

Managing Partners Awards Nominations 2023

Full list of nominations submitted by individuals within the Estates team at the Land Trust, and by Managing Partners.

Community Site of the Year

Silverdale

There's a lot for the local community to get involved with at this site, apart from the regular volunteering activities, scything seems to be a favourite. Three of the group have been volunteering for over 10 years.

Other events for the community were:

- This year's summer fair celebrating the Queens Platinum Jubilee.
- Orienteering event where groups of all ages were exploring the site. The event was such a success a permanent orienteering route is being designed for Silverdale.
- Bespoke home-schooling work party sessions, giving home schooled teenagers with learning difficulties and their parents a chance to work and learn together outdoors.
- Silverdale running club continues to be a key user of the park with up to 25 runners training on the park each week as well as donating £200 to Silverdale to help us manage the park paths.
- Silverdale angling club also continues to be a key user.
- Staffordshire Bridleway Associations continues to organise horse riding events at Silverdale.

Greenwich Peninsula Ecology Park and Southern Park

Greenwich Ecology Park and Southern Park in central London, both managed by The Conservation Volunteers, offer a range of opportunities for community groups including schools and volunteers and also access to greenspace in a very urban location. The sites combined are just 4.5Ha and last year offered 31 events attracting 1,640 people, 262 volunteering opportunities attracting 785 volunteers, 19 school visits catering for 488 children and 21 adult skills training sessions for 242 people.

Elba Park

Team organised and held 33 community events this year including Easter, Halloween and Christmas craft sessions. Summer activities included sports, wildlife spotting, bark rubbing, and tree trails. A total of 238 people came along and enjoyed the sessions. In total this year the site team hosted 57 volunteer sessions with 31 individual volunteers and a whopping total of 1,008 volunteer hours!

We also had two CSR groups volunteer with us this year helping resurface paths. Local employees from NHS property services and Equans enjoyed their days and the opportunity to connect with colleagues despite the hard work.

Finally, Elba's long standing star volunteer continues to be Robin – Chair of the Friends Group. The team had the opportunity to celebrate and thank him at Groundwork's 40th anniversary in London.

Nature Site of the Year

Dawlish Countryside Park

Dawlish is a 26-hectare park attracting over 200,000 visitors a year. Managed by TDC the majority of the site is meadow grassland with colourful wildflower swathes and areas of Spring Barley. These have been a huge benefit to two very different species, in particular.

Before creating the park two pairs of Cirl bunting bred on the site. After just two years of the Spring Barley this has increased to ten breeding pairs.

Through a project with Back from the Brink, seed from an endangered arable wildflower called Small Flowered Catchfly has been sown in the barley patches. Its life cycle suits the increasingly rare spring sown crop, and it's thriving on site with upwards of 900 plants counted.

Additionally, a heritage orchard was planted. (And cared for by Dawlish Gardens Trust charity) the tree species chosen for their historic links to the area and are less common in commercial orchards.

Oliver Road Lagoons

Oliver Road Lagoons, managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust, is a unique brownfield site located on the Thames Estuary where there was once a power station. The resulting landscape and substrate of pulverized fuel ash is now home to populations of nationally rare invertebrates, partly designated as a SSSI. Essex Wildlife Trust manage the site by controlling the birch scrub to retain the flower rich grassland and areas of bare ground beneficial for invertebrates. Last year the team also managed to re-commission the tidal sluice on site to allow parts of the site to become inundated. This will have benefits for the sites resident water voles and roosting wading birds for which the SSSI is designated.

Avenue Washlands Nature Reserve

Avenue Washlands is biodiverse and nature rich thanks to the hard work of DWT and their volunteers. This year under the Natural England District level licencing pond creation scheme, Wildscapes created two new ponds with the northernmost sidings compartment, enhancing a third; the dragonfly pond, with the objective to heighten pond connectivity for great crested newts. Subsequent surveys revealed the two established ponds to be of excellent quality, with peak counts of 22-59 great-crested newts recorded during one visit, and peak counts of between two and six within the newly created ponds. Thanks to numerous dedicated volunteers and staff the management of areas inaccessible to machinery was carried out by hand to enlarge open areas of water, desirable for species breeding.

Staff, volunteers and the community group have carried out regular essential habitat management for conservation across the site and for all habitat types; wetlands, grasslands, woodlands and hedgerows, adopting traditional management methods, such as hedge laying, for sensitive biodiversity enhancement, additionally maintaining traditional skills.

Seasonal grazing of the grasslands by cattle in Siding meadows and 20 soay sheep within the Duck Marsh and Reedbed compartments ensure a diverse grassland is maintained. Botany surveys completed last year within the HLS scheme compartments, Duckmarsh, bee field and Sidings, by

Natural England, revealing high quality habitat resulting in an extension to the reduction in coverage in comparison with the previous years.

