



Telford Green Spaces Partnership Handbook



2013



Contents

Introduction and Acknowledgements	3
Telford Green Spaces Partnership	4
Creating a Friends Group	6
Constitution and Committee	8
Communications	12
Running an Event	14
Raising Awareness of your Green Space	16
Retaining Volunteers	17
Best Practice in Leading Volunteers	18
Practical Projects	21
Writing Funding Applications	22
Creating a management plan	26
Woodland management	28
Ecology Surveys	29
Sharing Nature with Families	30
Risk Assessments	31
Disclosing and Barring (formerly CRB)	34
Appendices	
Appendix 1: Friends of Hollinswood and Randlay Valley joining leaflet	36
Appendix 2: Sharing Nature with Families activities	39
Appendix 3: Example of a site risk assessment	40
Telford Access to Nature Case Studies:	
1. The Formation of Telford Green Spaces Partnership	41
2. Friends of Apley Woods: Engaging the Community	43
3. Friends of Hollinswood and Randlay Valley: Getting Started	45
4. People’s Millions Funding: Partnership working	47
5. Little Acorns Family Group	49

Introduction

Telford Access to Nature

In 2009, the Telford Access to Nature (TATN) Partnership, managed by Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, received £309,000 from Natural England and BIG Lottery for a 3 year project to improve physical and interpretational access to green spaces in Telford. A User Group audited 22 green spaces and access was improved by volunteers and contractors. Following the improvements, several Friends of green spaces were formed which joined together in 2011 to form the Telford Green Spaces Partnership (TGSP). In 2012, a one year extension bid of £110k was successful in order to make TGSP sustainable by receiving training from the TATN partner organisations of Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, Telford & Wrekin Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Shropshire Community NHS Trust, and Small Woods Association.

This Online Handbook is written for members of the Telford Green Spaces Partnership to give the tools in which to manage their green spaces and engage with local communities.

Acknowledgements:

The Telford Access to Nature Partnership received funding from the Access to Nature Programme which is run by Natural England and is part of the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments.

Natural England manages this £28.75 million Lottery-funded programme on behalf of a consortium of twelve national environmental organisations comprising BTCV, British Waterways, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Greenspace, Groundwork UK, Land Restoration Trust, The National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust.

Through this programme, it is Natural England's ambition to create opportunities for people from all backgrounds to have greater access to our natural environment and bring a lasting change to their awareness and understanding as well as improved links to the natural world, which many of us can take for granted.

Access to Nature closed to applications in May 2010 but for further information about the programme visit www.naturalengland.org.uk/accesstonature

With kind thanks to the following authors:

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust: Cadi Price, Kate Chetwood

Shropshire Wildlife Trust: Bryony Carter, Liz Etheridge, Sara Pearce

Small Woods Association: Angela Pollard, Jude Walker

Telford and Wrekin Council: Becky Eade

Telford Green Spaces Partnership: Friends group members

Telford Green Spaces Partnership

The Telford Green Spaces Partnership (TGSP) was formed in August 2011 when 11 Friends of green spaces groups across Telford united as one group. Supported by the Telford & Wrekin Council who manages the green spaces, the Friends realised their common goals and challenges. A committee was formed with an agreed constitution enabling TGSP to represent all the green spaces 'Friends of' and volunteer organisations in the borough of Telford.

The vision:

1. Provide local green spaces accessible to all
 - Encourage use of green spaces by residents & visitors of all abilities
 - Promote access to and understanding of the green spaces
2. Maintain & enhance biodiversity in Telford & Wrekin
 - In accordance with the Shropshire B.A.P. / H.A.P. / S.A.P
 - Promote improvement of the standards of green spaces
 - Work in partnership with T&W Council and other organisations
3. Improve social cohesion, encourage social networks, develop knowledge & expertise within local communities
 - Organise, host and fund events & activities
 - Host education events for school and community groups
 - Discover & promote awareness of local history & wildlife
 - Encourage gardening as therapy and to promote healthy living
4. Create a pool of resources to support the groups within the TGSP
 - Tools, manpower & expertise (trained 'champions') in order to assist groups not fully equipped to deliver their objectives in isolation
 - By working together to link different green areas in such a way that they provide coordinated opportunities for walking cycling and horse-riding as well as 'green corridors' for wildlife

The objectives:

- To bring together individual groups with a single aim
- To apply for joint funding for larger sums of money
- To co-ordinate activities
- To support each other with manpower and tools
- To provide 'champions' with specialist skills to support all groups
- To market and promote project

The aims:

- To promote sustainability
- To map of all green spaces
- To enable members to learn new skills
- To encourage outdoor learning in local green spaces
- To increase value to the project
- To involve all partners

Progress to date:

- Monthly committee meetings
- Training in practical conservation, biodiversity and sustainable management
- Sixteen Friends groups affiliated to TGSP
- Support from Telford & Wrekin to write own management plans
- Friends groups continue to manage regular committee meetings
- Website written and maintained <http://www.tgsp.org.uk>



TGSP members trained in ecology quadrat surveys



Creating a Friends group

Carry out an information search

Management plans	Historical information	Maps
Memories	Wildlife Surveys	Community plans

Get people together

The landowner	Telford & Wrekin Council	Parish Council
Residents and Users	Volunteers	Schools

Organise some awareness raising events

Walks	Talks	Press
Website, Facebook, Twitter	Approach other user groups	Public consultation

A viable group is formed when a minimum of six people, with an agreed aim, are prepared to hold scheduled meetings. The Friends group then starts to plan, to put together a constitution, obtain insurance and open a bank account.

Action Planning

A Development Plan

It is beneficial for members to create a long term strategy for the group.

This strategy or development plan looks at the long term goals for the group and what is hoped to be achieved over a 5 year period or longer:

- Those which must be done (Short term)
- Those which should be done (Medium term)
- Those which could be done one day (Long term)

The plan will outline the range of work within the group including:

Management	Values	Broad aims	'Mission Statement'
------------	--------	------------	---------------------

Once completed the **development plan** can be printed and used to advertise the group and inform funders. It should be used as a working document.

Making a development plan

An ideal way is to hold a day when the members can get together to think exactly:

Objectives	Priorities	When	Who	Evaluation	Completion date
------------	------------	------	-----	------------	-----------------

For example: **Community Involvement**

Aim: Encourage local people to become actively involved with all aspects of the project

	Objectives	Priority	When	Who	Evaluation	Completion date
1	Organise events	Must	Now and on-going	Group	No. of events and people taking part	
2	Work with Parish Council to enhance woodland	Should	Within 6 months	With partners	Reduction in fly tipping	
3	Undertake projects	Must	Within 9 months	Group with training	No. of projects and community interest	

Implementation: annual cycle of planning, implementation and review:

Each spring, groups should:

- Plan their tasks, events and activities
- Work out projected expenditure for the financial year ahead
- Look at and review the long-term development plan
- Look at and review the woodland development plan
- Write down ONE point at a time what you will do in next 12 months

The work must be consistent with the management plan and be undertaken with the agreement of Telford & Wrekin Council or your local Parish Council or owner of the site.

EXAMPLE:

Action 1: To celebrate the new woodland path, celebrate with a picnic for mums and toddlers

Why? For users of pushchairs to enjoy the outdoors

Where? Linking our new picnic table with the pond and the woodland trail

When? Summer holidays

Who? Local families

Cost: Picnic: for 30 adults and 60 children: £150 or 'bring and share'

Annual Review

Constituted groups should produce a review of the previous year in an annual report. Share this task as a group workshop: EXAMPLE: Friends group (see Appendix 1: example of joining leaflet)

Social Output	Economic Output	Environmental Output
5 events run: people getting to know the area and neighbours	2 areas cleared of scrub: Use tools safely to increase confidence Woodland less dense	1 Woodland cleared of scrub to create glade: Wild flowers came up Dead wood left to encourage fungi & beetles
2 woodland litter-picks: Healthy physical activity	Received training in tools safety: useful for future employment	
4 people trained in wildlife knowledge: Transferable skills		



Constitution and Committee

What is a constitution?

It is simply a set of written rules or an agreement governing the aims of your organisation, how it will be run and how the Friends members will work together.

A Friends group, with small funds and few staff, is known as an unincorporated association, not a registered company. A written constitution is an agreement where people are working to agreed aims:

1. Name of your organisation
2. Aims or objectives of your organisation
3. Powers
4. Membership
5. Management Committee
6. Officers
7. Meetings
8. Finance
9. Dissolution
10. Amendments to the constitution

As soon as your group begins to progress and deal with funding applications, a formal statement documenting decision-making processes, responsibilities and rules for all taking part within the group's activities is essential. This will also prevent individual members being exposed to potential risk if, for example, your group runs into financial problems or ceases to exist, by spreading the risk between members.

In most instances, a constitution is not just an important device to ensure the effective running of your group; it is a requirement. Most sources of funding can only be accessed by groups with a bank account, and banks will only allow groups to open an account with a constitution!

It is also a "must have" if your group wants to register as a charity with the Charity Commission, or if you wish to undertake services within the community. A written constitution will lay the foundations for the structure of your group and will allow it to develop within a concrete framework, ensuring that it stays on track and continues to successfully achieve its aims.

