

If that wasn't enough more benefits are being delivered from the project. As well as being able to enjoy the natural attractions the park has to offer, there is plenty of opportunity to be active be it walking the three and half miles of paths in the park itself, or riding, walking or cycling along part of the 211 mile Trans Pennine Trail which runs alongside the Park.

Although the major redevelopment project is complete, the local community is not resting on their laurels. They are still helping maintain the park by getting involved in conservation task days organised by the Council. Funding from other sources is continuing to support the on-going development of the park and the benefits can be seen as the wildflower meadows thrive and the Sidings Orchard takes shape.

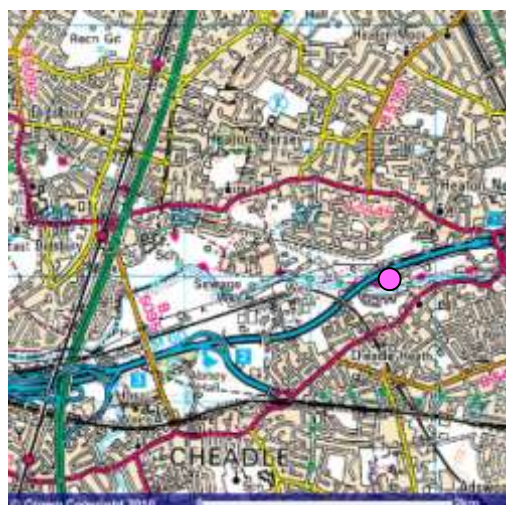
The project was successfully delivered as a result of genuine commitment from all parties. The commitment of the Council and the local community are now conserving Mersey Vale Nature Park for future generations.

For more information please contact:

Parks and Recreation  
Stockport Borough Council

**Tel:** 07800 617863

**Email :** [parks@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:parks@stockport.gov.uk)



Located in the Heaton Mersey area of Stockport just south of Manchester, Mersey Vale Nature Park can be accessed from J1 of the M60, heading towards Didsbury on the A5145. The Park is near Burnage Rugby Club where visitors will find car parking.

The 23 hectare park services the local population of approximately 14,000 people although it attracts visitors from the wider Borough, which has a population of around 284,000.



### Learning with a difference in London

- Conservation
- Innovative education experience
- Social inclusion
- Encouragement of volunteering

How classrooms have changed in London! In 2007 Natural England awarded Groundwork £5000 to create an outdoor classroom including log benches, the construction of a stag beetle loggery, signage and surfacing for entrance to the area of woodland tree planting. This was part of the first phase of a three-phased project at Paddington Recreation Ground Maida Vale, in the City of Westminster. Now visitors to the park are learning about conservation and experiencing the attractions of the nature area at the same time. What better way to make learning interesting and fun?

The entire three-phase project will deliver a wide range of recreation facilities to the local area but it's the redevelopment of the environmental area located in the north west section of the park close to the Carlton Vale entrance and new sports pitches/playground which has had such an impact. The site is designated a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and lies in an Area of Deficiency in Access to Nature as defined in the Mayor of London's Biodiversity Strategy. The City Council has translated their commitment to the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy by adopting Areas of Deficiency in the Unitary Development Plan and Open Spaces Strategy.

This first phase of the project has, with Natural England's help, delivered clear benefits to the area. The new outdoor classroom is bringing new excitement to science and geography lessons as well as increasing opportunities for environmental education. An unused area of the park which was previously a children's playground and a yard for park maintenance is now transformed into a vibrant area filled with plants and wildlife that are easily accessible to all. People in the ethnically diverse local community are connecting with each other and re-connecting with the area through being encouraged to get involved in planning future work. Interest in volunteering in conservation activities has increased as a consequence.

In 2009 the project won first place in the 'National Environmental Project of the Year' 2009 Awards organised by the Institute of Groundsmanship in recognition of its outstanding achievements.

For more information please contact:

John Tweddle  
Principle Parks and Open Space Manager  
Westminster City Council

**Tel:** 0207 641 6307

**Email to:** [jtweeddle@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:jtweeddle@westminster.gov.uk)



Located in Maida Vale in the north west of London, an area which includes areas of high deprivation, Paddington Recreation Ground is Westminster's largest and principal park occupying a beautiful 11 hectare site. It has a wide range and mix of facilities and services that are heavily used by local residents and visitors alike attracting approximately 1 million users annually.