DWT ensure that Water levels in the Duckmarsh are seasonally altered to provide muddy feeding margins for waders. Kingfisher perches have been created and Segments of the pond margins dug by hand to provide a feeding area for waders.

The living bird table plot has been ploughed, harrowed and seeded, aiming to provide a source of nourishment for overwintering passerines during the colder months. Seasonal surveys continue, including bird and dragonfly counts and butterfly transects and there are numerous successful bird and bat boxes across the site.

Carr Lodge

Carr Lodge is an amazing space for nature. Managed by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) the site contains a complex mosaic of habitats including wetland, deciduous woodland and scrub, good quality semi-improved grassland (grazed by YWT's Shorthorn and Highland cattle), flood-plain grazing marsh, swamp and tall fen.

Grazing by cattle helps to create additional micro-habitats for invertebrates, particularly for ground-dwelling faunas, including ground beetles and spiders that are associated with the draw down zones of ephemeral wetlands that develop in grazing marshes. *Panagaeus cruxmajor* is the most significant ground beetle found at Carr Lodge, given it is Vulnerable, Nationally Rare and a Species of Principal Importance (SoPI).

Within the immediate ecological landscape, Carr Lodge could be considered a natural extension of Potteric Carr SSSI, which extends immediately to the east of Carr Lodge,

A report will be submitted this year, which should see Carr Lodge receive Local Wildlife Site status.

Haig

Phenomenal effort by Chris and team as part of a HLF project, "Get Cumbria Buzzing" to enhance a Buglife Bee Lines corridor.

So far 14,000 native bulbs planted, 8kg of native wildflower seeds sown, 3,600 native plug plants planted with approx. 40 work parties/events, with approx. 200 people helping to deliver the work on site, from school groups to corporate volunteers. Coastal heath was encouraged with seeding and planting of heather, 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 Sept.

The benefits have been a focus on native species and correct management and a push to involve the community with a series of events and support from CWT, as well as skill development opportunities for participants and networking opportunities.

Hassall Green

A combination of partnership working between Groundwork and Green Angels have provided a wealth of biodiversity on what is a very small site.

Dry stone walls also provide habitat for amphibians, invertebrates and small mammals;

The efforts of the last 10 years creating and managing the wildlife habitats onsite really came to a head this year with all sorts of wildlife seen onsite. Badger setts now recolonised after the disturbance in recent years from neighbouring development, bats regularly seen onsite, 117 flowering orchid stems this year plus much more. Most notable though is the regular sightings of grass snakes onsite. From not seeing any for years our meadow management clearly suits them, particularly the stacks of hay we leave at the meadow sides after scything, providing a warm place for increasingly rare grass snakes to thrive.

Health Site of the Year

Beam Park

Beam Park in east London, managed by London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, offers volunteer sessions for community members including scrub clearance and litter picking. Last year this attracted 14 volunteers over seven tasks. Healthy walks are also promoted, helping support people with their mental and physical health, and forming part of the council's Social Prescribing programme. Last year five events were held onsite attracting 16 people.

Kiveton Community Woodland

The Wellbeing in Nature project provides a monthly program for mental health and wellbeing through nature-based crafts and mindfulness activities. The project has developed into a nurturing space for women to connect, share and learn new skills surrounded by nature at Kiveton Community Woodland.

The program includes mindfulness, grounding and reflection activities to help participants find inner calm and be present in the moment, and natural crafts to encourage connection to nature, boost confidence and to foster a sense of achievement and wellbeing.

Participants engage in activities such as lighting fires, willow weaving, natural cordage, and pewter casting to learn new skills which are fun to do, challenging, but also achievable to help promote self-esteem and a sense of pride.

The project has been a tremendous success, with participants reporting significant improvements in their confidence levels, reduced stress and anxiety, new friendships, and discovering hidden talents!

Monkton

Groundwork run a Green Gym on site every week to give people within the community a chance to improve their physical and mental health. Questionnaires filled out by participants show that 100% feel happier as result of attending.

Route 2 Work (a SEN college) have been looking for a site for land-based placements and this year have had up to ten learners attend Monkton to carry out practical maintenance tasks. Tutors have reported that learners have improved their communication skills, increased in confidence and some even feel ready to move into the workplace because of these sessions.

Groundwork also holds community outdoor planting sessions for those who do not attend the usual sessions. All participants benefit both physically and mentally from attending.

Also, two volunteers have dedicated themselves to the site, partially because they care about Monkton but also because it benefits their physical and mental wellbeing.

Beaulieu

In 2022/23 Beaulieu hosted 48 physical related activities throughout the year organised by Health & Sole. This attracted 640 participants. Heart & Sole is a free health walk scheme run every Friday by volunteers with support from Chelmsford City Council's Community Sport and Wellbeing Team. The economic value of health & wellbeing at Beaulieu has been calculated at £480,000 per annum.