It is of paramount importance because:

- without a written understanding, people may become confused and things may not get done
- it will act as a point of reference and help resolve any problems or controversy that may arise
- it reassures the public and funding bodies that your group is properly run and that money is effectively managed
- it illustrates that your group is democratic and accountable, with clear methods by which decisions are made.

Notes taken from GRANTfinder Ltd, Enterprise House, Carlton Road, Worksop, S81 7QF
www.grantnet.com/HelpfulReports/writingaconstitution.pdf

NB: Also use your local CVS constitution guidelines



Role of a Chairperson

The chairperson controls the meeting. When discussion is underway, it is the chairperson's responsibility to ensure that it continues to flow smoothly by involving all members present and by not permitting one or two people to dominate the meeting. The chairperson during meetings can:

- Indicate progress, or lack of
- Refocus discussion that has wandered off the point
- Conclude one point and lead into the next
- Highlight important points
- Assist the secretary if necessary
- Clarify any misunderstanding



Role of a Treasurer

The Treasurer of any 'Friends of' group is responsible for managing and handling the group's financial resources and maintaining accurate financial records. The Treasurer should have a good grasp of money management and the group itself should have financial policies written down so that the Treasurer is clear what their duties are and to whom they have to report to. The duties are to look after the finances of the group and:

- To collect all money due to the group
- To pay all bills on time and records the information
- To issue receipts for all money received and records the information
- To keep accurate and up to date records of all financial transactions
- To prepare a year –end statement of account to present to the Auditors
- To present an end-of-year financial report at the group's Annual General Meeting
- To help prepare and submit any statutory documents that are required, eg grant aid reports

Paying the bills

It is important to pay out-of-pocket expenses to volunteers promptly, they will have already paid out their money on behalf of the group, and it is their goodwill that the group relies on.

Bills should be paid within one month of receiving them, especially with companies that are used regularly.

All payments should be accompanied by an invoice or document. This also applies to petty cash expenses. A simple claim form should be completed before any petty cash payment is made.

All receipts and payments should be recorded either manually in a cash book or electronically (e.g. Excel spread sheets).

It is wise to record the following information for each transaction:

- Date of the entry
- Who you are paying (or who you have received money from)
- Payment reference (e.g. cheque no.) or receipt no. (for receipts issued by you)
- Reference number for that entry; this number should also be written on the invoice or expenses claim form for easy cross reference
- Details of the transaction

Collecting money

All cash should be kept in a cash box and receipts should be written as soon as the money is received. If you have a duplicate receipt book, one copy should be given to the person who has paid and the other should be retained for reference in the book.

Balancing the bank account

A bank statement is the bank's record on the group's finances. This record may not agree exactly with what is kept by the Treasurer in the cash book because it can take a few days for credits and debits to appear in a bank account.

Bank reconciliations should be undertaken regularly as this enables any mistakes or discrepancies to be identified quickly.



Role of a Secretary

Ensure meetings are effectively organised and minuted

- Liaise with the Chair to plan meetings
- Receive agenda items from committee members
- Circulate agendas and reports well in advance of the meeting
- Take minutes (unless there is a minutes secretary)
- Circulate approved minutes
- Check that agreed actions are carried out

Maintaining effective records and administration

- Keep up-to-date contact details (i.e. names, addresses and telephone numbers) for the management committee and (where relevant) ordinary members of the organisation
- File minutes and reports
- Compile lists of names and addresses that are useful to the organisation
- Keep a record of the organisation's activities
- Keep a diary of future activities

Upholding legal requirements

- Act as custodian of the organisation's governing documents
- Check quorum is present at meetings
- Ensure elections are in line with stipulated procedures
- Ensure organisation's activities are in line with its objects

Communication and correspondence (or Correspondence Secretary)

- Respond to all committee correspondence
- File all committee correspondence received and copies of replies sent
- Keep a record of any of the organisation's publications (e.g. leaflets or newsletters)
- Report the activities of the organisation and future programmes to members, the press and the public (unless there is an Information or Publicity Officer)
- Prepare a report of the organisation's activities for the year, for the Annual General Meeting

Regular meetings

The Agenda is the outline plan for the meeting. It may be drawn up by the **Secretary** in consultation with the **Chairperson**.

These often start with the minutes from the last meeting followed by 'Matters Arising' which forms a link with what took place in the previous meeting.

Most meetings conclude with 'any other business' (AOB) which gives everyone the opportunity for any genuine last minute items to be raised. The Chairperson should be aware that the AOB doesn't become a 'free for all' and only relevant business is discussed. Try to put a deadline onto the length of a meeting such as 1 or 2 hours and stick to it.

An example of an agenda might be:

- Apologies for absence
- Minutes of last meeting
- Matters arising (from minutes of last meeting)
- Item 1 – Events programme
- Item 2 - Report on Funding
- Item 3 – New members
- A.O.B.
- Time and date of next meeting



Communications

Good communications

Good communications should form part of a much wider plan. Before you start communicating with anyone, you need to have a very clear understanding of what you want to achieve on your site in the next few years. Once that is in place, then you're into the communications phase...

1. **What** – what do you want to say? What are you trying to achieve with your communications? What will change in the world as a result of your communications?
2. **Why** – why do you want to communicate to people about it? Why will people care?
3. **Who** – when you've thought about the 'what' and 'why', it's time to think carefully about whom you want to communicate with?
4. **How** – how do your target audience communicate with each other? What groups do they belong? What events do they go to? Where do they socialise? What papers or magazines do they read? What websites and forums do they visit?
5. **When** – when will you communicate your messages? Will you do several bursts of activity or one big effort? Once you've decided how you are going to communicate with your audience then you can start putting a timed plan together to work from.

It's all about who you know

Build up a list of names and (email) addresses, Facebook friends and Twitter followers who are interested in your site. Make a contact list and keep it up to date. It should allow you to contact different groups of people separately.

People to include:

- Your members
- Local neighbours and education providers
- Relevant community groups
- Local government and councillors
- Local media (newspapers, events websites and radio stations etc). Get to know your local radio or newspaper journalist and photographer as they are usually interested in your news!

Get the message!

This is definitely worth spending a little more time on. You need to be very clear about what the message is that you are trying to get across.

Social media

Do:

- ✓ Put someone who enjoys it in charge
- ✓ Make things interesting and fun
- ✓ Have lots of content
- ✓ Update it regularly
- ✓ You need permission for photographs

Don't:

- ✗ Expect young people and children to suddenly come flocking to you
- ✗ Try and be too formal
- ✗ Be inappropriate in communication with children and young people

Twitter



To create an account:

1. Go to <http://twitter.com> and find the sign up box, or go directly to <https://twitter.com/signup>.
2. Enter your full name, email address, and a password.
3. Click Sign up for Twitter.
4. On the next page, you can select a username (usernames are unique identifiers on Twitter) — type your own or choose one we've suggested. We'll tell you if the username you want is available.
5. Double-check your name, email address, password, and username.
6. Click Create my account. You may be asked to complete a Captcha (the irritating letters in a box that humans can't read either) to let us know that you're human.
7. Twitter will send a confirmation email to the address you entered on sign up, click the link in that email to confirm your email address and account.

Facebook



You need your own Facebook account to create a group or a page for your organisation. To set one up goes to www.facebook.com and you will get set by step instructions.

You then need to decide whether a group or a page is the most suitable for your needs:

- **Pages** allow real organizations, businesses, celebrities and brands to communicate broadly with people who like them. Pages may only be created and managed by official representatives.
- **Groups** provide a closed space for small groups of people to communicate about shared interests. Groups can be created by anyone.

Further information on the difference between a page and a group is provided by Facebook:

www.facebook.com/help/



Running an event: tick list

Event Name:

Location of Event:

Date of Event:

Time of Event:

Co-ordinator:

Activity	Lead	Date done
Pre Event		
Activity plan written (e.g. guided walk plan, activities timetabled)		
Activity/ entertainment leaders organised		
Appropriate people (businesses, landowners, council) contacted		
Venue booked/available		
Events package (check with your T&WC environmental officer)		
Site plan (If appropriate)		
Gazebo/ Shelter organised/ booked		
Toilet/ Hand washing facilities available		
Updated on Website and Facebook		
Promotional material (posters/ leaflets etc) created & distributed		
Press release		
Press photograph for promotion (Shropshire Star/Telford Journal)		
Promoted on radio (Beacon/Severn/Radio Shrops)		
School newsletters contacted (family events)		
Equipment booked		
Relevant group members informed		
Risk assessment completed and acted on if necessary		
Insurance and liability		
Health and Safety reviewed with group		
Volunteers confirmed		
Photography volunteer organised		
Contact details of attending speakers, performers and volunteers		
Appropriate adult supervision ratio checked		
Designated first aider		
First aid kit		
Signage created		
Contingency plan (illness, weather etc)		
Pack member leaflets, key message cards and evaluation cards		
During Event		
Event briefing with people involved in organising using event plan		
Appropriate signage displayed		
Health and safety being followed (on-going checks through event)		
Photography permission		
Introduction at start of event (about group, H&S etc)		
Evaluation cards handed out and collected		
Post event		
Evaluate event (Improvements and successes), partnership debrief		
Signage and posters taken down		
Equipment put away		

The legality in running an event

The two main areas to keep an eye out for are:

a. Data Protection Act

If you hold a list of people's names and contact details in electronic format then you need to look after that list (database) in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Most groups do not have to register as a 'Data Controller' with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) but you should check if you are unsure:

http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data_protection/forms/notification_exemptions_-_self-assessment_guide.pdf

The general principles are:

- You must make the person aware that you are going to be storing their information as part of your contact database and get their permission to contact them about relevant activities or updates, preferably in writing
- You should only contact people with information relevant to what they signed up for
- You must make people aware of how they can be removed from your database or specific communications activity. For example, if you do an electronic e-newsletter in the future, just make sure you put a note in small print at the bottom saying if you no longer wish to receive the email reply with UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line (easy)
- You must keep your records up to date, so if someone asks for a change of contact number, name or number you must do it as soon as possible
- You cannot hand over the database to another organisation. If another group wants to contact your members, you can send an email out on their behalf

This guide is not exhaustive and groups should satisfy themselves that they are compliant. For further information visit the ICO's website.

http://www.ico.gov.uk/for_organisations/data_protection/the_guide.aspx

b. Copyright

Copyright issues are most likely to crop up over photography. You need to have permission from the copyright holder to reproduce images under 70 years old. To get round this take your own or use images that are copyright free. Websites like www.flickr.com allow you to search for copyright free images.