## Rushcliffe Country Park



Source: Garth Newton at  
<http://www.ilkcarn.com/2006/061105/Ruddington.html>

### The benefits of active friends in the East Midlands

- Conservation
- Innovative education experience
- Encouragement of volunteering
- Children's Play

Attracting over 250,000 visitors a year, Rushcliffe Country Park is a Green Flag Award winner. While managed by Rushcliffe Borough Council, the park benefits greatly from the activities of the Friends of Rushcliffe Park Group, a voluntary group formed in October 1997 and now a registered charity. The group meets regularly and carries out conservation work as well as improvement projects. This is a wonderful example of accessibility to greenspace giving the local community opportunities to help conserve and enhance their local environment.

The objectives of The Friends of Rushcliffe Park group are to promote the park and improve its facilities. The relationship between the Friends Group and the Country Park Ranger Service is close thereby enabling the Borough Council to manage development in the park effectively. The Council promotes the Friends Group on its website as a means to encouraging people to volunteer for conservation activities whilst the Friends Group website evidences its strong support of the Country Park staff and of their work. This partnership has been fundamental to the sustainability of the volunteering effort through the Friends Group and the positive benefits to the park's conservation and facilities.

The Green Flag Award recognises the work of the Council and the achievements of the Friends Group citing their conservation work such as hedge laying and tree planting. Recent activities saw the completion of the National Heritage Project to restore an area of the park to how it was believed to be in the 1930s and has included the design and installation of new interpretation boards and trail leaflets. The Environmental Education Centre, officially opened in 2005, is available to schools and other parties. The centre is designed to be 'energy neutral', using wind and solar power and a

biomass boiler. Schools and other groups are able to take advantage of environmental education lessons, which may be ranger-led, or self-led using the teachers' site specific resource book.

Rushcliffe Borough Council continues its focus on creating a fun environment for all the family and where children and young people, in particular, can play or be physically active. Fundraising efforts by local teenagers helped to deliver a new skateboard ramp in 2000 and the park's play area, built in 1996, underwent a £60,000 refurbishment in spring 2008 bringing in extra equipment for children whatever their needs.

This focus was reflected in activities of the Friends Group too which saw them build a new tyre maze in 2009. Project managed in consultation with the Council, the new maze is yet another benefit created out of 'friendship' in Rushcliffe Country Park.

For more information about the Park and the Friends of Rushcliffe Park Group please contact:

Rangers' Office,  
Rushcliffe Country Park,

0115 921 5865

[countrypark@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:countrypark@rushcliffe.gov.uk)



Located on Mere Way on the A60 just south of Ruddington, in the borough of Rushcliffe, Nottinghamshire, the 85 hectare Park comprises over 8 km of footpaths, conservation woodlands, grasslands, a 2-hectare lake with reed bed and wildflower meadows, a children's play area,





### Healthy conservation in the East Midlands

- Accessibility
- Creating opportunities for conservation volunteers
- Improving health

A management partnership with Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and the Ministry of Defence has enabled Natural England to create an environment which encourages people of all ages and abilities to be active and to get involved in conservation activities through volunteering in this NNR. Rather than leaving users to merely react to the environment, Natural England has been proactive in improving access to the reserve and by organising a varied programme of activities that help improve the health of users and encourages involvement in conservation management activities through volunteering opportunities.

A major factor contributing to the success of the reserve is the resources put into reducing barriers to access, not only to the reserve itself but also the programme of activities run by Natural England throughout the year. Access to the reserve is provided from seven car parks, including one which provides facilities for wheelchair users. An easy access trail, with display boards, has been constructed at Rimac to allow less mobile visitors to see much of the habitat described. A free interpretive leaflet is available in the Rimac car park and a free audio tape is available for loan with tape player from the pub on the B1200, 1¼ miles west of Sea View for those who are visually impaired. There are three viewing platforms at the Reserve which are accessible for wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments.

A programme of activities runs all year round and includes cultural events such as poetry readings. However, the majority of events focus on getting people walking whilst learning about the environment or participating in conservation activities. Working in partnership with other agencies and initiatives has enabled a wide range of activities to be offered which contribute to the delivery of a wider range of objectives than those of the reserve itself. For example, events have been organised as part of national initiatives such as Beachwatch, whilst others are part of wider local

initiatives such as the Lincolnshire Wold Walking Festival and the East Lindsay Heart Support Group which encourages people to walk their way to health. These are complimented by educational talks. A programme for children encourages them to learn about nature through play activities.