Education Site of the Year

Fort Burgoyne

Last year Fort Burgoyne in Dover, managed by the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership, ran 11 events catering for 332 individuals from primary and pre-school, one event for seven home school students and 23 sessions for 237 adults from local colleges. The site also has a new improved stable block which is now safe to use by visiting groups for education sessions. This is in addition to 25 informal education events such as bat walks, history tours, Green Gang and guided walks attracting 444 participants.

Avenue Country Park

Avenue Country Park, which was previously devoid of school nature activities, has over the last couple of years become a key part of nature education in the local area. The establishment of monthly junior rangers has enabled individuals aged between 11 and 16 to gain conservation related skills and knowledge in a practical format, whilst encouraging a sense of pride and respect for their natural green space environments and inhabitant wildlife. Nature tot is a pre-school aged session that encourages toddlers, supervised by their parents, to explore and connect to the green spaces with the aim to build a firm nature connection. Guided walks and nature connection or education activities are delivered seasonally, whilst larger scale school and scout education sessions have successfully been established and delivered. The new interpretation panels and waymarked routes also allow for self-led learning by visitors.

Warrington

Warrington has developed a very successful programme of seasonal outdoor formal teaching events at Bewsey, the Orchard and Airlift Hill, where every class in the schools will have attended through the 22/23 school year. These teaching events continue to support the science element of the school curriculum. In addition, an Environment Day held at Whittle Hall Community Centre, was well attended with over 250 members of the local community and 80 children partaking in pond dipping. This event helped to raise awareness on the geese overpopulation issue in addition to other environmental topics.

Green Angels also ran Wildlife ID, fungal ID, bugs and bloom, in addition to a wellness course connecting with nature at the Community Orchard.

Education at GPEP is at all levels and includes primary school class visits, secondary school work placements, sessions for university student, youth group activities, adult training and guided tours. All staff deliver activities, but Tony Day is responsible for the main school programme and, having been at GPEP for 21 years, is locally famous for his inspiring and humorous sessions! He also has a wealth of experience in environmental education provision for special needs children on site and GPEP is one of the few nature centres in London that offers such a wide range of specialist provision.

GPEP

In 22/23, 19 school class visits were delivered with a total of 488 children from Foundation level to Key Stage 2 Science (less than usual as COVID19 and ongoing boardwalk and site works affected our school programme at the start of the year and in March 2023). Work placements from two local secondary schools carried out one week work placements on site. Tours, talks and Q&A sessions were organised for six university groups with a total of 165 students at Undergraduate and Masters level, for students studying a range of subjects from environment resource management and sustainable design to illustration and digital design. Training sessions on site included dragonfly and butterfly surveying and a special series of habitat management trainings days in liaison with Queer Circle for LGBTQ+ people. Guided walks were organised for new Peninsula residents and staff ran a tours and activity sessions for young people from the Wave Project and teenagers with ASD from a My World My Home youth campaign group.

School feedback:

Cherry Orchard Primary School, Year 6 class, June 2022

“A fantastic visit, heads crammed with info, lots of laughs and amazing stories. Unmissable!”

Childeric Primary School, Reception class July 2022

“This is often the ONLY time our children experience nature first hand – a valuable and priceless visit. Thanks so much”

Cherry Orchard Primary School, Year 4 class June 2022

Hassall Green

- There are a variety of educational events delivered on what is a very small site, these include:
 - 52 Green Gym participants have benefited from learning new skills through the activities provided.
 - 248 Green Angels participants have learned new skills and enjoyed team work to improve the environment at Hassall Green. Every Green Angels course is delivered by a professional in their field of expertise, and this allows our trainees to extend their learning and progress at their own pace as they develop new interests, and perhaps even change their career prospects.
 - Go Wild Forest Schools and Cheshire buddies both continue planning and running forest schools again at Hassall Green. Dane Beavers (17 children & 6 adults) continues visiting the nature reserve each year and this year it was great to teach them how to identify plants and wildlife towards their community action badge. Training also continues from Steve Tomlin in the art of scything for our volunteers, some of which love it that much they have bought their own scythes and peening ponies.

Site Delivering Best Economic Activity

Braeburn Park

Braeburn Park, managed by London Wildlife Trust, is in Crayford in South-east London. The site is used weekly and in the school holidays by Sara Jones who offers weekly Forest School sessions. This is a private enterprise offering children the chance to explore greenspace close to home. Last year 91 sessions were offered catering for 1,064 children below the age of 16.

Pleasley Pit

The site visitor centre and cafe employ a centre manager and a number of other staff. The cafe custom continues to grow post covid and the addition of heritage items and interpretation within the cafe makes it a hub for visitors. The dog cafe ensure that the site caters for the many dog walkers on the neighbouring country park. Much of the landscape maintenance budget is put back to local contractors and community interest companies for tree works and grass cutting. A local firm Heart security have a five-year contract to carry out the car park security. The Pleasley Pit Trust hosts numerous large-scale events / festivals on the site that engage local business.