Again, if in doubt, check: <http://www.copyrightservice.co.uk/>

Raising awareness of your green space

Making people aware of your site and letting them know that it is a special place for the community to enjoy can be a tough job sometimes. Unfortunately, people often seem to mistake wildlife sites as waste grounds, dog toilets and even rubbish dumps.

It can take a long time and a lot of hard work to get your local community to respect the site and that journey often starts with communications and raising awareness. Different areas will respond to different approaches but below is an example of how you could go about it.

What: We want to raise awareness of our green space and the special features on our site

Why: To get people to feel more ownership of the site and look after it so it is a nicer place to enjoy

Who: Users of the site, local residents and local community groups, local schools

How and when: You can create a timed plan using the following communications methods:

If possible, try to talk to or survey some of the people you have identified as your 'who' to see if they were aware of your work and the features on your site. Ideally, record their answers so you can see how effective your communications are afterwards, even if it's just jotting down a record of a conversation with dog walkers or with people in a local pub about the site.

You could decide to have a competition to design posters to put up around the site and local community to raise awareness. Note that it isn't actually the poster itself that will create the awareness!

You'll need to work out the competition rules, design specification, whether to have a prize, the timings and judging process. As part of the entry application ask people if they were aware of the site and make sure you collect contact details. You need to check if they are happy to be contacted again as part of data protection.

Then launch the competition, all of which will help create awareness:

- Contact your local newspaper about the competition
- Contact local community groups and schools about the competition
- Use Facebook to put the entries up for judging using the 'Like' function
- Tweet when new entries have gone up on Facebook

- Contact and publicise the competition winner

- Print out winning poster and put up in prominent places in the community

- Return to your site and talk to people again to see if they are more aware, decide whether the activity was successful and then build on it. EVALUATION is good, especially for funders!

- Create a slide show and offer to present it to local organisations such as: photography group, art club, history society, church group, Women's Institute, Lion's Club, Rotary and Round table, U3A, walkers groups, youth and uniform groups, schools.

- Create a leaflet and display board with details of events programmes and meetings.



Retaining your volunteers

How to keep your volunteers motivated and coming back for more

- ✓ Be organised: Pre site visit, correct no. tools, Risk Assessment, names of attendees
- ✓ Keep to time as per programme: eg 10-3pm
- ✓ Be prompt with answering volunteering enquiries
- ✓ Smile and be happy!
- ✓ Welcoming at start and encouragement at end of day
- ✓ Introduction to all at start of day especially with new people
- ✓ Get to know your volunteers and why they want to volunteer
- ✓ Make it a social occasion
- ✓ Site visit and task introduction and its purpose: why are we doing it?
- ✓ Fun tools talk and share with more confident volunteers
- ✓ Use sharp tools & carry tool sharpeners
- ✓ Tea and biscuits/cake, lunch break
- ✓ Time to talk face to face during the day but don't be too inquisitive
- ✓ Finish task if possible
- ✓ Limited paperwork: name, contact details and emergency contact details
- ✓ Training opportunities
- ✓ Varied programme: hedges, scrub, monitoring, construction
- ✓ Take on board suggestions
- ✓ Christmas party and Annual day out
- ✓ Carry out an annual volunteer 'training needs assessment' and implement it

Legal requirements:

Public liability insurance: up to £5m or formally affiliated to your local land managed association eg Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, local parish council or T&W Council

Disclosing and Barring (CRB): if working with children of vulnerable adults

Site risk assessment

Task risk assessment

Contact number of closest doctor/hospital (on risk assessment): Emergency Fire telephone no. (if having fire)

Contact and emergency contact number for each volunteer



Best Practice in Leading Volunteers

There are 3 areas to consider:

The Project

- Define the project
- Identify resources
- Create the plan to achieve the task
- Establish responsibilities
- Set standards
- Monitor

The Team

- Develop team-working, co-operation
- Motivate the group
- Identify, roles within the group
- Give feedback to the group
- Seek feedback and input from the group

The Individual

- Respect the individuals
- Support individuals
- Recognise and praise individuals
- Identify and use individual's capabilities and strengths
- Train and develop individuals

The Project

Before the project starts:

The Project leader needs a thorough understanding of the site and the work to be done. A site visit to negotiate the parameters of the work and carry out a risk assessment should be done by the Project Leader. The work plan or schedule should be agreed with the landowner.

Insurance: As part of the risk assessment adequate insurance is an important element of the risk assessment process within the project. Telford and Wrekin Council's insurance will cover all employees whilst performing their duties and 'a person volunteering to assist, co-opted, seconded or appointed to assist the public authority in their business'.

Therefore any activity organised by Telford and Wrekin Council that includes employees and/or volunteers is insured. e.g litter picking to tidy the open space.

Any request from a group to carry out an activity for their own benefit will not be covered by the Councils insurance and the group should carry their own liability insurance.

On the project day:

Tools: Check that you have all the working tools required and that they are in good condition. There are limits to what you can do to sharpen very poor tools on site. Edges can be touched up and blades changed, but major works needs a workshop.

Most sharpening should be done before the project day Make an accurate list of all tools taken on the project and keep this list safe.

Brew kit: if taking one on site: Check that you have all mugs and utensils you need. Don't forget the kettle, matches, water, etc. Water and fruit squash should be provided as an alternative. Check you know how to use the method of heating water; Kelly kettle, gas burner or flasks. Don't forget the washing equipment for the cups and the volunteers' hands.

Meet the volunteers with a smile. First impressions are important. Introduce new volunteers and make sure you balance your time between the volunteers you know well and the new volunteers. They will all need your guidance on different aspects of the project.

Before the work starts:

Tool talk

These can be legendary for being boring, overbearing, pompous, patronising and far too long. What you need to do is explain the 5 key points for the tools when the volunteers are going to use them.

1. What the tool is called
2. How to check that the tool is safe to use
3. How to use the tool sensibly, safely and effectively
4. How to carry the tool
5. How to put the tool down properly

Explain the hazards of poor posture when lifting/carrying. Demonstrate correct lifting techniques, and any lifting or carrying aids available to reduce the need for manual handling. Advise volunteers to plan any lift properly, and to get help whenever possible.

Risk assessment

Using the risk assessment provided point out of the site hazards. These may change with the weather conditions and tiredness of volunteers. Ensure that the volunteers are aware of the site hazards.

Ensure that you and the volunteers know the safety procedure for each type of job and issue the correct safety equipment and clothing as required.

First Aid and Welfare kits should be placed at suitable areas in and around the work site. State who the First Aiders are and ensure everyone knows where the First Aid and Welfare kits are. It is important that you inform several volunteers where the nearest 24 hour casualty unit is located – tell the more experienced members of your group.

Site background

You need to explain what is special about that site, within that locality. If possible get the landowner to explain the work and arrange a walk around the site early in the project.

Organising the volunteers on the day

Ensure that you know, or are going to find out, the skills and experience of the volunteers, as this will help in deciding how to divide the group between the various jobs. Remember that inexperienced volunteers should be given more attention and instruction, particularly in the use of tools. Volunteers with special needs, by virtue of their age or any other reason, should tactfully be given jobs within their capabilities. Explain how the group is to be organised – try to get people working in pairs, or in groups, experienced volunteers working with inexperienced.

During the project

Circulate; check work, tools use and morale. Ensure that the tools are being used properly and efficiently. Be prepared to explain again during the day's work how to do the job and correct use of tools. Ensure tools are left safely when not in use, ie so that no one will trip or fall on to a sharp blade. Maintain a safe working distance between volunteers when swinging any tools.

Watch out for fatigue, exposure and problems associated with wet, hot or cold conditions. Be prepared to stop work if necessary. Rotate boring jobs, encourage experienced volunteers to work with less experienced ones, and swap groups around every now and again.

On sites with public access, use signs to indicate that you are working there

Think whether you have focussed on the three areas (Task, Team and Individual) appropriately. Check the volunteers: how are they looking? Motivated? Happy? Anybody looking left out? Be available to answer questions and support volunteers who need it. Review how the work is going and reset targets and provide encouragement.