Proactive management has delivered many benefits for all concerned. Partnerships between Natural England and local community groups continue to grow and strengthen which have helped the community identify strongly with the nature reserve. A more significant benefit, however, has been the recognition by users that Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes National Nature Reserve is a place where they can improve their well-being by being physically active and learning about conservation through getting involved in conservation activities. Several of the patients from the East Lindsay Heart Support Group have signed up as volunteers for example. The Lincolnshire Conservation Group are supporters of the reserve and play a part in encouraging more people to 'get volunteering'.

For more information please contact:

Roger Briggs  
Natural England Office  
Lincolnshire

**Phone:** 01507 338611

**Email:** [roger.briggs@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:roger.briggs@naturalengland.org.uk)



Located close to the A1301 between Saltfleet and Mablethorpe, Saltfleetby – Theddlethorpe Dunes stretch for 8 km along the north-east coast of Lincolnshire, covering 952 hectares of coastal habitats (dunes, ponds, saltmarsh, beach and grassland meadows).

## Sharrow School Green Roof Local Nature Reserve



Acknowledgement: Melbourne School of Land and Environment

### It's one of a kind in Yorkshire!

- Innovation in greenspace development
- Conservation and education

Local Nature Reserves (LNR) do not get more local than the one at Sharrow School in Sheffield. The school's unique green roof is the first to be declared as an LNR. With the support of Natural England, Sheffield City Council was able to announce the declaration in October 2009 given in recognition of its importance in attracting local wildlife and the education of the pupils at the school. Working closely with Sheffield University and Groundwork Sheffield, Sheffield City Council has created a wonderful example of how future generations can be involved in looking after the environment. There's no stopping the Council now! So far the Council has encouraged the creation of 120 green roofs across the city.

The green roof habitat has developed well in the two years since it was established and a colourful display of flowers is a haven for butterflies and bees. Just like Sheffield's hilly landscape, the roof has rolling hills and valleys formed out of locally sourced recycled materials. Designed to reflect the habitats around the City, there are areas of limestone grassland, wildflower meadows, a wetland area with a small pond and even a dead tree for insects to burrow in! Other areas have been left just to grow and small trees are already beginning to appear, enhancing the biodiversity of the area.

Inner city pupils now have the chance to learn about the environment right on their doorstep (or on top of their roof!) This unique resource is a wonderful outdoor classroom where bird tables and insect feeders attract wildlife. A weather station and webcam provide opportunities for the research to continue regardless of the weather.

The benefits of the roof are obviously not just educational. The impact of climate change is also reduced by keeping the building cool in summer, soaking up heavy rainfall and absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It has also strengthened the identity of the area and the local community. Pupils and local volunteers are working with Sheffield City Council and Green Estate, a



local not-for-profit social enterprise, to deliver the management plan for the roof. Visitors are also encouraged through tours round all the City's green roofs organised by The Green Roof Centre.

Without doubt Sheffield has introduced a novel way of supporting wildlife in the city that has definitely captured the minds of young pupils in Sharrow School!

As this is a green roof on a school building, it is not accessible without special permission so it's best to visit it as part of an organised green roof tour.

For further information please contact:

City Ecology Service  
Parks and Countryside  
Sheffield City Council

**Tel:** 0114 273 6951 or 0114 273 4481

**Email:** [parksandcountryside@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:parksandcountryside@sheffield.gov.uk)



Located in the Sharrow area of Sheffield to the south-west of the City, the School is situated in Sitwell Road not far from the A621 and B6081. The roof offers 2000 square metres of green habitat whilst the school accommodates 420 primary school pupils and also has a 52 place nursery unit and 30 places early years centre.

## St Lawrence Park, Newcastle



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### It's all going green in the North East!

- Community engagement
- Green exercise
- Conservation and regeneration

The St Lawrence Park project is a great example demonstrating how pro-active activity on a greenspace can unlock a multitude of benefits for community and wildlife alike. It also shows the value of community engagement in designing, managing and maintaining good quality attractive parks. St Lawrence Park is part of a network of green spaces stretching across the City and along the River Tyne contributing to a wider Green Infrastructure network within the Newcastle-Gateshead Growth Point. Started with £8,000 from Natural England and further supported by £4,000 funding from Newcastle City Council, the project is part of the New Leaf New Life Portfolio funded by the Big Lottery Fund and hosted by the North East Strategic Health Authority. The efforts of Green Gym volunteers and the Friends of St. Lawrence Park group co-ordinated by the environmental organisation Groundwork are transforming what was a neglected park into a valued greenspace.