Beaulieu

In 2022/23 £372,841 was invested in local contractors at Beaulieu. There are 10 businesses operating on site which includes two apprentices. The approximate number of new homes built in the period was 1,341. The economic value of Beaulieu in terms of land management and use has been calculated at £3,970,830 per annum.

Most Inclusive Site

Fort Burgoyne

Fort Burgoyne in Dover is managed by the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership. Last year the site offered a collaboration with the Wild with Wheels group. Sessions have been organised for individuals and families with disabled members of the community to come and explore the site, getting involved with natural art, bird watching, leaf & bark rubbing, seed collecting and learning about the history of the site. One of the sessions included participants from Touchbase Care - adults who are disabled and neuro-divergent. At least one session was supported by Natural Pathways Bushcraft. Eight sessions took place, catering for 68 participants in total.

Haig

The team at Haig and their volunteers have worked hard to include groups of asylum seekers to come and join sessions on site. Their volunteer, Alan, was the first point of contact for the asylum seekers who are looking to be involved on site. There has been regular contact with the hotel staff and the asylum seekers themselves to inform them of the opportunities and ensure they are added to their program of events.

Marleigh

Marleigh is a community of 1,300 homes in the north-west of Cambridge in the greenbelt on the edge of the city. About 15% of the homes are built and occupied, but already the community centre is operational and has been for the last six months. The community centre is uniquely placed to be impactful in binding the community. Located on the market square opposite the school, the hall and foyer attract parents and residents. It provides additional living space for parties just as the public open space provides additional garden space. Most residents in Marleigh are from overseas: residents in the social or shared ownership housing are largely key workers or refugees from Iran, Ukraine and Syria. Those in privately owned properties are largely from India and Hong Kong but also Colombia, Greece and Algeria which means that they have no family nearby and so their local community is critical to them adjusting to their new home. The Land Trust is focused on responding to local needs, for example, working with the parish council to make the village cricket pavilion available throughout Ramadan, hosting a Friday morning market that brings food direct from London

for the Hong Kong diaspora, and a vigil was held the night before the first anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine.

Most Improved Site

Wellesley Woodlands

A number of significant improvements have taken place to this, the largest Suitable Natural Greenspace in the UK. These include:

- Developed a new site leaflet to engage visitors with local heritage and biodiversity.
- Translocated Green Hounds Tongue to allow for expansion of this nationally rare plant
- Installed new bins, fencing, dead hedges, bollards, fingerposts, steps and a new vehicle access track.
- Restored wooden sculptures and enhanced a well-loved feature - the Wellington Statue mound
- Robo-mowed three miles of pedestrian verges and improved the path network by stump grinding
- Restored a WWII pill box roof via our first Green Angel volunteer session
- Undertook major lake drainage improvements and ditch clearance works to reduce the risk of flooding
- Constructed 19 habitat piles, hibernacula and stumperies for wildlife
- Commissioned a woodland management plan allowing for a 10-year felling license to remove conifer and replace with broadleaved trees and finalised maps to enable access a Woodland Improvement Grant.
- Ran corporate volunteer tasks with a number of companies to remove invasive plants
- Gained the first Green Flag Award for the site

Canvey Wick

Canvey Wick which is partly SSSI, on the Essex stretch of the Thames Estuary, is managed by the RSPB. Last year the site managed by them increased by 83Ha from 17Ha. The size of the site, historic development for an oil refinery, leaving a legacy of hazardous infrastructure, and its remote location is a challenge for management. Despite this, RSPB have begun to deliver the management to improve the site for the benefit of its unique wildlife. This has involved removal of scrub over 8Ha to create a mosaic of more open habitats beneficial for the development of bare ground and flower rich grassland and associated invertebrates. Volunteering with the RSPB and the partnership with Buglife has also supported engagement with the diverse local community at Canvey through sessions with adult mental health and social isolation groups, the Yellow Door youth club and seasonal family events.

Port Sunlight River Park

This site has had challenges over the past few years, a combination of Covid, the ranger leaving and the MP finding themselves unable to continue in their role meant the site lost its way a little, volunteer numbers dropped significantly, active management to enhance biodiversity stopped and the connection between the park and the local community stalled.

A combination of the appointment of TCV as the new MP, a herculean effort from the Land Trust fundraising officer to open the Heritage Centre and source funding from UU for projects connected

with water environments and the GA team delivering those activities in partnership with the new ranger have restored the site back to a thriving hub for the local community.

In addition, the ranger on site is actively managing the site to increase the grassland habitats for ground nesting birds, and evidence of otters using the site have been found.

The site is now returned back to the wildlife rich, community hub which it once was, and is a great example of the partnership and teamwork that exists between the MPs and the Land Trust.