The site manager/owner will expect the group to accomplish the agreed amount of work to a good standard. However, in certain cases it is not always possible to finish the job, such as in the case of low attendance of volunteers or site problems. In this instance you should consult the landowner who will decide on the best course of action. Under no circumstances should volunteers be pressured to overwork to achieve the goal. It may also be the case that the work is easily accomplished within the time and extra work could be achieved. Having some options already worked out is recommended.

At the end of the project

Remember to thank the volunteers for their time and effort, celebrate what you have achieved. Ask for feedback about the project and encourage them to go on future projects.



Stapling woodland steps: Severn Gorge Countryside Trust volunteers



Practical projects

The project should form part of the management plan for the site. You will find it helpful to have a clear specification and brief for the works to get three quotes for all capital works. You will then know how much it is going to cost, and discussions with a range of contractors will provide you with a greater understanding of what is involved – you may need to redraft your project outline following these discussions. You will need to distinguish between capital and revenue costs and to work out the timescale for the project.

Bench details: measurements for 1 oak bench

Seat	1800mm x 250-300mm x 75mm	1
Supports	1200mm x 150mm x 150mm	2
Coach Screw	Coach Screw BZP 1/2" x 6"(M12 x 150mm).	4



Step details: measurements for 1 wooden step

tread	9 per step	50 x 150 x 900	treated larch
stob	4 per step	550 x 100 x 0.5 top	1 pointed end
nails	2/3 per stob	125mm	galvanised
nails	4 per step	100mm	galvanised
staples	Approx 20 per step	25mm	galvanised
rabbit wire	half of 1 roll	1050mm x 31mm x 50m	





Writing Funding Applications

1) Before you start your bid

- Has your group got a constitution?

There is a wide range of group constitutions, and your group's should match the type of project you wish to undertake and the role you wish to take in project delivery and aftercare. You can choose from an Un-incorporated association, a Charity, working through a local parish or town council, setting up as a Social enterprise where more trading or contracts are involved, or a Not for profit or a co-op.

- Have you written permission from the landowner?

You should discuss your aims with the landowner, finding out if they tie in with their plans, and if possible, are mentioned in the management plan for the site. You will need written permission from the landowner, in a form that sets out their role and your group's role in work to the site. The letter should clearly state any constraints.

- Is your project realistic, achievable and fully costed?

Your group should start with a small project, clearly benefiting the community that uses the green space, and which will encourage more users. It should be of a size related to the experience of your group – how used are you to handling contracts, running events and leading volunteers. Does your group need training and can this be part of the bid?

The project should form part of the management plan for the site. You will find it helpful to have a clear specification and brief for the works to get three quotes for all capital works. You will then know how much it is going to cost, and discussions with a range of contractors will provide you with a greater understanding of what is involved – you may need to redraft your project outline following these discussions. You will need to distinguish between capital and revenue costs and to work out the timescale for the project.

- Have you involved your community?

Define who are you doing the project for and make sure you have consulted them about project details eg how big should a wheelchair turning space be?

Have you asked the wider community whether they support the project? This is a good way of informing and involving others in the project. Talk to your Parish and Borough officers and Councillors, and other local stakeholders, about your group, your green space, your aims and the project. Talk to as many other local groups as you can find time for. Consultation is increasingly important for funders, though the extent and form depends on project scope. You can use Vox pops, anecdote, surveys, focus groups, and combine with evidence of need.

- Find the supporting information you need?

This is anything that evidences the need for the project, and may include ecological surveys, local population statistics – health, education, unemployment, local level of 16-18 yr olds not in education, employment or training (NEETS), % of free school meals, letters from partners, consultation results.

- Find potential funders

You will identify funders by talking to other local groups who have run similar projects, and the parish council. You can search the internet, (Funding Central is useful) or get your local CSV to run a Funderfinder search for you. You should aim to match the funder to the size and type of project.

Use local resources first, and find out what local funders like to fund. Read funder guidelines carefully, and think about what criteria they will use to select projects – they don't always tell you, and you need to read between the lines. It may be the value to biodiversity or the value to the local community, or the likelihood of a successful project.

- Final preparation: is everything in place

You will need a bank account with 2 signatories for most bids, a copy of the management plan for the site and possibly a business plan for the project depending on size. You will need the right type of insurances, and a team of volunteers to back up the project work. You will require the consultation results, project information (specification and brief) and three quotes. You will need to define the outputs and outcomes (outputs relate to quantity and direct activity, outcomes relate to quality and resulting changes). You will need to think how you will judge success and how the project will be monitored and evaluated.

2) Writing your bid

Read the application form and the funding guidance several times before you start and get a clear idea of where the different information goes. Tick relevant boxes for a quick win. If possible, talk to the funder. As you fill in the form or write your project description, don't assume prior knowledge of the site, the area or the type of work. Use critical friends to read through the application, and don't forget this is the only opportunity you get to sell the project to funders.

Bidding hints

- ✓ Keep applications relevant with clear measurable objectives
- ✓ Meet funders' priorities
- ✓ Make sure figures add up
- ✓ Work in partnership where possible, and be clear about other income
- ✓ Be realistic and creative
- ✓ Have clear start and finish dates and include an exit strategy
- ✓ Use plain English, avoid abbreviations and jargon
- ✓ Include referees where requested
- ✓ Use checklists and critical friends

Bidding don'ts

- ✗ Rely on one person – have a fundraising team
- ✗ Ignore funder information – read everything and stick to it
- ✗ Fail to answer any questions – a lost opportunity
- ✗ Use out of date facts (anything over 3 years old is out of date)
- ✗ Submit a budget that doesn't add up, and don't forget inflation
- ✗ Rush an application
- ✗ Assume prior knowledge of project, site or area
- ✗ Confuse outputs and outcomes
- ✗ Send unnecessary information
- ✗ Waffle

Common reasons for failure

Funding levels have fallen since the recession by 25%, so competition is strong. Smaller funds report an increase in applications, with larger funds seeing less competition. Funder feedback reports that while the quantity of applications has increased, the quality has fallen.

1 in 3 bids are ineligible, usually due to organisational or match funding issues, poor budgeting, lack of consultation and evidence of need.

Other reasons for failure include wrong information submitted, poor quality outputs or outcomes.

Large projects are more difficult to fund and revenue costs are always harder to find than capital.

3) Sources of Funding

Funders in and around Telford

- Sita Trust land fill community fund (LCF)
- Biffa Award (LCF)
- Veolia Environmental Trust (LCF)
LCF Trusts vary in some details, but all prefer capital, and are strictly limited to parks and green spaces (category 'D' projects), or biodiversity 'DA'. All LCF funds will require a 10% third party payment up front, which is returned to you as part of the grant payment.
- Donnington Fairshare Trust
- Rowlands /Cadbury Trusts
- Regeneration funding

Reaching communities/ Big Lottery

- Round 1 : you get 3 goes (99% rejected at first try, 20% get through at 2nd and 3rd try)
- Round 2: 45% success rate
- Best chance is for under 300K or less than 5 years
- 92% of funding of voluntary sector
- Repayment of Olympic loan over 25yrs will see an increase in available funds
- All change in 2013: The revised objectives are said to be "less political" in future
- Current 50% of lottery allocation to Big will reduce to 40%, Arts/Heritage/Sport increasing to 20% allocation each

Awards for all

- 4 sections Sports/arts/heritage/community
- £300 - £10,000
- No match funding required
- 1 Year to spend
- 55% success rate in West Midlands
- Will fund session workers but not salaried posts

National funders

- Henry Smith Charity/ Tudor Trust
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Big Lottery Reaching Communities
- Awards for All
- Heritage Lottery – Your heritage
- Sport England

Heritage Lottery Fund

- Flexible application process
- Re-launch Feb 2013
- Sharing heritage £3-10K
- Our Heritage - £10-100K
- 1 round applications

Charitable Trusts

- 9,370 trusts
- Reduction of 20%
- Varying application requirements
- Mostly slow to respond
- Various search websites : Funding central
- Research your funder

The future

- More competition
- Small community projects
- Consortium working
- Always money for good projects



Rough Park, Woodside, Telford: TATN funded 100m accessible path



Dale Coppice, Ironbridge: TATN funded Little Acorns Family Nature Group



Creating a management plan

1. Why is the Management Plan needed?

The primary reason for developing a management plan is to aid the efficient and effective management of the site. However depending upon the type of open space and the community surrounding the open space there may be many other reasons as to why to produce a management plan:

1. Consultation, involvement and consensus
 - Resolve conflicts of interest
 - Promote interest, support and encourage community involvement
2. Preparing for change
 - Monitor and assess change on site
 - Identify future requirements
 - Identify external factors that affect the site
3. Information and recording
 - To ensure a site is properly described
 - To identify areas of management responsibility
4. Framework for decisions
 - To help managers react positively to a changing world
 - To ensure clear objectives of management are laid down
 - To identify what we are aiming to achieve
5. Strategic planning
 - To enable communication within and between sites and organisations
 - To achieve comparability of approach to different sites
6. Action planning
 - To cost work, to bid for funds or to assess grant aid
 - To programme and schedule work

2. What should be covered in a Management Plan?

Broadly speaking, the information in the Management Plan should identify and describe:

- The current situation
- Ambitions & expectations eg increase visitor numbers, improved facilities, greater biodiversity
- A way of achieving or moving towards the desired future situation
- Methods of measuring progress

Where are we now?

