

Improving quality of place

Newlands Green Streets

Introduction

'Green streets' was an initiative that used greening projects to improve quality of life for urban dwellers. Green streets worked at the heart of community – with residents, businesses and partner organisations to promote the value of greenery – as a means of tackling a range of social, health and economic issues. Tailor-made greening schemes were produced in order to meet very personal needs within a number of communities, sustainably. A range of targets were established focusing on economic, social and environmental benefits that would emerge from a community-engaged process for tree planting in disadvantaged areas of northwest England.

Objectives

The Newlands Green Streets project aimed to:

- Improve the standard of living in urban areas with high levels of poverty and deprivation.
- Engage and involve residents, households and schools in the planting of street trees in their local community.
- Enhance green infrastructure.

Project methodology

Study area

The Newlands Green Streets project was delivered in ten locations extending over two areas of northwest England: Merseyside and Manchester and Salford, as shown in the table below.

Processes: working collaborations and partnership building

Two project teams – Mersey Forest and Red Rose Forest – developed independent Green Streets projects, using two different methods, building on their own set of experiences and existing partnerships. The Red Rose team required a more exacting specification and bespoke design for tree planting due to a mix of strict planning controls and local authority requirements. The Mersey Forest team instigated a low specification, grant award approach, enabling a uniform approach, simplified design and implementation.

Table Delivery locations and output achievements.

Location: Merseyside

| | Bank Land, Tower Hill | Bedford Queens | Norman Street Triangle | Cement City Parr Estate, St. Helens | Clock Face, Sutton | Liverpool Road, N. Huyton | Totals |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Trees planted (no.) | 34 | 123 | 50 | 37 | 67 | 56 | 367 |
| Route way improved (km) | 0.53 | 2.47 | 0.93 | 1.12 | 2.60 | 1.83 | 9.48 |
| Households consulted (no.) | 90 | 720 | 50 | 79 | 450 | 200 | 1,589 |
| No. of individuals directly engaged | n/a | 246 | n/a | 148 | n/a | n/a | 394 |
| Schools engaged (no.) | 1 | n/a | n/a | 2 | n/a | n/a | 3 |

Location: Manchester and Salford

| | Lightbowne Road, Moston | Potters Lane, Moston | Bolton Rd and Station Rd, Salford | Littleton Rd, Sleaford Rd, Salford | Matthew Lane, Levenshulme | Totals |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Trees planted (no.) | 60 | 60 | 54 | 77 | 70 | 321 |
| Route way improved (km) | 0.32 | 0.95 | 1.09 | 2.44 | 1.26 | 6.06 |
| Households consulted (no.) | 86 | 123 | 98 | 250 | 139 | 696 |
| No. of individuals directly engaged | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 301 | 301 |
| Schools engaged (no.) | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 2 | 2 |

n/a: not available

Processes: community consultation, engagement and involvement

Each particular project locality and street required a different consultation strategy in light of the time available, funding constraints and site characteristics. A broad spectrum of consultation approaches was used:

- in-street advise on tree planting
- 'Green Streets' team visiting and talking to residents
- use of local consultants and local groups to contact households in the planning selection and nature of trees to be planted in particular streets
- community events to receive feedback
- use of Green Streets visualisation software.

People were offered the choice of having a tree outside their home and, in some instances, a choice of tree.

Funding

The Northwest Development Agency provided £300 000 in funding over the 2007-09 period, tied to successfully obtaining a further minimum 100% match funding. The estimated average cost per tree was: Salford £2075, Manchester £1607; Mersey £902.

Highlights and Discussion

The project was very successful in many aspects: match funding exceeded by 177%, tree planting target exceeded by 114%, route-way improvement target exceeded by 4.7 km (target: 10.8 km). However, direct individuals and school engagement achieved was only 78% and 45% of targets, respectively.

Community-centred successes of the project were mixed: hindered by funding delays, physical restrictions on planting and red tape. Consequently, as indicated in the two tables below, while 73% of respondents felt that the tree planting had made a positive difference to their street and 77% were happy with the way they were consulted, only 31% felt involved in the process and few mentioned any personal benefit from the project. Further attention will be required to ensure on-going community involvement in Green Streets; without which the success and sustainability of the project are questionable.

Table Summary of effectiveness of community consultations.

| Question | Yes | No | N/A | Total |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Were you happy with the way you were consulted | 77% | 14% | 9% | 100% |
| Did you feel involved in the process | 31% | 62% | 7% | 100% |
| Has it made a difference to your street | 73% | 16% | 11% | 100% |

Table Project feedback.

| Pro | Pro | Con |
|---|---|--|
| 'It makes a big difference. It's a pleasure coming down the street when you see a tree' | 'I've started putting more pots out at the front. It's a change from the concrete. It's brought some life to the place' | 'We got something through the door asking if we wanted a tree. I said no, but next door wanted one so he got it' |

Recommendations

- Improved guidance on methods for engaging individuals and schools and consulting the community need to be disseminated and locally adopted to secure additional personal and community benefits.
- A more practical approach to the way funding is awarded, including flexibility of funding deadlines, is required to promote effective engagement works.
- Central guidance backed up by good practice recommendations on street tree selection, planting and maintenance is required, plus consistency across local authority's street tree policies and a reduction in 'red tape' hurdles to planting.

Reference

Pathways Consultants (2009). *Newlands Green Streets: pilot project evaluation report*. Northwest Regional Development Agency, Forestry Commission England and 'Newlands'.