Ranger of the Year

Tom Marshall – Kiveton TCV

Tom started volunteering with the Kiveton Green Gym in 2016 so has a Forestry Commission volunteering shirt as well as a TCV one. Tom was quiet and reserved, he has blossomed while volunteering under the recently departed Hannah Darcel. Once the switch to TCV had taken place he very soon became a Key Volunteer, then a Volunteer Officer before taking the first step on the paid ladder by becoming a Site Warden. From there he gradually moved up the ranks and has recently become a Senior Project Officer working on Engagement, the role recently vacated by Hannah who is incredibly proud of the progress Tom has made over the past seven years.

Tom has been an invaluable member of the site team over the past few years helping design and install all manner of steps, fences and culverts always in a calm, methodical and carefully planned manner. If you should ever find yourself in the Doncaster you will see the best tool store in all of TCV, designed and built by Tom. Tom has been an inspiration to us all and the thought “What would Tom do?” or “Better ask Tom” is never far from our minds. The site team’s loss is the Engagement team’s gain and it is good to know that should his advice ever be needed he is just across the office.

In January this year Tom organised and led the first ever Kiveton Community Orchard Wassail. This was a whole team event run by Tom and was a great success. The idea that the shy, quiet volunteer of seven years ago would be playing the violin and shouting “Wassail!” in front of a crowd of people is quite remarkable and a great demonstration of the value of volunteering. Tom is a poster boy for the great work that TCV do on the fantastic Land Trust sites.

Sian Avon – Dawlish Countryside Park and Ridgetop Park

Sian’s a very modest person. However, the work she has done over the past few years is remarkable.

Those in estates know how frustrating it is to get a new site that perhaps doesn’t have good access, or the right site furniture.

Sian has been involved in the early stages of both Dawlish Countryside Park and Ridgetop Park and has worked to ensure the best site design possible. At the same time her interest and enthusiasm for both wildlife and local history and heritage has added hugely to the interpretation of the sites and the connections with the local community. Her attention to detail is incredible and has resulted in two very high-quality spaces.

Sian is both practical and passionate and has a real gift for talking to people. She’s conscientious, hardworking and remarkably positive. She’s a joy to work with and we’re very grateful for her efforts.

Peter McNee and Abi Rees – Groundworks - East Ketley, The Old Brickworks and Bilston

Pete and Abi have been instrumental in the success of East Ketley, The Old Brickworks and Bilston UVA. They both ensured a smooth transition midway through the year to a new Estate Manager and have helped to progress ongoing projects such as the pond clearance at Old Brickworks and substantial tree works at East Ketley. Alongside this they have worked hard this year on the design of new signage and interpretation for the sites. Pete's knowledge and communication regarding issues on the sites and suggested solution has been invaluable. Abi's ongoing presence at Bilston and links to the local community and stakeholders has helped to tackle a range of issues that come with the Urban nature of the site.

Rebecca Maw – Monkton

Rebecca's contribution to Monkton speaks for itself. It's a relatively small site at just under 10ha and with a modest budget, but under her leadership it has achieved Land Trust Nature Site of the Year and been nominated for Education Site of the year. More than this, the community benefits delivered have been hugely impressive, particularly for those with physical and mental health needs. The focus of many projects and activities on site have been very much geared towards helping those who would benefit most from what the site can offer.

She is particularly skilled though at bringing her influence and incredible enthusiasm to bear when it comes to capitalising on new initiatives or funding opportunities within the north-east to help benefit Monkton, none more so than with the contribution delivered by the Green Challenge Recovery Fund which helped transform the site in so many ways for people and wildlife.

Neil McMahon – TCV – Countess of Chester Country Park

The budget for this site is very small in comparison to the number of visitors which the site attracts. Keeping the site looking so good whilst coping with the visitor number can only be achieved by careful planning and utilisation of the volunteers on site.

Neil achieves this by having a great relationship with the Friends group and volunteers, he maximises what can be achieved on site, and co-ordinates activities to ensure the site is well maintained whilst providing interesting activities for the volunteers to keep them engaged, this takes a lot of organisation and time management skills.

He works really well with neighbouring landowners on the site so that the entire country park which extends beyond our land ownership looks good. He is enthusiastic, engaging and friendly and is very well known on the site.

Best Friends of/Community Group

Dinnington Green Gym Group

Since the return from covid the Dinnington Green Gym group have grown in strength, recording great volunteer numbers over the year. They are a pleasure to work with and work so well as a supportive team to each other. They have recently finished a hedge laying project on site. They embraced learning a new skills and work well to get the task completed and looking fabulous. The majority of the volunteers are extremely local to the site and walk in from the different entrances. A recent visit from Forestry England saw how great the volunteers were and how they made everyone feel welcome.

