

The Land Trust Managing Partners Awards Shortlist 2022

Nominations for Community Space of the Year

Avenue Country Park

The Avenue Country Park brings together different elements of the community on site. Initially it was the wildlife interest that brought in the volunteers, but quickly the dog walkers, health walkers, and sports activities became popular.

In the last year the community have come together to support the country park helping to raise over £6k through social media to fix the damaged boardwalk.

Hogmoor Inclosure and PPP

51 events were run throughout the year attracting more than 9,000 people. These ranged from regular adult and junior park run's and orienteering events to Brian Wood's multiple charity marathon runs raising money for walking with the wounded. A Managing partner, the Deadwater Valley Trust also worked with the South Downs National Park on a lottery funded partnership based event called Secrets of the Heath.

Deadwater Valley Trust rangers also run two conservation volunteer groups and have delivered 63 sessions involving 287 individuals. Many of our volunteers experience issues with their mental health and getting outdoors and being sociable helps reduce isolation and improves their wellbeing. DVT also encourage young people through a Junior Rangers group that connects local children to nature.

There is a wide range of other volunteers and trustees who help run events, undertake litter picks and even a dog ambassador who chats to local dog walkers to encourage responsible dog ownership.

Warren House Park

Warren House Park's site ranger puts a huge effort into engaging with the community to participate across all elements of the sites management, from managing biodiversity, to engaging them via day to day site maintenance and through to helping tackle anti-social behaviour. Regular social media posts also help gel the community, encouraging them to participate in the range of volunteering and family activities on site. This is ever more important as Warren House Park is now completely surrounded by housing (and a new community) following the completion of the Keepmoat development.

Elba Park

Elba Park held regular events throughout Covid which were particularly popular with the community at Halloween and Christmas. Lots of sessions were also held in the school holidays supported by local Councillors with activities for families including pond dipping, bug hunting, natural crafts, sports and games and singing. Families who attended these activities were also given healthy snack packs to take home and enjoy. A total of 18 sessions were held with over 400 people attending who were encouraged to explore nature and the outdoors safely whilst also providing food for children during the school holidays.

Canvey Wick

Canvey Wick reserve is an important local facility with at least 924 volunteer hours recorded for 2021/22. The site is often used by local Canvey Junior School and Beavers, wildlife watchers, horse riding, dog walkers, cyclists and ramblers. Newsletters and social media posts by the RSPB Essex team regularly feature Canvey Wick for its interesting and extensive wildlife. The reserve is part of the Greener Thames project and former part of the 'Back from the brink project' and is regularly surveyed along with nearby reserves by Buglife and Wildlife Trust volunteers as part of this project.

Nominations for Nature Space of the Year

Twywell Hills and Dales

This site is a fantastic example of species rich grassland complete with invertebrates and higher species. The work to restore the grassland has been significant and a credit to all involved. In addition, the work to restore the pond and increase the levels of light has benefited many species.

Castle Hill Country Park

With significant habitat improvement works carried out by volunteers, Castle Hill will continue to thrive. It already has a good population of nesting Skylarks and our work with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, is set to continue with site surveys and habitat improvement works. Our relationship with the neighbouring development has seen the site receive reptiles through a relocation process, and six hibernacula were built to support them. A barn owl box is due to be erected, as they are known on site and the rough grassland habitat is perfect habitat for their favoured food. More than 360 trees have been planted this past year, both of native broadleaf and heritage orchard varieties too. Scrub clearance, invasive species control and maintaining wildflower areas means that this year, the site has taken a big step forward in plans to improve the site for wildlife.

Monkton

A lot of effort has been put in by Lynsey, Sarah, Jennifer and the team to create new glades for Dingy Skippers which were recorded on site for the first time a few years ago, and have now undergone a population explosion through their extensive scrub removal work. This has been incredibly hard work, removing tough Blackthorn scrub.

In addition, the woodlands have begun to be thinned, no mean feat, and this has already dramatically opened up the woodland floor, increasing the amount of both scrub floristic diversity and also makes the site feel safer for visitors. The floristic diversity has been supplemented by the planting of hundreds of wildflower bulbs on the woodland floor, as well as the spreading of wildflower seeds around the site.

Haig

Following funding from HLF, the site has been improved through 12,000 native bulbs being planted, 4.5kg of native wildflower seeds sown and 1,300 native plug plants planted - all done by volunteers and local schools. Coastal heath was encouraged with seeding and planting, spring bulbs for early nectar and increasing sward diversity with seeding and planting as well as a commitment to ongoing favourable management of these areas for the next 10 years, which is a late cut and collect in September.