Located in a socially deprived area, the St. Lawrence Park project aims to deliver benefits for the local community and biodiversity through improving the quality of the park and turning an area with overgrown vegetation and anti-social problems into a focus of community pride and well-being. This is being achieved through the involvement of community groups such as the Friends of St. Lawrence Park group and the "Green Gym" volunteers. The Green Gym encourages people to improve their physical and mental health through participation in conservation and horticulture activities; whilst improving local community areas.

Since the project started in March 2009 these volunteers have been working on improving the environment and helping manage the four hectare habitat and parkland. To date they have carried out a survey of the plants growing in the wildflower meadow by the Byker cycle path and also turned

an overgrown flowerbed into an attraction for bees and butterflies. Future plans include wildflower planting, clearing woodland and maintaining the footpaths.

Although still in its infancy, this first phase of the project has encouraged the local community to get active whilst undertaking environmental and conservation work. The environmental benefits are clearly visible and the social benefits are evident in the growing numbers of volunteers working in the park: the group of volunteers has grown to fifteen since the project began.

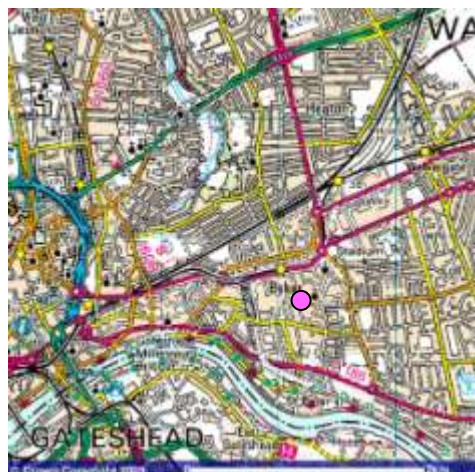
Without the initial funding from Natural England this project would never have got off the ground. The achievements to date are providing a solid foundation upon which to plan the next two phases which will provide green exercise facilities and focus on the health benefits of open space. Moreover, the achievements have strengthened the case for additional funding in the future. With this kind of good management the project can look forward with optimism to further enhancing the social and economic welfare of the community through improved health and wellbeing.

For more information please contact:

Alene Jauncey  
Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle Green Gym

**Tel:** 0191 428 1144

**Email:** [alene.jauncey@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:alene.jauncey@groundwork.org.uk)



Located in the south west corner of Byker, this site is approximately 1.5km from Newcastle City Centre. The elevated, southerly sloping site has easy access to the River Tyne and the East Quayside. The site is bounded by Walker Road to the south, Albion Row to the west, St. Michael's Road to the north and Rodney Street to the east.



Source:

<http://www.designforlondon.gov.uk/uploads/media/ELGGarea3.pdf>

### Long-term relationships in the East

- Effective partnership working
- Conservation
- Developing volunteer groups

Thames Chase, one of twelve community forests in the UK (founded by the former Countryside Agency), is a wonderful example of people and agencies from public, private and voluntary sectors working together to manage and develop something truly special. This partnership project is working to achieve the goal of regenerating the land at the edge of east London and south Essex. The work done so far is testament to just how well this partnership approach is working. With the goal of increasing the woodland cover in the area from just 8% to 30% by 2030, the partnership has already planted 1.3m trees to increase the woodland cover to 13%. There's still a long way to go but it seems this partnership is definitely up to the challenge.

Community Forests are all about involving local people in the regeneration of the areas and places that make them up. The Thames Chase Partnership (made up of the five local council partners, the Confederation of British Industry, Country Landowners and Business Association, Forestry Commission and the National Farmers Union) has ensured there are plenty of opportunities for people to get involved in all aspects of the Woodland. Advice from the Arts Council, Natural England and Sport England continue to help the Partnership develop new projects and opportunities for the community.

Volunteers are helping out with conservation work, giving some time to help the Thames Chase education service and wherever else they are needed. The education service volunteers have helped many people feel valued in their community through helping young people learn to care about their environment whilst the conservation volunteers have learned new skills and made new friends in the process of enhancing the woodland. There are now several volunteer warden or 'friends of' schemes operating across the woodlands in Thames Chase and they are always looking for more help.



The trees, woodlands and green spaces of Thames Chase Community Woodland have brought people together who continue to work in partnership to the benefit of the environment and of their local community. Their efforts have created almost two square miles of new woodland and almost 56 miles of new or upgraded paths.