The Friends of Port Sunlight River Park

The Friends of Port Sunlight River Park have done excellent works for and around the park, they were as active as they could be during the long lockdowns that came with the covid 19 pandemic , and when we came out of the lockdown they were very supportive to me as I had just come into post and had to pick up with the group as the previous ranger had left . During this time, we have had some really good projects thanks to the support of the Land Trust Green Angles. The friends built a wellbeing oasis area, started a new gardening club, and took part in Green Angel courses such as reed bed management and scything. They hit the ground running as soon as the restrictions were lifted. They are supportive to the aims of TCV and the Land Trust and promote the park to the wider community including schools and educational groups. A lot could not have been achieved without their support and most importantly their time.

Whitehaven Harbour Youth Project

We have worked together on site since 2009. Recently the frequency of group sessions has increased with seven sessions held last year where a total of 61 young people participated in a variety of tasks from native bulb and plug planting to building bird boxes, clearing turfs from pathways, hand weeding the meadows, biological surveys and seeding. The staff are enthusiastic and supportive and there is usually a good atmosphere with tangible outcomes for the site. Site users appreciate seeing young people contributing to maintaining and improving their area and are often very complimentary. The organisation does their own social media posting which makes it easy for us to share the images and information about what the young people have been doing with our own supporters. Participants, their parent's and the organisation are great ambassadors for the work we do in the community and are often keen to know and do more.

Friends of Knowle Haven

The group was established in 2016 and created to manage the site.

The initial concept was a community space to be used by a diverse range of people including youth groups, adults with disabilities, as well as to support mental health activities and physical exercise groups.

The site has grown to be much more than a community space.

It has become a Haven for wildlife with a diverse eco system. A pond teeming with newts and other amphibians, the site is also home to birds of prey and deer.

Pleasley Pit Trust

Pleasley Pit Trust – The volunteers at the Pit Trust are incredibly dedicated to the site and to making it a welcoming and fascinating place to visit. Their hard work and effort have enabled them to establish a successful café and visitor centre and their fundraising has made a huge difference to securing the future of the historic buildings. The knowledge and passion that the volunteers have for this site make them an absolute pleasure to work alongside.

Volunteer of the Year

Paul Charman – Hogmoor Inclosure

Paul is the textbook definition of a volunteer. Ever cheery and keen he is always the first to take a step forward - much to the exasperation of his wife! He is not only an active member of our board of

trustees but is also a regular at work parties and events as well as assisting with our Junior Rangers group. He is on the board of allotment holders, helps with the accounts for a local fishing group (despite not fishing himself) and is a member of the local cycling group - individually and acting as the eyes on his tandem with his friend and Blind Olympian Rob. Over the last year he and his wife have welcomed a Ukrainian family into their home. As well as all this Paul manages to be a devoted Grandfather and friend to all.

Gabby Shields – The Avenue

Gabby is a local resident to the Avenue estate and has been a volunteer since Spring 2022. Over the past year, Gabby has shown tremendous passion, care and commitment not only for the local community, but for the enhancement of the reserves and wildlife. Gabby contributes a valuable amount of time to both the Avenue sites, which has grown considerably over the past year. Not only does Gabby participate in weekly practical volunteering sessions, she utilises her experience as a teacher to assist seasonal events, guided walks and monthly junior ranger and nature tots sessions. During unforeseen situations, Gabby has remained reactive and been a vital support for the site ranger on numerous occasions. She has also actively sought further opportunities to contribute to the sites betterment by coordinating and overseeing monthly community litter picking sessions and contributing her valuable time to ensure the sites are secure. Gabby's help and support over the past year is truly commendable.

Ann Shaw / Francis Williams – Ashton's Field

Ann and Francis are two of the most inspiring individuals I have ever met. They have a huge amount of knowledge, skill and expertise with regards to hedge laying and hedgerow management built up over many years. Their biggest skill however is in teaching and encouraging other people to take part. Since introducing us to the art of hedge laying in 2019 they have overseen the laying of 282 metres of hedgerow at Ashton's Field all using hand tools and in the traditional Lancashire style. They have done this with the assistance/hinderance of 26 volunteers (none of whom had ever picked up an axe/billhook before) across 57 full day sessions. Seven of these volunteers have gone into employment since within environmental conservation and state this training as a key component whilst six others have entered hedge laying competitions (with one winner). Their biggest attribute is patience and enthusiasm to see everyone succeed.

Alan Alexander – Haig

Although he is not a registered National Trust volunteer, his role is voluntary enabling groups of asylum seekers to come and attend sessions on site. Alan was my first point of contact with the asylum seekers and has remains crucial to facilitating the volunteering sessions being offered. He has done this through regular contact with the hotel staff and the asylum seekers themselves to inform them of the opportunities and ensure they are added to their program of events. He acts as the responsible person / group leader to receive and return the necessary paperwork such as risk assessments, volunteer activity forms and site information. He accompanies willing participants to the site and remains with them for the duration to ensure safeguarding requirements are met and joins in the activities despite a long-term injury. He is always in good spirits and encouraging despite the many challenges his role presents.