Last year saw a concerted effort to start formal recording on site with three national surveys to tie in with 'every flower counts' surveys from Plant life in May and August, with the focus on creating nectar scores for grasslands. However, the recording sheets were adapted to also measure vegetation height and percentage cover of different species as well with over 100 m square quadrats recorded in total.

Langdon Lake and Meadows

The scrub islands in top meadows are continued to be heavily thinned to minimise the scrub regrowth. This has been working well in previous years and the first island cleared has just started to regenerate on a smaller scale.

The top meadow has had two years of tight cutting and the scrub has been hit hard and regrowth has been considerably less. The grazing has also helped to minimise this regrowth while also keeping the grass short. This has resulted in increase of wildflowers, which are no longer being smothered by the scrub. We are awaiting cows to come in August to get the grass down before this year's cut.

The lake has had a large chunk de-silted removing all the debris from around the inflow and outflow and burying it into a pit dug close by. The silt pit needed to dry and as a result the whole area and paths at that end of the lake was closed. We have just reopened the paths

and the pit has been capped with the surrounding clay and had formed a bund. The area is still Harris fenced by this will be replaced shortly with sweet chestnut cleft fencing to match the whole lake. The actual bund will be either wildflower seeded or green hay depending on SSSI restrictions.

The lakes island's reeds are re-growing with ducks breeding in on the island and a first for the sight this year a Cettis Warbler a reed bed specialist singing from lake.

St Michael's Hurst

At St Michael's Hurst, as well as supporting the people in our new communities, a key part of our stewardship is to also see how we can enhance the biodiversity on site and boost local populations. Recently this year at Bat Willow Country Park, attached to St Michael's Hurst, we have seen a number of hibernaculums installed to assist with the local population of common lizards, some of which were translocated from the construction areas. We have also allowed areas to grow wild including areas of bramble to protect songbirds and allowing areas containing species such as teasel to self-seed providing much needed food. Bat Willow also contains large areas of wildflower meadows which are managed on an annual cut as well as clear paths being provided so the locals can still explore without causing too much disturbance.

Nominations for Health Site of the Year

Monkton

Every week Groundwork run a Green Gym session at Monkton Woodland, to encourage people within the community to be outdoors and be more active in order to improve both their physical and mental health. Over the past year over 70 individuals have taken part in these beneficial activities. Volunteers are asked to fill in a mental and physical health questionnaires and the results were extremely positive. For a second year running, 100% of the volunteers who attend the Green Gym sessions said that they feel happier and confident since engaging in the sessions and green space.

Groundwork have held several community outdoor planting events to get those who do not attend the usual sessions outdoors and active in the woodland. They have planted 100s of spring flowering bulbs and seeds in the woodland and wildflower seeds around the site.

Countess of Chester Country Park

Countess of Chester Country Park has an abundance of activities for the community to get involved in.

These include regular park runs, drop in art sessions, weekly Parent Plods, Five Ways to Wellbeing sessions and mindfulness walks which are open to all and aim to improve physical and mental health.

Weekly Young and Green at Heart volunteering sessions aimed at improving physical and mental health and Forest School activities have been extremely popular, targeting challenged parents and providing outdoor wear so pre-school children can get actively involved.

The Friendly Bench is the perfect community hub and has social events each Friday lunch time to help those feeling isolated. The park is a constantly evolving hub of varied activities aiming to improve physical and mental health.

Beam Parklands

Beam Parklands offers health benefits for the local park users by providing open space for physical activities such as walking, cycling and running.

There was a noticeable increase in visitors to the site during lockdowns (2021) and many have remained regular users. Several local residents/site users have told the ranger how wonderful it is to have such a fantastic space on their doorstep and, especially since the lockdown, just how much they now appreciate it.

Several walking groups have been led by the ranger in 2021 and early 2022 and these have been primarily aimed at older users, as this group can often be more socially isolated. The council's Social Prescribing model has helped promote the group within the wider community, including doctors' surgeries.

Marking signage links the site to the Beam Valley and Eastbrookend as part of the wider Dagenham Corridor; thus, encouraging users to explore from one side of Dagenham to the other. This also helps to promote and encourage car-free travel around the borough.

Beaulieu

Beaulieu has become well known within the city of Chelmsford for having some fantastic walking routes. Currently there are trails taking residents and the local community out into the farmlands of Essex, alongside the historic New Hall School or even just providing connections to other developments within the area.

The site paths are ideal for walkers of any mobility, often used by runners as well as social cyclists. Personal training sessions also taking part in the suitable parks and open spaces.

A significant achievement post-pandemic, is local walking group, Heart and Sole relocating their weekly walk to Beaulieu. This was largely down to the ease of walking on the paths but also because with the development still under construction, there are many more paths coming offering varied routes each visit. The group regularly attracts more than 20 walkers with some weeks attracting close to 40.