- Introduction
- Policy context
- Site description

Where do we want to get to?

- Vision
- Assessment and analysis
- Aims and objectives

How will we get there?

- Work/action plan
- Finance and resources

How will we know when we have arrived?

- Monitor and review

● **Where are we now?**

This section of the Management Plan describes the current situation; it is therefore largely driven by an audit process that allows examination of all aspects of the site and the circumstances in which services are delivered. This section should include: - site name, location, size, site ownership, previous Management Plan information, any relevant policies relating to the area.

Also the current description of site including: description of habitats, geological features, footpaths, entrances, community usage, history of the site, current management, finances available and summary of known issues, challenges, gaps.

Have we enough information to base management decisions on –

- The physical aspects of the open space
- The community, visitors and non-visitors
- The current management involved.

● **Where do we want to get to?**

Based on the information we have what is the “**vision**” for the site, the long term view on how should the site function? Also how can we achieve this vision? Through identification of aims for the open space – a general statement of intent, providing a framework to describe roughly a direction that site management should follow. Objectives for the site and underpin the aims, objectives describe specifically how to achieve the aims.

● **How will we get there?**

Identifies how the aims and objectives will specifically be achieved through a work plan. The work plan should be describes for each year and identify the action, who will do it, when will it be completed and resources needed.

● **How will we know when we have arrived?**

This section sets out ideas on tracking progress and checking that, after all the effort and time you have put in, you have got to the “right” place.

It is important to set up a process and timetable for monitoring, yearly after the work plan involving stakeholders, to see how things have gone.



Woodland management

To properly manage woodland, a group needs a woodland management plan relating to the woodland and tasks there in. The plan should include a large-scale map of the site and divided into different areas that may require different management techniques or have different characteristics, call **compartments (©)**. In order to create and develop a plan, considerable survey work, knowledge of conservation methods and species requirements are needed. Although professional help is valuable, community members may carry out surveys, set objectives, contribute to proposals and draw up a timetable.

A woodland management plan will contain some or all of the following elements:

1. **Vision:** What could the woodland look like in 30 years' time
2. **Objectives:** what benefits can the woodland provide, for example:
 - Safe recreation and access for all abilities
 - Conservation of rare plants or invertebrates
 - Area for Forest School (©1)
 - Production of charcoal, firewood and coppicing products
3. **General Description:**
 - Size of site
 - Legal details of ownership, designations (SSI, LNR)
 - History
 - Location
 - Access
 - Topography and aspect (steep, south facing)
 - Climate
 - Soil type
 - Water courses and non-woodland habitats (heathland, fen)
 - Ground flora and shrub layer
 - Tree stands – what species? How many of each: age, height, diameter, quality, problems
4. **Proposals:**

A list of activities which will achieve the objectives, for example:

 - Strim and clear paths annually
 - Create habitat piles
 - Strim work area, maintain wood pile, remove dangerous branches (©1)
 - Wood to be stacked for charcoal and firewood
5. **Budget**
6. **Timetable**



Ecology Surveys

An ecological survey provides a snapshot outline view of what a particular area was like at the time of surveying. The purpose of the survey depends on your green space management plan and may include observation of:

1. Any differences between the vegetation of differently managed sections of the site
2. How each section has changed from one year to the next

These changes will have been brought about as a direct result of the management regimes being used on your green space, as well as by the environmental conditions which have been prevalent over the preceding year(s). An example of what a 5 year ecological monitoring survey timetable could look like:

	4/2012	8/2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Description of site	+					
Descriptive/monitoring map	+					
Features of conservation significance	+					
Ecological targets	+	updated				
General management objectives for conservation	+					
Management practices to meet above objectives	+					
Monitoring forms	+	updated				
Vegetation monitoring (whole wood)						
Vegetation monitoring (ground flora in thinned areas)						
Bird monitoring						
Other monitoring						

In a quadrat sample, every plant is recorded. The area that each plant covers in the square is also estimated as a percentage e.g. if a plant covers one quarter of the quadrat its cover is 25%. Also record bare ground cover. See Appendix 2 for ecological annual plan



Flora monitoring on Ropewalk Meadow: Severn Gorge Countryside Trust volunteers



Sharing Nature with Families

My childhood was spent exploring the local woodlands from morning until tea-time! Leading the Little Acorns Family Nature group for walks through our local woodlands makes my life complete. To make the experience life-changing for you:

- ✓ **GOLDEN RULE:** Make sure the adults take care of their **own** children and share activities with them. You are **NOT** the child-minder! Keep **yourself** safe.
 - ✓ Make sure of meeting point, time of walk, footwear, old clothes, snacks etc.
 - ✓ Make walk bookable in advance with names and ages of children, for planning activities.
 - ✓ Introduce yourself and allow time for families to introduce themselves.
 - ✓ Keep your group small, maximum of 12 (to start with) and have a helper.
 - ✓ If pushchair friendly, say so. Although activities must be planned to suit the ages.
 - ✓ Encourage adults to bring drink and snack for walks over an hour. Picnics are fun.
 - ✓ Checked your route out beforehand and complete a risk assessment.
 - ✓ Take your First Aid kit and First Aider.
 - ✓ **Smile** and the world will smile with you! Engage both adult and child.
 - ✓ Let **Nature** be the teacher. Focus on helping children and adults experience nature through their senses and feelings: touch, smell, sight and hearing.
 - ✓ A sense of joy should permeate the experience!
 - ✓ Be receptive – listen and be aware. Be happy to be outside whatever the weather!
 - ✓ Focus by asking questions, pointing out sights and sounds, textures and shapes.
 - ✓ Learn to see and explore, talk later. Children absorb so much knowledge.
 - ✓ Don't worry about not knowing names of things. Exploring is more important.
 - ✓ Keep activities short and sweet. Gauge the interest. You'll know very quickly when children and adults are bored! Children love free time just to play.
 - ✓ Keep paper resources to the minimum. It just gets lost / thrown away or give out at end.
- (See Appendix 2: Sharing Nature with Children activities)



Severn Gorge Countryside Trust: Little Acorns Family Nature group making bows and arrows



Risk Assessments

What is a Risk Assessment in your green space?

It is a systematic method of looking at work or walking activities, considering what could go wrong, and deciding on suitable control measures to prevent loss, damage or injury in your green space and should include the controls required to eliminate, reduce or minimise the risks.

Why conduct a Risk Assessment?

Risk Assessments are a fundamental requirement for you when working with volunteers and the general public. If you don't know, or appreciate where the risks are, you are putting yourself, your volunteers, employees, general public and your organisation in danger.

The leader(s) of the activity must look at everything that could cause harm in order to decide whether they are doing enough to meet their legal obligations. This is a minimum requirement.

The aim should always be to reduce the risks as much as is 'reasonably practicable' meaning you must balance the cost of steps that they could take to reduce a risk against the degree of risk presented.

Step 1: Identify the hazards

First you need to work out how people could be harmed. When you use your green space everyday it is easy to overlook some hazards, so here are some tips to help you identify the ones that matter:

Walk around your green space and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. For example:

Guided walks: weather conditions; road traffic; child straying from group; slips, trips & falls

Scrub clearing: Slips, trips and falls; manual handling; handling thorny materials / brambles; contact with and incorrect use of hand tools; contact with traffic; weather conditions; contact with micro-organisms e.g. tetanus / toxocariasis (from dog/cat/fox)

Ask your Friends committee and members what they think. They may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious to you.

Visit the HSE website. HSE publishes practical guidance on where hazards occur and how to control them.

www.hse.gov.uk/risk/

If using chemicals and equipment, check manufacturers' instructions or data sheets as they can be very helpful in spelling out the hazards and putting them in their true perspective.

Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed; it will help you identify the best way of managing the risk by identifying groups of people ('people working with tools' or 'people of the guided walk').

Remember some people have particular requirements, general public, expectant mothers, and people with disabilities. Extra thought will be needed for some hazards. Ask your Friends if they can think of anyone you may have missed.

In each case, identify how they might be harmed, i.e. what type of injury or ill health might occur. For example, 'Walkers may suffer an injured toe when tripping over tree root on path'.

Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Having spotted the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about them. The law requires you to do everything '**reasonably practicable**' to protect people from harm. You can work this out for yourself, but the easiest way is to compare what you are doing with good practice.

First, look at what you're already doing and think about what controls you have in place and how the work is organised. Then compare this with the good practice and see if there's more you should be doing to bring yourself up to standard. In asking yourself this, consider:

Can I get rid of the hazard altogether? (Road traffic: is there an alternative route?)

If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

When controlling risks, apply the principles below, if possible in the following order:

- try a less risky option (switch to another route)
- prevent access to the hazard (as above)
- organise the walk to reduce exposure to the hazard (warn the walker of the hazard)
- insist on personal protective equipment/put note in advert (sturdy footwear)
- provide welfare facilities (first aid)

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. Failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen.

Involve your Friends members so that you can be sure that what you propose to do will work in practice and won't introduce any new hazards.