Mike Little - Friends of Knowle Haven

Mike has been the face of and inspiration of Knowle Haven, despite his disability, he works hard to keep the site open and manages the site day in, day out, and also unlocks and locks up. He

developed site including the pond from digging it out to keeping it clear from weeds. He cuts the grass and litter picks.

Managing Partners Choice Award – Project of the Year

Kiveton Wellbeing Group

The Wellbeing in Nature project provides a monthly program for mental health and wellbeing through nature-based crafts and mindfulness activities. The project has developed into a nurturing space for women to connect, share and learn new skills surrounded by nature on a community woodland in South Yorkshire.

The program includes mindfulness, grounding and reflection activities to help participants find inner calm and be present in the moment, and natural crafts to encourage connection to nature, boost confidence and to foster a sense of achievement and wellbeing.

Participants engage in activities such as lighting fires, willow weaving, natural cordage, and pewter casting to learn new skills which are fun to do whilst also being slightly challenging but achievable to help promote self-esteem and a sense of pride.

The Wellbeing in Nature project has been a tremendous success, with participants reporting significant improvements in their confidence levels, reduced stress and anxiety, new friendships, and discovering hidden talents!

Get Cumbria Buzzing

Get Cumbria Buzzing is a 3.5-year county wide partnership project with Cumbria Wildlife Trust, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to improve sites along bee lines for pollinators. Haig received and delivered £5,000 worth of works on time and a 6-month extension to use up underspend increased the project value to £8,000. The first year served as the academy ranger's diploma project however, the ranger delivered the rest with 14,000 native bulbs and 3,600 plug plants planted, 8kg of wildflower seed sown. 40 work parties/events involving over 200 people to deliver the work on site from school groups to corporate volunteers. Coastal heath was encouraged with seeding and planting, spring bulbs for early nectar and increasing sward diversity with seeding and planting. There is a 10-year commitment to favourable management with a late cut and collect in September. Cumbria Wildlife Trust supported throughout with skill development and networking opportunities, resources and steering group meetings.

Green Angels Water Connections at Port Sunlight River Park

The project delivered a programme of Green Angels activities, community events, formal and informal educational sessions with young people, engaging with people of all ages and abilities at Port Sunlight River Park (PSRP). Activities focused on learning about the water environment - habitat creation and maintenance and the importance of water bodies to the physical and social environment and the history of the area. We were able to use the large lake and reedbeds on site; the Mersey Estuary and adjoining mudflats/RAMSAR site; the River Dibbin/Dibbinsdale Brook; and the tidal inlet and culvert as our learning resource.

As part of the project, we were also able to provide two new interpretation boards and support the PSRP Friends Group through developing the "Oasis" area as a quiet space and an area for raised beds and gardening - leaving a legacy for all to enjoy.

Secrets of the Heath – Hogmoor Inclosure

“Secrets of the Heath” is a family-friendly, awareness raising event around the heritage and importance of heathlands.

The thing that made this zing was the willingness to work together and collaborate between a number of like-minded organisations. Together we brought an established event to a brand new audience and location, attracting more than 4000 people.

The project shows the positive impact that can be delivered to the community when you work together and overcome challenges to share skills, knowledge, expertise and funds.

The host site was Hogmoor Inclosure and involved Deadwater Valley Trust, Whitehill & Bordon Community Trust and the South Downs National Park.

Site of the Year

Fort Burgoyne

Delivering on both education - (35 formal sessions catering for 576 and 25 informal sessions attracting 444 participants) and inclusion - offering sessions to Wild with Wheels disability group, Fort Burgoyne offers a good balance of community engagement whilst also supporting other outcomes on environment and biodiversity - 14 formal wildlife surveys and management at Coomb Hole Local Wildlife Site; Economy - over £200,000 invested in local contractors and also engagement with the local community through volunteering for all ages 25 and above - 1,288 volunteer hours.

Avenue Country Park

The two contiguous sites at Avenue provide both a brilliant haven for wildlife and a considerable amenity asset to a diverse cross section of the local community whether it be for sports, bird watching, cycling, volunteering or educational visits. The sites could be nominated for any of the above awards as they deliver brilliantly across all of the charitable objectives.

Health: The site is regularly utilised by dog walkers, sports clubs, recreational users, cyclists, nature enthusiasts and train spotters. Access has also been improved with two new RADAR kissing gates enabling site access to larger mobility aid users. New waymarked trails, and an accompanying interpretation panel, now encourage users to explore further whilst highlighting focal features of the site for enhanced nature connection. Junior Football sessions continue to run seasonally with approximately 200 participants each week. Tupton rugby club continue to deliver Junior rugby sessions weekly

Education: The establishment of monthly junior ranger enables individuals aged between 11 and 16 to gain conservation related skills and knowledge in a practical format, whilst encouraging a sense of pride and respect for their natural green space environments and inhabitant wildlife. Nature tot is a pre-school aged session that encourages toddlers, supervised by their parents, to explore and connect to the green spaces with the aim to build firm nature connection. Guided walks and nature connection or education activities are delivered seasonally, whilst larger scale school and scout education sessions have successfully been established and delivered. As an area previously devoid of school nature activities, this has been a great achievement.