Nominations for Education Site of the Year

The Old Brickworks

The Old Brickworks is meeting local needs on the local doorsteps rather than making people travel to a "regional" hub. From a standing start we now have regular holiday sessions and schools and community groups using the purpose made education area. Doing this during the period of the pandemic was very significant and a great achievement.

Elba Park

Rangers at Elba Park delivered education activities with 22 groups from local primary schools, with almost 700 children in total. Regular sessions with Portland Academy post-16 students re-started in September 2021. These students have a variety of different physical and learning disabilities and now enjoy weekly sessions in the park.

Groundwork were successful with a bid to the Green Recovery Fund and part of that project involved 6 Kickstart trainees. They spent a total of 12 weeks at Elba and completed a number of different training courses including chainsaw maintenance, strimmer use and herbicide spraying.

Kiveton Community Woodland

This year saw the final year of the Outside is Fun project at Kiveton. The funding by Natural England finished in March 2022. The project has been a great addition to the team and the sites. It has allowed us to look at a model that we could take forward for further school work and allowed us to develop greater relationships with the local schools in close distance to the Community Woodlands.

The project further developed the programme of teacher training (CPD – Continuous Professional Development training) to equip them with the skills to begin using outdoor learning. The project has also led to the start of school permits being developed for the sites. A further evaluation report will be available on the findings of the project.

Silverdale Country Park

This site is used by the Fire Service to deliver safety videos to schools nationally. Titled, 'Safe & Sound' the videos have been delivered weekly to an online audience of over 10,000 UK schools and homes. They have also filmed their 'Meet the Ranger' series at Silverdale that educates children on issues and dangers such as; frozen water, vandalism, litter, wild fires and picking up dog poo.

A collaboration with Keele University has seen the Ranger providing a guest lecture to a class of third year biology students using Silverdale as a case study. The University opted to use this site for their first and second year biology student field trip modules studying wildflower diversity and abundance.

Collaborations also continue with Reaseheath College, with Brett Bowman conducting a work placement with us in 2021 which helped him into employment in 2022. Reaseheath also made five field trips to Silverdale as part of their Countryside Diplomas. Students learnt wildflower ID skills, built hibernacula, managed early successional vegetation as well as hay meadows and hedge laying.

Nomination for Site Delivering Best Economic Activity

Twywell Hills and Dales

Twywell Hills and Dales is an important wildlife site which has seen significant development. Grant funding has been used to fundamentally change the natural structure with a capital expenditure on local contractors of Circa £60k. There has been an introduction of Highland cattle with the herd supplying beef to a local farm shop and the stockman as part of this funded activity.

In addition to having a Ranger employed on site, funding through the Green Kickstart Scheme brought in additional funds and saw around 350 training activity participations on site providing local young people with opportunities to develop skills and understanding of aspects of countryside management.

On top of this, the Barista Bus, a local business licenced to operate on site selling hot and cold drinks and snacks, now employs one full time person and is turns over Circa £60k pa.

Northumberlandia

Northumberlandia received an estimated 87,000 visitors this year bringing much needed finances to local amenities.

This site also received healthy donations of over £21,000 and the café made £100,000 in takings. Inside of centre has been reconfigured to allow the counter to better serve customers and bring more efficiencies to the service times, plus the outside seating area has been expanded to allow customers to dwell longer and ultimately spend more whilst on site. For dog owners, an additional offer for summer now includes ice cream, which has been especially developed for your favourite canine!

St Luke's

With any new emerging community there is an opportunity to boost any local economy either by providing jobs or creating places to invest. At St Luke's we have always aimed to use local contractors to carry out our work with our main landscape contract being undertaken by Nurture landscapes with their local depot being just over 15 miles from site. As well as helping to provide local employment, the short distance also helps to reduce the carbon footprint of the Land Trust with only short distances required.

Recent tree works has also been undertaken by local tree surgeons, Roman River Tree Care being based just 16 miles from site.

St Luke's has also recently opened a new Coop for the local community along with a soon to be open independent coffee shop.

Silverdale Country Park

Local contractors were used on site using ERDF funding to excavate, re-profiling and clay lining of 70 seasonal pools now onsite to help support a greater wealth of aquatic plant and invertebrate life.

During 2021/22 £17,939 was spent on local contractors to lay 160 Tonnes of stone to repair paths from flood damage, five more culverts were upgraded to metal key clamp fencing and 60 T of stone was used to enable emergency vehicle access onto our main meadows in case of wildfires. After lots of compliments about our hedge laying onsite we also got professional hedge layer Anthony Hammond to hedge lay 75m of roadside hedge near our Scot Hay entrance.

