaths and improvements have made a massive difference. They have brought the country into the city. The Vale is now a place for everyone to enjoy, young and old alike".
Local resident, R.

"My son and I went to the lantern parade last Friday (2nd of December) My son really enjoyed there, to see his friends, walk together with Music and the lanterns looked really nice. It was like a small festival for him. Thank you very much for giving the chance to join this event, I'm from Japan and it reminded the festival in my country a little and it was really good for my son. Thank you very much." B. and M.

"Nutsford Vale is a fantastic resource for the people of Gorton and Longsight. It's a great example of how multi-purpose green space in the heart of the city will be enjoyed by people from years to come. I encourage the people of Gorton to start using it". Sir Gerald Kaufman.

Critical Success Factors to take forward:

- Working with children in school helps to engage the parents
- Running community events helps to bring people out of their homes to experience their local greenspace, meet their neighbours and break down barriers and fears
- The amount of community development work needed shouldn't be under-estimated
- Supporting good quality capital improvement works brings efficiencies, engagement and partnership opportunities
- Including ongoing maintenance costs for the site helps to make the commitment more long term and build on the initial engagement.

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