Economy: Local businesses have been part of our free community events, including local coffee and nourishment vans. Local contractors are sourced where possible for tasks including mowing and infrastructure fabrication and installation. Kier Homes and Tilia Homes are activity building homes adjacent to the park with a drawing selling factor of a country park on their doorstep.

Community Cohesion: The Avenue Volunteer group has grown considerably, with 20 members regularly volunteering during weekly practical sessions, six livestock wardens, four site wardens and a team of wildlife surveyors. The local community have also pulled together to help maintain site security, taking responsibility for opening and securing entrance barriers and reporting concerns.

Monthly litter picks, led by a member of the adjacent estate, are increasing community cohesion and site respect. A large scale community event has been a great success with approximately 500+ attendees.

Environment: The site host over 28 BAP species from breeding Barn owls to great crested newts, harvest mice, lapwings and dingy skippers. Under the Natural England District level licencing pond creation scheme, Wildscapes created two new ponds to heighten pond connectivity for great crested newts. Subsequent surveys revealed the two established ponds to be of excellent quality, with peak counts of 22-59 great-crested newts recorded during one visit, and peak counts of between two and six within the newly created ponds. Botany surveys completed last year within the HLS scheme compartments, Duckmarsh, bee field and Sidings, by Natural England, revealing high quality habitat resulting in an extension to the reduction in coverage in comparison with the previous years.

Water levels in the Duckmarsh are seasonally altered to provide muddy feeding margins for waders. Kingfisher perches were secured to one of the islands. Segments of the pond margins were dug by hand to provide a feeding area for waders. The site is much loved by local naturalists and birdwatchers for its biodiversity.

Silverdale

Silverdale delivers a lot for the local community, the site is well used for informal activities but also supports events run by the local running club, orienteering events, schooling activities for children with learning difficulties, summer fairs and volunteering activities.

The site also delivers a number of educational activities reaching school children through to college and university students, they learnt wildflower ID skills, built hibernacula, managed early successional vegetation as well as hay meadows, hedge laying and dry-stone wall construction.

In addition, the site demonstrates great environmental management to support conservation initiatives, this year has seen wading Lapwings chicks on site increase from two to three, at best to this year seeing 10, there has also been a return of Little Ringer Plover, thought lost to Silverdale. The site has also been identified as a suitable translocation site for the Grizzled Skipper butterfly by ecologists, when their last known location in Stafford was threatened by housing development, they are now regularly seen on site along with Skylark, Grasshopper Warbler & Cuckoo and Grass snakes and many other rare species.

Countess of Chester Country Park

This site has had a great year for enhancing the wildflower and wetland habitats on site, a wildflower area was sown in November 2020 including Cowslips, over 400 bulbs and seed were planted into the woodland nature reserve with Green Gym volunteers and Bluecoat Primary School, there are now many wood avens, some bluebells and some wild daffodils around, including ramsons.

Three new wetland scrapes have been added, two fenced to stop dogs from entering and destroying the new habitats. Another 300 plants were added in March 23, and three new wildflower areas have been sown.

250 mixed species trees were planted at a community planting day, and another 400 planted as part of Queens Canopy and more hedge laying has been undertaken to thicken up and extend the life of the hedges on site.

Most of these activities were done with the support of the Friends Group, volunteers, scout groups and school children. There are regular activities on site for the local community supported by the Friends group, hospital staff and patients are often seen on the park, more and more this year. This we feel started during Covid and now has carried on. The park has grown in strength as more people in the Chester area have grown to love its appeal.

Hogmoor Inclosure

A number of significant improvements have taken place since this site transferred three years ago to the Land Trust.

These include:

- Installation of a new toddler play area to extend the age range of equipment alongside improvements to safety surfacing.
- Development of a new site leaflet to engage visitors with local heritage and biodiversity.
- Installation of a brass rubbing trail and activity booklet to help families explore the wider area.
- Development of nature back packs to help engage schools with nature.
- Working with South Downs National Park to deliver an off-road electric tramper to help people with reduced mobility access the site.
- Delivered a new 5-year management plan, wildfire plan, protected monument plan and tree risk strategy – to provide future direction.
- Commissioned a woodland management plan allowing for a 10-year felling license to begin thinning pine trees and expanding areas of heathland.
- Submitted for first time into Green Flag award scheme
- Implemented vegetation clearance and invasive plant removal, ride management, bench base and path surfacing improvements for drainage and surfacing.

ENDS