During 2021/22, through Groundwork UK, Groundwork West Midlands were able to recruit three full time staff to deliver the 'Natural Neighbourhoods' project on Silverdale Country

Park and in the local community. The result was six apprentice Kick-Starts completing six month terms onsite and resulting in two of the Kick-Starts going on into full time employment. The Natural Neighbourhoods team also organised our first Rural Skills event on the August Bank Holiday. Over four days, over 500 visitors came to Silverdale to experience displays and taster sessions in blacksmithing, chainsaw sculptures, dry stone walling, scything and orienteering.

Most Inclusive Site of the Year

Ashton's Field

A local volunteer, who is 88, who used to volunteer at a neighbouring site recently became involved at Astons Fields. They are really enjoying being involved due to the tailored tasks suitable for his ability and thanks to good access to the site.

The site has two local key holders who allow access for mobility scooters and the ranger regularly encounters them when on site, they always stop to tell us how much the site benefits their mental health and wellbeing.

Beaulieu

The site continues to be a safe and friendly place for those who live, work and visit. The site has been design to provide a number of areas of public space easily accessible by all. The community trust have supported a food bank for a number years and drop in sessions to support vulnerable members of the community. The events program ran by the Land Trust aims to cater for the whole community and provide a selection of education, health and environment based activities.

Nomination for Most Improved Space

Telford Millennium Nature Reserve (aka East Ketley)

TMNR was an area which was adjacent to a housing development and needed a solution for long term management. The heathland was dominated by gorse, the grasslands being overrun by coarse grasses, nettles and in early successional transition to scrub. The paths were becoming dilapidated and generally it was unloved by the local community.

The transformation has taken time, it has been a gradual process and will take longer to reach the vision, but much of this reserve has been transformed. The grasslands are now rich in wild flowers, the heathland is supporting an increasing population of lizards and other

characteristic wildlife. The biggest transformation is that when you visit you see the community and visitors walking around and using the site.

Weyburn Meadows

The site consists mainly of former horse-grazed pasture with wet grassland on the floodplain to the north. There are mature well-established hedgerows and patches of other habitat present, a side stream to the River Wey, Alder Carr, broadleaved woodland and isolated patches of scrub.

The site has been improved significantly by clearing invasive scrub from meadow with a roboflail, improved site drainage by excavating ditch and removing riparian willow, and doing regular litter picks which have removed three trailer-loads of historic debris and rubble removed from the meadow. We have installed a ramp at either end for improved access and repaired the boardwalk, paths have been mown and kept clear, we have worked alongside contractors who surfaced 160m of path on behalf of Surrey County Council Public Rights Of Way Team and have worked on the removal of invasive plant species like Ragwort and Himalayan Balsam.

The site has set up and monitored reptile transect in partnership with the Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group and greensands Farming Cluster grant funded the installation of bird and bat boxes including a barn owl box has future. The site also has plans to include a pond and a kingfisher bank along the riverside.

We are establishing a link to Surrey Growth team who are a CIC encouraging people with learning difficulties to obtain confidence and skills to enter employment. They will begin to help with the site conservation works.

Monkton

As above, with significant improvements to the habitats on site through scrub clearance, woodland thinning and bulb planting there has been a step change in the biodiversity value of the site. In addition, a huge stretch of the main thoroughfare through the site had become potholed through greatly increased use. This has now been completely resurfaced (almost half a kilometre of path). Many of the other paths through the site have also been resurfaced, including wood chipping the woodland paths. All of the entrances have been upgraded to make them more welcoming, including new artworks and this has encouraged even greater use of the community woodland.

Furthermore, with the Green Recovery team on site for much of the year, the site has had a real buzz of activity, helping to transform both the feel and the appearance of the site.

Ashton's Field

Ashton's Field is a small 9.2 Ha sites in a challenging area. Despite this, an 80 metre stretch of hedge laying was achieved in the Lancashire style, a drainage ditch was cleared and planted with lesser celandine, sneezewort, meadowsweet and ragged robin plug plants by volunteers. Dead wood habitat piles were also created and wild garlic and wood anemone and bluebells planted by volunteers.

Woodland management was undertaken by Lancashire Wildlife Trust and extensive tree work undertaken. The previously laid section of the hedger was maintained by local volunteers who have learnt a new skill whilst benefitting from the physical and mental exercise. In addition to this, a wetland area was restored and planted with various wetland plant species, yellow rattle has been sown and blackthorn incursion removed.