Step 4: Record your findings and implement them

Putting the results of your risk assessment into practice will make a difference when looking after people.

Writing down the results of your risk assessment, and sharing them with your members, encourages you to do this. If you have fewer than five members you do not have to write anything down.

When writing down your results, keep it simple, for example 'Tripping over root: use alternate path, root removal, members and land owner notified.

A perfect risk assessment is not expected, but it must be suitable and sufficient. You need to show that:

- a proper check was made
- you asked who might be affected
- you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the no. people who could be involved
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low
- you involved your Friends in the process

Step 5: Review your risk assessment and update if necessary

Few green spaces stay the same. Sooner or later, you will bring in new paths, steps and ‘furniture’ that could lead to new hazards. It makes sense therefore, to review what you are doing on an on-going basis.

Look at your risk assessment and think about whether there have been any changes? Are there improvements you still need to make? Have your Friends spotted a problem? Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses? Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.

When you are running guided walks and volunteering days it’s all too easy to forget about reviewing your risk assessment – until something has gone wrong and it’s too late. During the year, if there is a significant change, don’t wait: check your risk assessment and where necessary, amend it. If possible, it is best to think about the risk assessment when you’re planning your change – that way you leave yourself more flexibility.

More information from: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/step5.htm>

See Appendix 3 for example of a Site Risk Assessment



Using tools safely when preparing ground for hedge-laying: Severn Gorge Countryside Trust volunteer



Changes to Disclosing and Barring

CHANGES TO DISCLOSURE AND BARRING (England and Wales) from September 2012

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012: Changes came into effect on 10th September 2012.

An organisation which knowingly allows a barred person to work in regulated activity will be breaking the law.

If you dismiss or remove someone from regulated activity (or you would have done had they not already left) because they harmed or posed a risk of harm to vulnerable groups including children, you are legally required to forward information about that person to the ISA. It is a criminal offence not to do so. If you believe that the person has committed a criminal offence you are 'strongly advised' to pass the information to the police.

ISA Helpline 01325 953 795 or isadispatchteam@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

We don't need to contact ISA and ask whether or not someone is listed, an enhanced CRB check for work within a regulated activity will tell you (where requested) if the person is on one of the ISAs barred lists.

New definition of regulated activity: It has been scaled back to focus on work which involves close and unsupervised contact with vulnerable groups including children.

- i. Unsupervised activities: teach, train, instruct, care for or supervise children, or provide advice/guidance on well-being, or drive a vehicle only for children.
- ii. Work for a limited range of establishments ('specified places') with opportunity for contact: for example schools, children's homes, childcare premises. Not work by supervised volunteers.

Work under i or ii is regulated activity only if done regularly.

Regulated activity relating to adults: The new definition of regulated activity relating to adults no longer labels adults as 'vulnerable'. Instead the definition identifies the activities which, if any adult requires them, lead to that adult being considered vulnerable at that particular time. So it focuses on the activities not the setting. There is no longer a requirement for a person to do the activities a certain number of times before they are engaging in regulated activity.

Six categories of people who fall within the new definition of regulated activity (including anyone who provides day to day management or supervision of those people):

1. Providing health care
2. Providing personal care
3. Providing social work
4. Assistance with cash, bills, shopping
5. Assistance with person's own affairs
6. Conveying – transporting an adult because of their age, illness or disability. Doesn't include taxi drivers.

Everybody within the pre-September definition of regulated activity will remain eligible for enhanced CRB checks, whether or not they fall within the post-September definition of regulated activity.

Repeal of controlled activity: This category will no longer exist. It covered people who might have less contact with vulnerable groups including children than people in regulated activity – for example, some people who deal with records. At the moment you can check whether these people have been barred – but not after September 2012. These people may still be eligible for a CRB check depending on the role.

Repeal of registration and continuous monitoring: The original plan in the Vetting and Barring Scheme – was that anyone who wanted to work with vulnerable groups including children would need to register with the scheme and to be continuously monitored for any new criminal record information. This was put on hold during the review, but it has now been confirmed that registration and monitoring (*our need to contact ISA every time we employ someone new*) will NOT be introduced.

Repeal of additional information: Under the Police Act 1997, police forces can provide certain sensitive ‘additional information’ about applicants only to organisations, not to the applicants themselves. Known as “brown envelope” material. This provision will no longer exist in the Police Act, BUT the police may choose common law powers to provide information directly to employers in cases where this is necessary, for example to prevent crime or harm to others.

Minimum age is 16 – applying for a CRB check. No need to apply for a CRB for under 16s.

More rigorous ‘relevancy’ test for when the police release information held locally on an enhanced CRB check: Currently the police provide information held locally on enhanced CRB certificates when they consider it to be relevant to the purpose for which the certificate was requested. This will continue, but the police will now apply a more rigorous test before deciding whether to disclose information. From September they will only include information they “reasonably believe to be relevant”. If information is included on the enhanced CRB and the applicant doesn’t think it should be, they will now be able to ask the Independent Monitor to review it, and the IM can ask the CRB to issue a new certificate, either without that information or with amendments to it. Applicants should be encouraged to inform you when they request such a review and to update you about what happens with their certificate.

Challenges to information on CRB certificates: Currently an applicant for a CRB check who believes that information disclosed is inaccurate can apply to the CRB for a decision about whether it is accurate. The Protection of Freedoms Act will allow people other than the applicant to do that too.

More Changes are due

The ISA Helpline says that in the future the onus will be on the potential employee to get a CRB. You will then be able to run your own check on-line to make sure nothing has been added – even if that CRB is 3 years old. The new Update Service is not likely to happen until early 2013 – there will be a small subscription fee to the individuals applying.

In December 2012, the work of the CRB and ISA merged into a single new Non-Departmental Public Body called the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

A great many thanks to all authors who have contributed to this Handbook, appendices and case studies.

Cadi Price

Telford to Nature Partnership Officer

2013



Welcome to the Friends of Hollinswood and Randlay Valley

Over the years Randlay Valley has been severely neglected and little used. The Friends of Hollinswood and Randlay Valley were formed in January 2011 with a view to redressing this neglect.

Randlay Valley is an area of approximately 87.5 Acres and, as you can see from the map on page 2, lies between Queen Elizabeth Drive, the Eastern Primary, Naird Lane and Stirchley Avenue It is part of the green network linking Telford Town Park to Nedge Hill and the wider countryside.

It's an area of natural woodland with open spaces and meadows, through which run footpaths and bridleways. It contains rare plants (orchids, blue-bells), a variety of trees (some ancient), old industrial workings, several wildlife species including muntjac deer, and dingy skipper butterflies

With the help of Telford and Wrekin Council, Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council, Green Gym, Venture Out, Access to Nature and Shropshire Wildlife Trust we have been able to:-

- Open up two previously inaccessible footpaths had another path resurfaced, added new steps and repaired some old ones.
- Had the grass and verges cut and some hedgerows cropped.
- Installed picnic tables, interpretation boards, litter bins & benches
- Held bug hunts, bush craft days, Walks for Health and other events
- Set up a web site – [http:// friendsofhollinswoodandrandlayvalley.webs.com](http://friendsofhollinswoodandrandlayvalley.webs.com)
- Identified other work and projects

However, there is still much to do! This is YOUR Valley, please come and explore it and tell us what improvements you would like to see.



OUR KEY AIM is to improve the involvement of the local communities in this part of Telford over a period of several years which we hope to achieve by carrying out various projects and activities listed below

OBJECTIVE 1: To improve safety
AIM To make Randlay Valley safely accessible by people of all abilities
METHODS: 1: To increase police presence
 2: To improve the state of paths
 3: To cut back verges
 4: To repair steps

OBJECTIVE 2: To enhance awareness of Randlay Valley’s potential
AIM To educate all on the extent of wild life, flora, fauna, and past history in Randlay Valley
METHODS: 1: To involve local groups and schools
 2: To encourage the discovery of past history
 3: To develop wild life areas

OBJECTIVE 3: To involve the local neighbourhood
AIM To make Randlay Valley a place enjoyed by people of all abilities
METHODS: 1: To improve signage
 2: To install seats and picnic tables
 3: To survey people using Randlay Valley for their opinions and desires
 4: To carry out regular litter picks

Parts of these Objectives have been completed; the remainder form an Action Plan for the future

To help undertake the work involved we have split the Plan into areas with a key lead for each as listed below

Name	Role	Lead
	Chairman	Funding Paths and lighting Management plan
	Vice Chair	Grassland management Police liaison
	Secretary	Mammals
	Training	Woodland management Tool procurement
	Website	Streams and ponds History Surveys
	Treasurer	Parish Council

Additionally we are supported by a number of Organisations

Telford and Wrekin Council

Telford & Wrekin Council has a variety of roles within The Friends of Randlay Valley:

Landowners - Ultimate responsibility for the land, and the work UNDER PASS that land must meet the various Council’s obligations.

Strategic View - Management of Randlay Valley achieves the Strategic Borough wide Open Space vision, taking into consideration such issues as The Biodiversity Action Plan and the Green Infrastructure.

Operational - To provide a variety of support to The Friends of Group in the creation and delivery of a Management Plan, including joint external funding bids.

Aim - Through Partnership working improve the quality and enjoyment of Randlay Valley involving the local community.