20 years since its inception and with £9 million Government funding for woodland planting since 2000, there is no doubt that this is one project that is delivering!

For more information please contact:

Thames Chase

Upminster, Essex

**Tel:** 01708 641880

<http://www.thameschase.org.uk/>



Located to the east of London, Thames Chase is not far from Junction 28 of the M25. Heading towards Cranham and Upminster on the B186, the Thames Chase Forest Centre can be found in Pike Lane. There are many access points to the many different woodland areas within the 10,400 hectare area.



### Everything is green in the East

- Effective use of sustainable technology
- Environmental Education
- Effective partnership working

This ambitious project in Pitsea, Essex, is a wonderful example of how sustainable technology can be used to bring new and exciting opportunities for the local community to learn about the natural environment. Several refurbished buildings are now carbon neutral and are part of an exciting development which is delivering new opportunities for education and learning. This programme of restoration, landscaping and interpretation is transforming Wat Tyler Country Park into one of the most popular and dynamic visitor attractions in the Thames Gateway. Being green has definitely brought many benefits to the local community!

The new heritage centre, the Wat Tyler Centre, boasts some great technology to enhance the low carbon credentials we all seek to achieve. It's powered by a woodchip boiler using home-grown fuel. Rainwater harvesting is used to flush the toilets, a passive ventilation system saves electricity and the spaces have been designed to capture lots of natural daylight. It is also home to an exciting interactive exhibition that lets people explore the explosives factory heritage of the park and its future as a space for nature at the heart of developments in the Thames Gateway region. State of the art classrooms are available for school visits and offer a great all-weather base for education visits exploring the park

Many partners are collaborating to establish the park as a central hub for visitors to the area as part of a wider plan. This has been recognised by the Government's Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), in their construction of a 'Parklands' concept that will put green spaces and the connections to them at the heart of the Thames Gateway strategic development.

Thanks to the collaborative efforts of many organisations and businesses and schools and the support of The National Lottery and Heritage Lottery Fund visitors to the Park are now able to access and enjoy a much wider range of facilities and experiences within this Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The innovative use of sustainable technology has not only created an energy efficient facility, it is a focus of learning and also a constant reminder to every visitor of the importance of environmental conservation. This project is now regarded as a model for other sustainable development programmes.

For more information please contact:

Wat Tyler Country Park  
Pitsea, Basildon, Essex

**Tel:** 01268 550 088

**Email to:** [info@wattylercountrypark.org.uk](mailto:info@wattylercountrypark.org.uk)



Located 15 minutes from the M25, 10 minutes from Basildon Town Centre, Essex, the 50 hectare park can be accessed just off the A13 towards Pitsea railway station. Situated within the **South Essex Marshes**, the features of its landscape such as grazing meadows, ancient hedgerows, blast mounds, tidal waterways, sea walls and field boundaries are evidence of the way people used the area. Over 350,000 people now visit the Park every year.



### Nature in the care of the young in the North West

- Environmental education
- Volunteering
- Access management

Watchtree Nature Reserve is a DEFRA (Department of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs) owned site which is managed by a charitable trust, Watchtree Nature Reserve Ltd, through a Land Management and Funding Agreement with a twenty-five year lease on the land. The Trust's environmental education work with young people is developing a wonderful legacy of future generations of adults who understand the value of the natural environment and the need to conserve it. In addition, an out of hours restricted access policy which requires membership of the Friends of Watchtree group and participation in an induction programme is further ensuring frequent users are accepting responsibility for securing the future of the Reserve.

The Watchtree staff are using a range of approaches to getting young people interested in the environment. With the National Curriculum in mind, staff are able to meet the needs of Primary, Junior and Secondary pupils through subjects including Science, Geography, Art and Local History.

Education is not limited to schools however. Watchtree also works with young persons' organisations and universities. For example, work is on-going with staff and students of the University Of Central Lancashire in Penrith (UCLAN) which is focusing on ways of enhancing grassland and grazing management at the reserve.

Whilst the focus on educating young people about the environment is delivering many social and economic benefits to the local community, the work of the Friends of Watchtree group makes a tangible contribution to the management and development of the reserve. Some group members help out with office-based work whilst others tackle practical conservation tasks in the weekly volunteer work parties. The satisfaction members get from being involved in the friends group must



be contagious for there are now over one hundred and fifty 'Friends' some of whom have become Directors and are now involved with decision-making and project management in the reserve. Such enthusiasm and commitment is a real boon to the work of the Watchtree Nature Reserve trust.