Since the appointment of LWT the proactive management practices that they are putting in place are revitalising this urban space. Habitats are being restored and improved and the site contains significant wetland features, with the swales and locks; rich grassland areas; woodland areas have been planted with bluebells, wood anemones and wild garlic and a heathland which offers a wealth of habitats and food for butterflies. This management plan will improve habitats for all species. Whilst on site there is a definite sense that the habitats are improving and moving in the right direction and site users regularly remark upon this. In addition to the biodiversity improvements on site they have reached out to the local community and provide opportunities for:

- Education - training volunteers in various practical management techniques.
- Community/Social cohesion – regular practical volunteering sessions are now run on site tackling a range of tasks involving 28 individual volunteers contributing a total of 271 volunteer days.
- Health - Twice monthly health walks have resumed using the site following a break during the pandemic.
- Economic - LWT's Trainee who regularly worked on the site was successful in moving on into a full time role as a project officer.

Three other trainees also undertook work on site and were involved in conducting wildlife surveys – All three have now progressed into full time roles (one with LWT, one with the Woodland Trust and one with the Mersey Rivers Trust).

Beam Parklands

The LBBB team have always been passionate about this site, however during the Covid lockdowns and since, the park seems to come alive. With a new Community Ranger joining in 2019, the community groups have been using the site again, works to continue to improve the important chalk grass land have been continued and links to connecting green spaces have been promoted to the surrounding communities.

The local residents have set up a Dagenham Community Volunteering group with the support of the Community Ranger, litter picking the park in their free time whenever they can. They mainly use their own resources provided by CleanUp UK, and encourage others to keep the park in good condition by cleaning up after their dogs and using the bins provided. This has had an increase in the awareness that a clean environment is essential for the wildlife to thrive and that it also reduces the risks of anti-social behaviour, making it more pleasant to visit.

Nomination for RANGER OF THE YEAR

Pete McNee and Abi Rees – East Ketley, Bilston UV and the Old Bricks

Pete and Abi have huge smiles and "can do" attitude. They have also been instrumental in the success of East Ketley over the last 12 months. At East Ketley the changes are most significant when considering where the site has come from. The hardest part of the journey was moving the neglected grassland and heathland into a significantly better condition, getting people wanting to visit and engage in events and come back to have a walk around. At the Brickworks picking up the old layout and reinstating the grassland areas, instigating coppicing and better grassland management, creating an education area and making it used in the post pandemic world. However, it is probably Bilston UV which has been the most challenging. Overall, Pete and Abi's presence on site, responding to the enquiries, finding solutions to issues and refusing to be beaten has been inspiring.

Kelly Brindley – South Yorkshire – TVC sites

Kelly took over the large Yorkshire portfolio part way through the year, but almost instantly got her head around the complexity of the seven sites under her remit and began to enable her team to further develop the sites from an already strong starting point.

New initiatives have seen asylum seekers taking part in events at Bentley and Biodiversity Net gain opportunities agreed at Phoenix Park and New Park Springs. Kelly has worked carefully with the site budgets to maximize her staff potential across the sites, including

taking on a trainee ranger and at most sites continue to deliver diverse community activities and volunteering opportunities.

In a period of uncertainty for her team Kelly has shown strong leadership skills and sites continue to flourish.

Chris Gomersall – Haig

Chris is totally committed to managing Haig for the benefit of the local community and for enhancing the biodiversity of the site. He is knowledgeable and respectful of the history and understands how important the area is to the local community, who know him well and appreciate all that he does.

He is passionate about the biodiversity on the site and constantly monitors and makes improvements, managing it to support biodiversity while being mindful of how the community use the area, balancing the requirements of both, which is quite a skill.

Jenn Slade – Avenue Country Park and Washlands

Jenn came new into post in June 2021 yet has already made a huge impact on both the reserve and the visitors in just 11 months. She really hit the ground running, picking up a number of pieces of work stalled by Covid and resurrected them quickly and with great success! This includes liaising with both the local Rugby and Football clubs, completing essential livestock infrastructure, responding to anti-social behaviour, fixing critical river erosion issues, re-establishing the volunteer warden system and setting up a new (and highly popular) weekend volunteer team.

Alongside all this, she has delivered a brand new people engagement project with ambitious targets when schools, groups and individuals during Covid restrictions making just setting a date for a simple species walk a logistical nightmare! She is an incredible ambassador for both DWT and the Land Trust.

Eric Joinson – Port Sunlight River Park

Eric has only just taken over the reins at Port Sunlight River Park but, although out of his normal comfort zone has well and truly taken the bull by the horn, working alongside Autism Together, the previous managing partner for the River Park to get stuck into the day to day running of the site with gusto. Eric has done a fantastic job, keep up the good work.

