



The Gateshead area of North East England contains some of the most deprived wards in the country. In support of the Gateshead Community Strategy, and as part of a wider project to regenerate the River Team area, the River Team Corridor Project seeks to enhance greenspace within the area, connect the people of Gateshead with the natural environment and improve their quality of life. Building on previous experience of community outreach work, the Project will provide a safer and more attractive physical environment, increasing the confidence of local people to enjoy and engage with the river corridor.

## objectives

- To encourage and enable all sections of the community to be involved with planning, creating, managing and enjoying their local environment.
- To enhance the environment, support the land-based economy, conserve and enhance the area's rich landscape character and diversity and increase biodiversity.
- To improve the community's health, well-being and quality of life.
- To provide opportunities for education and life-long learning and promote the enjoyment and understanding of the area's cultural heritage.

## actions

The project's work will include:

- Delivery of outreach through community involvement in project. The emphasis will be on practical projects that promote the greening of the river corridor between the A1 and the Tyne, including community action to care for their area.
- Promotion of green exercise to work with existing Walking for Health Initiative schemes and link to the Gateshead Cycling Strategy and Countryside Strategy, together with use of orienteering to promote confidence in accessing the countryside.
- Environmental education for schools and community groups that will cover a broad range of topics including the wildlife of the river corridor, sustainability and climate change.
- Landscape-scale habitat and access projects to include Lamesley Pastures, Lamesley Reedbed, the Bowes Valley Nature Reserve, the Team Valley Trading Estate, riverbanks and the Bowes Railway Path.
- Expand involvement of businesses on the Team Valley Trading Estate, UK Land Estates in future environmental management of estate, and develop existing relationship with Komatsu at Birtley.

## achievements

- Employment of a full-time project officer and a part-time education worker.
- Working with hard-to-reach communities within wards of highest Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in the country.
- Established agreements with two children centres which will rise to four in 2008.
- Formal opening of the Bowes Valley Nature Reserve and ongoing development of the site - 40% planted with ash and oak.
- Development of activity programmes including health walks and walking club; 'Nature Club (8-11 year olds); Explorers Club (11-14 year olds).

## background

The River Team catchment covers an area of approximately 90 square kilometres in south Tyne and Wear, and north east Durham. A history of coal mining and quarrying has profoundly shaped the character of the landscape. The area is part of the River Team Revival Initiative, a four year EU-funded project (Interreg III) led by the Great North Forest team, - a partnership between the Forestry Commission, Natural England and six local authorities. In conjunction with PURE - Planning for Urban-rural River Environments North Sea Project, the partnership produced a Catchment Plan, that sets out aims to conserve, enhance and restore the total river environment through land and resource planning. Issues include water quality, land use, natural heritage and biodiversity, access and recreation, cultural heritage and development pressure. Within the conurbation of Tyneside lies Gateshead, which stretches 13 miles along the River Tyne. It is a mix of urban, rural and industrial areas and is home to the Metro Centre, one of the largest industrial and retail parks in Europe. Nearly half the population of Gateshead falls within the top 20% most deprived areas of England. The Gateshead Community Strategy (2004-07) sets out a vision to address issues of poor health, education, crime, employment and housing.

North East Community Forest Ltd (NECF), created in 2003 and registered as a not-for-profit company in 2004, oversees the Great North Forest and Tees Forest. As part of the River Team Revival Project NECF focused on a specific area within the Project, aiming to meet the objectives of Gateshead Community by enhancing greenspace within the river corridor. The River Team Corridor project will make a considerable contribution to the environmental objectives of the Gateshead Community Strategy. The project also aligns with future Local Area Agreements, Regional Economic Strategy, Local Authority Strategies, and Local Authority Service Level Agreements.

## quotes

*"The Project is a fantastic opportunity to deal with so many different issues. Getting people to connect with the countryside and wildlife around them is so important, and needs to work just as well in the former pit communities as it does in the urban setting of the Team Valley Trading Estate. There is so much potential throughout the River Team in Gateshead to increase environmental awareness and to make the river meaningful to those who live and work there."*

Annabel Bartyla, River Team Corridor Project Officer.

*"The River Team Corridor Project is a new phase in turning strategy into delivery, implementing actions identified in the wider River Team Catchment Plan and using them to involve those hard-to-reach communities in the Gateshead area. People are now starting to realise what they have on their doorstep and are wanting to get involved."* Steve Scoffin, NECF Operations Director.

## partners

Forestry Commission  
Gateshead Stronger Safer  
Communities Fund (SSCF)

## funding

<b>Total:</b>	<b>£60,000</b>
Gateshead SSCF	£42,500
NECF	£17,500

## lessons learnt

- It is important who you approach in terms of funding. Working closely with the local strategic partnership.
- Balance the needs of the local community with funding available.