No one is left out at Watchtree. The nature reserve is home to the Watchtree Wheelers, a cycling club for elderly, disadvantaged and disabled cyclists. The 'Wheelers' used winnings from ITV Border People's Millions to establish a cycle exercise area and wide cycle track network for use by specially adapted cycles that enables access for all to the many attractions that the reserve offers. Adapted cycles, including tricycles, quads, wheelchairs and tandems are available for use every Friday.

Effective communication has been a major contributing factor to getting people of all ages involved in looking after the reserve. Blog-tree, the Watchtree weblog, is a particularly innovative way to tell people what's going on at the park. Maintained by Tim Lawrence, the reserve manager, the blog keeps people up to date with recent achievements, seasonal changes in the environment and forthcoming events. In addition the reserve's website includes a 'kid's page' containing sheets and workbooks which can be downloaded. What better way to engage young people and to keep people involved in the life of the reserve?

For further information please contact:

Tim Lawrence

Watchtree Nature Reserve Management

Tel: 01228 712539

Email: [wnr@watchtree.co.uk](mailto:wnr@watchtree.co.uk)



Located near Great Orton to the south of Carlisle, the 24 hectare Watchtree Nature Reserve is not far from the A595 and is easily accessible from all directions. Routes to the reserve are clearly signposted.



### Greenspace in the North East: a sense of pride, place and well-being

- Access to natural greenspace
- Promotion of healthy lifestyle
- Sense of place/ local pride
- Environmental education

Before West Park was developed, this area was Darlington's only significant remaining area of industrial dereliction. In only seven years it has made a significant contribution to the sustainability and well-being of the local community. A multi-partnership approach between local authorities and developers is bringing to life a ten year plan for a sustainable new community. Assisted by funding from Natural England, the development of Greenspace has become a key feature in creating a sense of place for this new community and a focus for learning and improving health and well-being. The West Park development has already won several prestigious awards, including the RICS Gold Award for Regeneration and, last year, the LCG Sustainable Community Award.

Each partner contributing to the promotion of the park in combination with a levy-based funding scheme applicable to all properties in the park has helped establish some of the elements of sustainability in a fairly short period of time. As well as a strong focus on art and sculpture, Darlington Borough Council has actively encouraged use for recreation and green exercise. The site is strongly linked with the surrounding area. It is well connected to existing neighbourhoods via waggon ways, a network of paths along which horse drawn wagons were used to transport coal in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, while the West Park bike track was opened in 2007 and supported initially by North East Community Forests (NECF), is now supported by Groundwork West Durham and Darlington and Hamsterley Trailblazers. The Borough Council's Sport Development team also

delivers a full programme of training activities on sports cycling and work with local schools to help children learn about mountain biking. A planning application has now been submitted for the development of a children's play area within the park.

The West Park Friends Group is now established and plays a major role in the development of the park. Membership is open to anyone who pays the West Park levy (currently £50) thus reinforcing the place of West Park in the identity of the local community. The NECF volunteers also work closely with Darlington Borough Council's Countryside Team to maintain the park and help out at events.

The Park is also a valuable resource in helping the rehabilitation of adults with acute mental health problems. A partnership between the Ranger Service and West Park Hospital has established a programme in which patients are taken out walking in the park which not only helps their fitness, but also helps them to interact with other people and learn more about nature and conservation. Patients also participate in gardening activities in the Park.

West Park is a wonderful example of a Greenspace serving multiple functions and delivering multiple benefits to multiple user groups. It is not surprising that the park contributes significantly to Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) and the more rigorous ANGSt+ for connectivity to other areas.

For further information please contact:

Parks and Countryside Team  
Darlington Borough Council

Phone: 01325 388648/ 388637

Email: [countryside@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:countryside@darlington.gov.uk)



Located just off the A68, close to junction 58 of the A1(M), West Park is a hill top, partially wooded parkland covering 12 hectares within the 49 hectare West Park development between the Cockerton and Faverdale areas of Darlington.

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**This guidance document was prepared by Pengelly Consulting and draws from a number of internally developed Natural England guidance notes and position statements.**

**During the development of the guidance, advice was sought from both an internal advisory group working both on people and access and on green infrastructure planning bringing the two together to make a coherent voice. Comments were also sought and noted from external partners within the parks and greenspace sector.**



Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings.

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