Anna Hamshaw – South Yorkshire, TVC sites

Anna has been an extremely important member of the team during the transition between two operation leaders. She took on extra responsibility during this time to manage the sites and has also offered great support and guidance to other members of the wider team. Anna is always keen to develop herself, her skills and is always there to help the team and to support them.

Andrew Hunt – Silverdale Country Park

With Silverdale Country Park reaching its 10-year anniversary in 2021, Andy continues to pour his heart and soul into the park bringing new initiatives each year to ensure that the park continues to grow, improve and remain at the heart of the community. In its anniversary year the whole site has now been designated as a site of biological importance which is a testament to the continued targeted hard work that Andy and his volunteers undertake to improve the site.

In summary, Andy is the driving force behind so many initiatives at Silverdale whether they be increasing biodiversity, working with volunteers, teaching and sharing his knowledge with students, increasing community health and usage or supporting other staff. He has achieved so much during the past 12 months guiding the park to be the very best for the next 10 years.

Following an invertebrate survey Andy has been working hard with his volunteers on a targeted management plan to increase numbers and diversity. Activities have included, ring barking trees to provide dead wood, making dead wood clearing, planting an understory of over 500 trees, planting wild Strawberry plugs in preparation for rare Grizzly Skipper butterfly's to be transferred to Silverdale, one of only two locations in Staffordshire.

This year has seen an increase in all wildlife on site, particularly skylarks (12 breeding sites) rare Little ringed Plover, rare Willow tits, 58 species of Fungi, 250 floral species and a very rare Orchid - tongue Orchid.

Andy has developed health and wellbeing on site massively during 2021 through the introduction of measured and signed trails for walking, running and horse riding Andy has worked closely with the local community to help form Silverdale Running club that now has upwards of 100 members.

Andy has also spent time creating videos on site, in partnership with Staffordshire Fire Service on topics such as ' The Danger of Wild Fires' 'The Dangers of Frozen water' and

many more. These have been uploaded by the Fire Service and distributed to over 10,000 schools across the UK.

Silverdale has been awarded the Green Flag Award for the 5th year running and continues to win numerous Awards.

Nomination for Best Friends of/Community Group

Braeburn Park

The volunteers at Braeburn Park Nature Reserve are extremely dedicated, keen, reliable, and responsive; they have achieved a great amount of positive change to the habitats, paths and overall feel of the site. No task is too great, they also step up to challenges which may arise and are very passionate about their local reserve. They have recently taken forward the long-awaited butterfly transect walk at the reserve, improving knowledge of the reserve's nature and learning new skills at the same time.

They are a great, dependable team who work well together, whatever the task and the weather.

The Avenue Country Park Team

Jenn Slade has managed to form a completely new Friends of/ group from the local community, inspired them to come out and work on the site and already they are becoming semi-autonomous by going out one Sunday a month as a team and frequently in the week as individuals or in pairs.

Jenn has offered them training, support, constant enthusiasm and gratitude and they are blossoming under her supervision.

They are all local residents who feel empowered to care for their local patch, now showing much initiative and coming up with ideas of their own to make managing the country park a real team effort between DWT, the Land Trust and local people.

Friends of Countess of Chester Country Park

This group is a pleasure to work alongside, a dynamic mix of ages who just love the park, nature and the park visitors.

Organising events to engage people, food drop offs for homeless people, walk and talks for isolated people, engaging with Chester University student groups, wildlife surveys of the park, the contacting and coordination of the planting of the Queens Green Canopy as well as also volunteering with TCV in the groups that we also run on the park.

Not only do they do all this, they also help very much with the maintenance of the site furniture and Ranger Cabin as well as look for funding to run new and on-going projects.

Well done to all of you and thanks for all the hard work and support that you give to Countess Country Park and TCV.

St Joseph's School Community Group (Kiv)

This volunteer group have put a lot of work into converting some overgrown, disused woodland on the school site and creating a pleasant outside learning space. There was support from TCV but also from the school, local residents and parish councillors.

This project was a really good example of an area pulling together to improve facilities and provide a valuable space for the school children to benefit from.

Nomination for Volunteer of the Year

Graeme Jefferson - Braeburn Park

Graeme is a local resident of Braeburn Park housing estate, bordering the reserve and has been volunteering here for over seven years always taking a leading role when asked.

Graeme cares about the reserve and its future, putting in a great deal of effort to help with the wide range of practical tasks, always getting on well with the rest of the team and members of the public with his proactive approach and great sense of humour. It would be good to recognise the contribution that Graeme has made to Braeburn during his years of volunteering.

Andrew Eaton – Countess of Chester Country Park

This young man never complains and is always smiling, come rain, hail or snow he is there.

He will undertake whatever job you give him without complaint and is known for his impeccable brewing up skills, how he remembers who has what, no one knows!

