



The Community Rangers Project has provided an invaluable opportunity for local people to participate in brownfield site regeneration. Following on from the 'Greening the Coalfield' scheme, which saw the transformation of Nottinghamshire spoil heaps into community woodland, Rangers worked with communities to encourage them to engage with and take responsibility for their local greenspace and have their say in how the sites were developed. The Project is an example of partnership working between environmental organisations, local councils and funding bodies. The success of the project has led to similar schemes in South Yorkshire and at other locations.

objectives

- To engage with communities living in former coalfield areas and encourage a sense of ownership in the newly regenerated sites.
- To facilitate joint working between local landowners and communities in the development of land management projects.
- To provide volunteer training, increase volunteering opportunities and improve the employment prospects of local people.
- To provide educational opportunities for schools and other learning groups.
- To increase partnership working in the area.
- To provide physical and mental health and well-being benefits to local people.

actions

- Four Community Rangers and one Project Co-ordinator were employed to work with volunteers from coalfield communities.
- Informal and formal consultations took place between Rangers and local communities to establish priority needs. As a result a wide-ranging programme of opportunities was established - volunteer training, conservation tasks, arts projects, guided walks, and the innovative 'Shadow Rangers'.
- Awareness-raising events reassured the public about the newly regenerated sites, and encouraged local people to get involved in the Project.
- Two Area Landowner Groups were set up to work with communities in tackling site management problems.

achievements

- More than 1,000 volunteer days last year, and 50 local volunteer wardens working across 10 sites.
- Additional funding from Nottinghamshire County Council provided training in countryside management skills.
- 19 volunteers gained long-term placements on the Shadow Rangers mentoring scheme. Seven 'Shadows' (37%) found employment in the environmental sector upon completion of the scheme.
- More than 15 schools within walking distance of sites are regularly involved in woodland-based activities.
- Volunteers have worked on Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targeted projects to support habitat creation for butterflies, water vole and other species.

achievements

continued...

- *Skillforce* has worked on the project for three years organising team building and problem solving exercises with young people struggling with mainstream schooling; weekly sessions with 15 students on 8 sites contribute towards GCSEs and other certification such as the Duke of Edinburgh Awards.
- The project has also supported over 30 young people through the Nottinghamshire Youth Offending Service 'Work in the Community' scheme.
- Rangers support six Friends Groups which assist in site management, project work, event planning and fundraising.
- An archaeological project has evolved from the discovery of parish boundary stones. Volunteers are working with Sheffield Hallam University to identify and interpret archaeological sites.
- Team building project days run for local businesses (Powergen, Cattles, Royal Mail and the Environment Agency) through the 'Business in the Community' scheme.
- The Project ethos has inspired a sister project in South Yorkshire.

background

- The 1980s saw the closure of many coalmines. The £14m 'Greening the Nottinghamshire Coalfield' project restored over 2,000 acres of spoil heaps (seven coalfields), created 30 miles of woodland tracks and 25 acres of heathland and planted 1.3m trees. Infrastructure was installed – footpaths, car parking and benches - to enable access for the 12 communities living nearby.
- The East Midlands Regional Forestry Framework gives a priority to "woodlands as places for social, health and educational benefit" and "raising awareness and understanding of the role and benefits of trees and woodlands".
- The Project works with Local Strategic Partnerships to support targets on environment, education and health.
- The Rangers have facilitated community consultation and other engagement work for the County Council's Building Better Communities Initiative.
- The Project has expanded and Rangers are now focusing on long-term plans with a range of groups, addressing physical and mental health issues.

quotes

"This is a beautiful place. I shall have to bring my own kids here!". Teaching Assistant.

"The Sherwood Forest Community Rangers have achieved true community engagement. I walk into a target primary school with one of the community rangers and every child knows him by name." Gill Grievson, Community Liaison Officer for Greenwood Community Forest.

partners

Nottinghamshire
County Council
Sherwood Forest Trust
Greenwood Community Forest
Newark and Sherwood District
Council

funding

Total: £800,000
Newark and Sherwood District Council,
Greenwood Community Forest, Neighbourhood
Renewal Fund, English Nature, Countryside
Agency, Heritage Lottery Fund, Sherwood
Forest Trust, Nottinghamshire County Council,
Single Regeneration Budget.

lessons learnt

- Flexibility: the Project has adapted over time, allowing it to reflect and include provision for community needs and interests, i.e. health and well-being issues.
- Enabling ownership allows communities to have a voice; young people are enthusiastic and full of inspirational ideas.
- Friends Groups need long term support and an open channel of communication.