

# Increasing environmental quality and aesthetics

Moston Vale, Manchester

## Introduction

The area of Moston Vale in Manchester had a rich industrial heritage during the early 1800s and became contaminated over the years due to the high concentration of bleach works, dye works and paper mills operating along the Moston Brook that flows through the area. The brook was so polluted that it was known locally as the Black Brook. More recently, the vale was indiscriminately tipped in and was eventually filled in so much that it became the same height as surrounding land. The land was then covered over and became an area of low grade, unattractive and neglected green space. Fly tipping has been a concern, and abandoned, burnt-out cars added to the overall state of neglect. On the index of multiple deprivation, the area was in the worst 5%, and £1.7 billion has been used to regenerate and re-landscape a former landfill site in order to improve the visual aspect.

## Funding

Funding of £1.7 million has been provided from the Newlands project (of the North West Development Agency), over a 20-year period.

## Materials and methods

### Method

Initial small scale improvement works were started in 2002, providing some much needed security fencing to help prevent access by cars and motorbikes, and the subsequent dumping and burning of the vehicles. Working with the Moston Vale Residents Association and the wider community, more fencing was erected and wildflowers were planted to brighten the site. Work was undertaken by the Green Tips project, and the site has now been taken over by Newlands, a multimillion pound urban regeneration project.

Environmental works will include the excavation of all contaminated and general waste from the site to a licensed landfill, construction of earth banks and mounds, and the drainage of wet areas. Following extensive preparative works to Moston Vale, the site supports a range of native species and wildlife, which enhances the ecological and visual appeal of the area and brings wildlife closer to local people.

Where a site has had a positive impact it is expected that it will be a focal point for the community and be well known and well used. It will be a safe place that people feel proud of and which helps them be healthy and which contributes to the area's vibrancy and regeneration. To assess the success of the development at Moston Vale 17 measures or indicators are used to look at how well the site is performing – what is working well and what could be improved, both now and in the future.

## Results

A total of 370 local people were asked to give their view on the site and it was found that they were proud of the developments at Moston Vale. The improvements that have taken place have seen the creation of a green space for people to use for leisure, sporting activities and for relaxing. Local people around the site are using Moston Vale on a regular basis and their enjoyment of the new pathways and green, open spaces means they are obtaining health and well-being benefits. People can now experience nature in the middle of their community.

## Conclusion

The Newlands project has improved the aesthetic quality of the area, and has increased the number of people using the site. Regular events have been held on Moston Vale since work was completed, including activities with local schools as part of National Tree Week, Christmas events, bird-box making, summer events with Sure Start and an Annual Fun Day organised with local residents associations and the Moston Valley Football Club. All in all, the landscaping has also helped to increase community cohesion and community involvement in the area.

## Reference

Newlands (2008). Moston Vale Media Pack: 1.7 million pound investment to tackle North Manchester's derelict land.