Well done Andrew for all your hard work, for your on-going dedication and commitment to the projects at Countess Country Park.

Bill Anderson - Yorkshire

Bill has been volunteering at two Green Gym locations for several years. He has put in lots of hard work, he always loves seeing a job through to completion and takes real pride in the

improvements made to the habitat and upkeep of the sites. What we would call a real 'trooper'!

Sam Toon – Silverdale Country Park

Sam started volunteering with Groundwork as part of the Natural Neighbourhoods project in June 2021. Sam lives in the local community and has committed over 200 hours of volunteering since June, always turning out for work parties and community events. He has been instrumental in helping getting Community Action days started at Silverdale and often leads activities and encourages and supports new volunteers. These activities have included dry stone walling and hedge laying taster events, scything, as well as walks and wildlife identification activities.

Sam is passionate about the environment, very patient and is always supportive with other group members, he is a real asset to the group.

Jack Windle – South Yorkshire, TVC sites

Jack is an 18-year-old horticulture student at Dearne Valley College. When he politely approached TCV last year asking if he could gain work experience by joining the Dinnington and Kiveton Green Gym teams, he was immediately accepted.

Jack was welcomed into the group as a shy teenager but it wasn't long before his confidence and personality started to shine through and he's now a treasured member of the team.

Jack has been nominated because of his incredible attitude to work and his exceptional work ethic, his wonderful sense of humour, kind and helpful attitude and how he positively engages with everyone in the group - most of whom are at least 40 years his senior. He has overcome many personal challenges through volunteering, is a brilliant role model to others and he a real pleasure to work with.

Nomination for SITE OF THE YEAR

The Avenue Sites

The two sites at Wingerworth have always been connected, and the transfer of them separately is a temporary matter in the minds of most people in the area. As such, and in terms of delivery there can be few sites which achieve outstanding results across the range of charitable outcomes, indeed it would receive plaudits in any category mentioned above.

Environment: we have few sites with so many notable species including sand martins, curlew, barn owl, little egret, heron, great crested newts, water vole, grass snake, bullhead,

kingfisher - and that's before you start to delve into plants and invertebrates. It is an outstanding site for wildlife.

Education: the site is just starting on this journey, but an improved "forest schools" area has seen community groups, drop in sessions and formal school groups starting to be invited and attending sessions at the site. However, it goes beyond this with occasions when you ask the group arriving in the car park where they are from to find the University of the Third Age from Sheffield have turned up unannounced. In addition, there are fairly regular visits from professional groups, with Natural England bringing colleagues from NE and EA and DEFRA to site to help explain what Natural Capital is. As well as this, The Polish environmental regulators visited while on a trip to Sheffield University meaning the site helps with education of all ages and all levels of expertise.

Community Cohesion: the site has really seen local people come together to enjoy the space, especially over the period of the pandemic. In the last year the way local people and businesses came out in support of the damage to the boardwalk was humbling, but also raised over £23k through social media.

Health: the site supports the local junior sports association and junior teams in the local rugby club with pitches for matches and training. A local running club are licenced to train on the site, and encourage young and old to take part in a "Couch to 5km" programme and more arduous activity. Most weeks walking groups are found on site, often organised by local community groups but just turning up. Almost always you will find people walking just because they want to get out and the paths are really good and obvious.

Economy: the remediation of the Avenue site has enabled economic regeneration to happen in the area, with significant house building directly on site by Tilia Homes, but also Redrow having two sites very close by and Taylor Wimpy adjacent to the site. Plans for industrial and office development on the footprint of the old industrial works will increase employment and stimulate the local economy. The site employs a full time ranger, a part time Community Outreach Officer and stockman. The various licences bring in additional funds and support the management of high quality sports pitches making the area significantly more attractive for investment and opportunities for homes.

Hogmoor Inclosure

The Land Trust took on overall management of Hogmoor Inclosure in Hampshire in late 2020 during a national lockdown. Despite this, in a short space of time Deadwater Valley

Trust rangers who are our managing partner, local contractors (Goodyear garden services and Quality Land Services), Whitehill & Bordon Community Trust and the local developer Whitehill & Bordon Regeneration Company have worked together to deliver an awesome greenspace for the benefit of both the public and wildlife in and around Whitehill & Bordon. Word has spread and the site now attracts 160,000 visits per quarter, tracked by on-site visitor counters. The 54-hectare wood and heathland site has undergone path and drainage improvements, new entrance signage installation and new interpretation and way marking, connecting visitors to the wider greenspace network of footpaths around the area. Conservation work to enhance the site includes heather and invertebrate surveys, invasive species control and woodland thinning.