HOLLINSWOOD & RANDLAY PARISH COUNCIL

Hollinswood & Randlay Parish Council identified the area known as Randlay Valley as a priority area within the Parish.

Randlay Valley has been included in the Parish Strategy as an important open space which offers a variety of habitats, links the centre of Telford to the wider countryside and is the home of a huge variety of wildlife, flowers and trees.

The Parish Council assisted in the setting up of The Friends of Hollinswood & Randlay Valley and continues to offer administrative and financial support to the Group.

Members of Hollinswood & Randlay Parish Council attend meetings and the officers work in partnership with the Friends group to offer advice, assistance and support wherever possible.

Telford Green Spaces Partnership - Objectives

- To represent all the green spaces 'Friends of' and volunteer organisations in the borough of Telford
- To bring together individual groups with a single aim
- To apply for joint funding for larger sums of money
- To co-ordinate activities
- To support each other with manpower and tools
- To provide 'champions' with specialist skills to support all groups

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

- Looks after 38 nature reserves
- Welcomes people on to its nature reserves
- Campaigns for wildlife and the environment
- Encourages people to enjoy nature
- Involves volunteers in practical nature conservation
- Takes thousands of school children on trips to wild places every year
- The Trust is supported by more than 10,000 members

Small Woods Association

- Based in Coalbrookdale on the edge of historic Ironbridge providing an innovative headquarters set in the woods of the Ironbridge Gorge
- Promote sustainable living through a wood based economy by running courses and events in sustainable woodland management, coppicing, crafts and related activities
- Activities at the Centre include woodland volunteering projects, fun family sessions and community events

Telford Green Gym

- offers an alternative way for local people to improve their health and well-being by getting involved in practical horticulture, conservation and environmental activities
- aims to improve the physical and emotional health of adults who are referred to by doctors and NHS
- provides provision of a range of practical conservation volunteering activities such as footpath improvements, habitat management, community gardening /allotments, biological monitoring and health walks.

If you are interested to learn more of to join us, please contact us via our website of Facebook

March 2013

Appendix 2: Sharing Nature with Families activities



Little Acorns Family Nature Programme: activities which have been popular

Stories: Share a story on your adventure. Use a hole in ground or tree to explore ‘Who live here?’

Role play: swaying tree, dandelion parachute, fox creeping, bird swooping

Natural art: spirals of autumn leaves; twig frames filled found materials (see below)



Clay: Use clay/plasticine to press into bark to make faces and add grass for hair etc; small balls of clay for minibeasts.
NB: clay can be heavy to carry, so keep quantity small (see above)

Sticks: Pile up sticks to create child-size/hedgehog dens. 3 forked sticks for main structure, add sticks for sides, cover with dead leaves from base upwards on 2 sides. (see below); study structures of birds’ nests, animal homes



Trees: Touch, hug and smell tree bark. Sit around tree or under branches, lie back and look up. Listen for heartbeat of a tree in spring – get up close. Choose own tree as a ‘Magic Spot’ and return regularly to explore

Sounds: close eyes and listen! What can you hear in 2 minutes? Share your experience and recognise a bird song

Sights: birds, butterflies: study different habitats, colours, shape, jizz of bird (movement)

Colours: colour palettes: strip of double-sided sticky tape on card/paper (see head crown above) collect small nibbles of nature: colours/10 green leaves etc . Use for book marks. Or use paint colour swatches (from DIY shop) to match eg green leaves

Scavenger hunt: spring, summer, autumn, winter: find 5 objects..... don’t pick, look and leave

Earth walks: Activities using senses, sight, hearing, smell, touch. (Taste: autumn fruits)

Magic Hearing Aid! Hold a stone/nut/hand size twig cupped in hand **next** to ear, concentrating the mind to listen

Silent walk: walk in a line, silently, looking and listening, then sharing. Use a stick as a talking stick to share ideas

Magic spots: each family/child sits quietly under a chosen/individual tree for 5 minutes just watching nature, then gather together in group to share experiences, using a ‘talking stick’ to take turns

Daily task: try to remember the name of one plant/insect/leaf on your walk. Use ID books to find out.

Site Risk Assessment

Assessors Name:	Date: 20 th April 2013	Site Name:	
MAP REF:			
HAZARD	RISK	CONTROLS	Who's AT RISK?
Branches at head height – cuts to face / eyes	MEDIUM	Verbal warnings. Walk short distance behind person in front.	Everyone
Falling branches	LOW	Avoid wooded areas in high winds. Remove any fallen or dangerous trees from along footpaths when found.	Everyone
Pond very deep water – steep sides	MEDIUM	Verbal warning. Stay away from sides. Keep to paths.	Everyone
Far side of open pond deep mud and low sides	MEDIUM	Verbal warning. Stay away from sides. Keep to paths.	Everyone
Dogs (many not on leads) and dog excrement	MEDIUM	Stay away from unfamiliar dogs. Wash hands after contact with faeces. Dog waste bins available.	Everyone
Slips, trips and falls	LOW	Areas of the site have steep concrete steps that when wet maybe slippery. Suitable footwear needed in wet / icy conditions. Trainers not appropriate in wet weather. Choose more suitable routes that are available.	Everyone
Stranger Danger – this is a heavily used public site	LOW	Give clear boundaries for activities. Do not let children wander off. Ensure appropriate adult supervision.	Everyone
Fires on site	LOW	No fires allowed on site. In the case of a fire, emergency services to be called and all participants to calmly make their way to the assembly point @woodland entrance	Everyone
Poisoning – berries / plants	LOW	A lot of yew tree present on Site. Do not pick or eat plants.	Everyone

Nearest phone: Local houses at entrance of site

Nearest doctor/hospital: 5 mins walk

Escape routes: Site contained with perimeter fencing, 4 exit points out of the woodland area.

Remarks: As a habitat this is a well maintained site, a key Parkland Habitat. It has great access for all users, and clear and defined flat paths throughout the wood. It is used generally for dog walking throughout most of the day. Off track areas, are open and flat and present little problem with access again, however there maybe opportunity for trips and falls from tree roots and loose ground. No serious problems with Litter or fires.

NOTES: If after your group has visited this site and any of your pupils or staff are absent through any illness, please ensure that you inform them, or their GP that they have been on an outdoor activity.

Case Study 1: The Formation of Telford Green Spaces Partnership

The Formation of Telford Green Spaces Partnership

Location: Telford, Shropshire, West Midlands

Partners: Telford and Wrekin Council (T&WC), Severn Gorge Countryside Trust (SGCT), Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT), Small Woods Association (SWA), Shropshire Community Health Trust (NHS)

Background: In October 2009, the Telford Access to Nature Partnership (2009-12) formed a User Group of local people. In order to improve the physical and sensory access in these natural spaces, they were trained by the Fieldfare Trust to access audit 12 green spaces managed by T&WC and 8 managed by SGCT. Following the audits and planned access improvements, several members took the initiative to form Friends' groups to 'look after' their local green space.

The funding support for this Partnership came from the Access to Nature Programme run by Natural England and is part of the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments.

In August 2011, Becky Eade, Parks and Open Spaces Group Manager for Telford and Wrekin Council, held an informal meeting with 11 Friends groups formed within the borough of Telford and Wrekin. At that initial meeting the Telford Green Spaces Partnership (TGSP) was formed and soon realised the benefits of sharing ideas and how to achieve aims and objectives but above all to realise the benefits that would come from a joint approach to funding. A Committee and Constitution were formalised to start our mission in looking after our many green spaces for the benefit of the community and wildlife.

Objectives:

- To represent Telford's 'Friends' and volunteer organisations for the protection and management of green spaces
- To bring together individual groups with a single aim
- To apply for joint funding for larger sums of money
- To co-ordinate activities
- To support each other with manpower and tools
- To provide 'champions' to support all groups with specialist skills

With the Telford Access to Nature Partnership ending in July 2012, further funding from Natural England and BIG Lottery Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme was made possible in order to maintain sustainability pending a successful application. In August 2012, the application was successful and Supporting Change (6 months) and Impact funding (12 months) commenced in November 2012 for one year, especially to help TGSP become a truly organic partnership. The objectives for each organisation were to offer a diverse range of training opportunities in order to increase confidence and skills for the TGSP members to deliver work independently and assume responsibility, leadership and/or delivery roles within the volunteering work and with mechanisms in place to ensure sustainability within the partnership.

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust applied for the funding on behalf of TGSP, Telford & Wrekin Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Shropshire Community NHS Trust, and Small Woods Association. The partnership was awarded £10k for Supporting Change and £103k for Supporting Impact.

Actions:

- Marketing and promoting project
- Sustainability
- Map of all green spaces
- Enable those running projects to learn and share new skills
- Outdoor learning
- Ordering value to project
- Involving all partners

Achievements:

- Promotion: Website (via ivo), group email. Training skills and Celebration event on 17th August 2013
- Sustainability: Through training in green space management and with further successful funding applications. Shropshire Wildlife Trust has engaged with TGSP in an application for the BIG Lottery 'Reaching Communities' bid to enable future engagement within all the communities in a variety of inspiring opportunities for the people of Telford
- Map: Initiated with help of Telford and Wrekin Council to celebrate the many green spaces
- New skills shared after training: First Aid, Volunteer Leadership, Ecological Surveys, Funding
- Outdoor learning: biodiversity identification, practical conservation and engaging children with nature
- Ordering value to project: S M A R T skills in project management, Green Infrastructure consultancy
- Involving all partners: Borough and Parish councils, SCI Partners, Friends groups

Lessons learnt:

It has been important to include as many Friends groups as possible to undertake the free training, thus enabling members to share in future practical management, biodiversity surveys and sustainable skills within their green spaces.