Significant play area resurfacing improvement works have taken place to improve the visitor experience. Additional smaller children play equipment has been installed and funding obtained to extend the younger child play provision on offer.

Community involvement is significant, with local conservation volunteer groups regularly getting hands-on with pine pulling or path vegetation clearance. A thriving café and educational space offers regular weekend craft fayres which are proving popular along with a wide range of events organised and facilitated by the team at DVT. Events range from dark sky star gazing, seasonal family trails to a Halloween fancy dress orienteering and outdoor theatre. An extremely positive event to raise awareness of heathlands ran for the first time in its new location at Hogmoor in 2022 called Secrets of the Heath. Attracted more than 2,000 people to Hogmoor, this is a real example of fantastic partnership working with South Downs National Park who have secure funding for the next three years.

Nomination for Managing Partner's Choice Award - Project of the Year

Learning through Nature – The Avenue Country Park

Learning through nature has three key aims, firstly, a programme of inclusive community activities, enabling participation in learning activities, guided walks, forest schools, practical conservation and volunteering. Secondly, forest school and nature activity areas, waymarked trails and interpretation of key site habitats and wildlife to enable outdoor learning and improved visitor experience and accessibility. Thirdly, wildlife viewing screens to allow visitors to spend time engaging with and understanding the variety of key habitats and wildlife present, while avoiding disturbance.

Elements one and two were completely new work at the Avenue Country Park, requiring initiative and determination to promote the project, engage with new audiences, and break down barriers to inclusion and work around the restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic. Despite all of this our staff have worked so hard and have delivered varied and popular events, improved site accessibility and empowered people to know and care about their local wildlife.

'Branching Out' - Bentley Community Woodland

The six-week project offering a range of outdoor skills and activities, offered to newly arrived asylum seekers in the Doncaster area. This project was very popular and well received by all involved, and perfectly demonstrated the potential for using nature and green spaces to help people develop skills, socialise, and feel part of their local community and feel included.

The Natural Neighbourhoods team also organised our first Rural Skills event on the August Bank Holiday. Across four days over 500 visitors came to Silverdale to experience displays and taster sessions in blacksmithing, chainsaw sculptures, dry stone walling, scything, orienteering, foraging as well as meeting their local fire service, police service and many other displays.

Round House Project- Hassall Green Nature Reserve

Prior to the start of the Green Angels programme at Hassall Green Nature Reserve in 2019 there were no facilities on site for volunteers and visitors. An aspiration of the five-year project was to provide some kind of natural shelter for site users, whether attending training sessions, community events or simply visiting the Reserve.

In the winter of 2021 we commissioned The Roundhouse Company to provide a 6m diameter timber framed roundhouse constructed through a series of workshops engaging 9 trainees. The structure is open-sided, with a timber roof supported on twelve round Larch poles with a floor of Douglas fir. The project battled storms, Covid 19, problems with supply chains and rising costs, but the result was delivered within budget and is fabulous, providing an invaluable resource for the site for years to come, and actually enhancing the nature reserve, with its warm colours and natural form.

West Wing Restoration- Fort Burgoyne

The Fort Burgoyne West Wing restoration has transformed a derelict decaying space which was suffering antisocial behaviour into a high quality mini Fort informal recreation space.

Community engagement forming part of Pioneering Places East Kent a joint Arts Council and National Lottery Heritage Fund project saw participants provide their thoughts on potential future uses of the space in notebooks which were brought together into a Big Drawing by Charles Holland. Further volunteer participation came in the form of a two week community archaeology dig which informed landscaping plans and specification which appointed architects developed and secured Scheduled Monument Consent.

The potential value of the space to a new residential estate on adjacent land has resulted in the developer agreeing to provide water and electric supplies which will support potential event use.

Outside is Fun- TCV Kiveton and Diddington

Outside is Fun, led by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), was part of the Children and Nature programme funded by the Department of Education and supported by Natural England. The funding finished in March 22.

The Children and Nature programme is part of the Government's 25-year environment plan and comprises three separate projects. Outside is Fun is one of five Community Forest and Woodland Outreach (CFWO) projects and sits alongside Nature Friendly Schools and the Growing Care Farm project.

The aim of the CFWO initiative was to increase and help sustain community forest and woodland outreach activities being delivered to school children, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, to benefit their mental health and wellbeing, engagement with school and other programme outcomes.

Outside is Fun aimed to establish a rolling programme that engaged year five or six pupils, within walking distance of community woodland sites across Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster. We had to adapt our approach to Covid right in the middle of the funding and have received some great feedback from pupils and staff from the schools.

We are looking at how we can use the learning and reflections from this great project to take forward into our team for future work.