Quotes:

"Telford Green Spaces Partnership developed from the original 11 Friends of Green Spaces Groups involved with the Telford Access to Nature Partnership and has grown organically being driven by its members who realised the benefits of working in partnership to achieve common goals not only for the individual green spaces they manage but for Telford's green spaces as a whole." Peter Loat, Lead Adviser, Access to Nature, Natural England

"...I have benefitted immensely on a very personal level in that I have been able to get involved in practical conservation tasks and a great variety of training on my doorstep which has helped improve my self-esteem and confidence and has helped reduce the sense of social isolation I experienced after a long period of depression. I have learnt to have fun again through learning new skills and working with other people who share similar values and commitment to nature conservation, developing community awareness of our local historic and cultural heritage and safeguarding our beautiful surroundings for future generations to enjoy." TGSP member.

Critical success factors:

- Partnership initiated by Telford & Wrekin Council for the Friends of Groups who formed following the Telford Access to Nature Partnership
- Training for all members for a sustainable partnership from 1st November 2013
- Clear need for the partnership with council and other organisational support
- Keeping the momentum going – so much learnt by so many people for the future and benefit of Telford



Training: Walk Leader



Sharing Nature with Children



Outdoor First Aid



Case Study 2: Friends of Apley Woods: Engaging the Community

Friends of Apley Woods: Engaging the Community

Location: Apley Wood, Telford, Shropshire, West Midlands

Partners: Telford & Wrekin Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Small Woods Association, Shropshire Community Health Trust (NHS), Hadley and Leegomery Parish Council

History:

Five years ago, the residents of Apley Castle formed a close working partnership with Telford and Wrekin Council (TWC) aimed at rescuing the woodlands surrounding the thirteenth century fortified Manor (Apley Castle) and reclaiming and restoring the remains of the landscaped gardens belonging to the eighteenth century Georgian house.

The 56 acre site, initially acquired by Telford Development Corporation some 50 years ago, as part of the whole of the Charlton Estate, had since become the property of TWC who, at first, sought to develop the Woods but then severely curtailed their interest in its condition.

Moreover, some years ago, Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) had downgraded the status of the Woods as a Site of Special Interest. The site became neglected, dense and overgrown; its deteriorating habitat reflected in diminished bird life and damaged wildflower stocks. The numerous rare trees suffered from complete lack of care, being increasingly crowded out by other invasive species.

Over time the site became surrounded by housing developments with little attention being given to their negative implications for the Woods and which gradually acquired the reputation of being rather inaccessible, dark and unsafe. The Western entrance, in particular, offered a haven for crime and antisocial behaviour; cars were damaged and stolen and, more generally, the Woods came to be a target for fly tipping, sporadic arson attacks and mindless vandalism.

Action Taken:

The situation had become critical. A focal point for forceful intervention was urgently needed, with the local community firmly assuming joint responsibility for the Woods, becoming directly involved in decisions about their future. The Friends of Apley Woods (FOAW) was set up; a partnership between residents and T&W, with the objective of protecting, fostering and developing Apley Woods as a valuable amenity for the local community, seeking to ensure that future change would be sustainable and respect the Woods' heritage and distinctiveness. These aims to be achieved by the FOAW working cooperatively with businesses, community groups, schools and others, while paying particular concern to the views of existing users of the Woods.

Initial Resources:

At the outset, financial resources were limited, amounting to no more than a few hundred pounds. The residents offered enthusiasm, time and hard work, coupled with a sustained determination that something positive should be done. In a phased plan, agreed to by all, FOAW and TWC began with a programme of modest improvements such as litter picking, path clearing, bulb and tree planting. Volunteers were rewarded with the warm hospitality for which FOAW is now well known.

These modest initial inputs were eventually to leverage many man hours of further effort by volunteers and other partners, including SWT, Green Gym, Local Businesses, Small Woods Association and RAF Cosford. It has been estimated that, in all some 4000 man hours of volunteer effort, equivalent to around £25000 at today's wage rates, have been mobilised.

The work carried out had many aspects including; the clearance of invasive species, hedging, de-silting of ponds, replanting and restoring plant stocks. More than 300,000 bulbs have been planted, together with 350 or so specimen trees and several thousand whips.

Special attention has been paid to making the Woods more accessible, by introducing new entrances, improving paths, providing resting places, refurbishing and rebuilding stairways, constructing poolside decking, adding angling platforms and repairing fences and gates. Signposts, way marking and other forms of onsite information are regularly updated and an attractive leaflet describing the Woods and their amenities has been circulated to schools, hospitals and the Severn Hospice.

An interactive website has been set up, giving details of forthcoming events and opportunities to volunteer and contribute and Apley Woods now has its own Facebook page, which is proving very popular.

Activities:

Our purpose has always been to develop the Woods in a way which would benefit and engage the community as a whole including, toddlers, preschool children, school children, families, senior citizens, people with disabilities, hospice/hospital patients and carers.

Our regular events include moth nights, “eco-olympics”, tree walks, bird walks, twig regattas, pond dipping, as well as Easter, Halloween and Christmas celebrations. Visitor response has been hugely positive, with attendance occasionally at levels where it has been necessary to set a cap on the numbers involved. There is enthusiastic weekly participation in features such as Forest School and Health Walks. Several specially commissioned sculptures, depicting birds of prey and woodland animals, attract much favourable attention, particularly amongst children. Despite the pouring rain, their enthusiasm showed through when the Woods featured on national television in the BBC “Countryfile” in 2012.



Recognition:

A recent interview survey of visitors showed that the overwhelming majority were pleased with the changes which have taken place. The improvements to access, many of which came about as a result of consultation with user groups, were particularly appreciated. Visitor book comments by those attending the various events throughout the year are glowing and extremely positive.

The work of the FOAW and their partners has also achieved widespread appreciation further afield, both nationally and locally. The national ENCAMS award cites the FOAW as “an excellent example of what can be achieved” in bringing “residents, land managers and other organisations to work together to improve the local environment” Closer to home, we have received environmental awards from both TWC and Hadley and Leegomery Parish Councils.

Funding:

Since the initial seed-corn money from TWC volunteer “Fix It Fund”, and generous annual support from Hadley and Leegomery Parish Council, we have received donations from visitors and hosted numerous fund-raising activities. Many of the larger projects have only been made possible by the substantial time and money committed by the Woods’ owners, TWC.

The FOAW has amply demonstrated the commitment of the community to the development of the Woods. This, and the growing evidence of success, has encouraged others to join in the work, providing access to much larger funding, for example from the People’s Millions, Access to Nature and the Big Lottery.

Future plans:

Our aims remain unaltered; to protect, foster and develop the Woods as an amenity to be enjoyed by the whole community, striving for sustainability and renewal, preserving the Wood’s wildlife habitats, involving and empowering local residents and celebrating Apley’s rich and unique heritage.

As the tangible focus for these ambitions our next objective is to work with SWT and others to establish Apley Woods as a Designated Local Nature Reserve. Apley has a variety of interesting habitats in one place, with its woodlands, meadows, lake, ponds and surrounding grasslands, providing a fascinating range of flora and fauna. It richly deserves to be recognised as a special place.

Visitor numbers are now such as to give rise to concerns about environmental impact. We think a programme needs to be developed to help ensure that visitors respect and appreciate what they find in the Woods, and seek to create as little disturbance to the Woods and to other visitors as possible. This “Tread Softly” message is to be communicated to all visitors to Apley Woods using, for example, information boards, website, social media and school visits.

Future Needs:

Parking and security of the Woods’ boundaries are an ever present challenge. More volunteers, more funding and quality sponsorship will see the successful continuation of this flagship community effort.



Case Study 3: Friends of Hollinswood and Randlay Valley: Setting up a Friends Group

Friends of Hollinswood and Randlay Valley: Setting up a Friends Group

Location: Randlay Valley, Telford, Shropshire, West Midlands

Partners: Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council, Telford Access to Nature Partnership (Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, Small Woods Association, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust, Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council).

The Friends of Hollinswood and Randlay Valley wrote this case study to highlight the achievements made by local people dedicated to improving their local green space for the benefit of the community and wildlife.

Background: Randlay Valley lies within Central Telford, and until 2010, had been renowned as a neglected green space between the urban housing developments of Randlay and Hollinswood. However, recent community development, following the inauguration of the Friends group, has greatly benefitted the area. It is clear that with an enthusiastic Friends group giving a great many hours of their time to improve the area, linked with improved access and interpretation, partnership working, community engagement and a supportive Parish Council and Unitary Authority, a long term solution is achievable.



Hollinswood and Randlay Valley is part of the green network linking Telford Town Park to Nedge Hill and the wider countryside. It is an area of approximately 87.5 Acres and lies between Queen Elizabeth Drive, the Eastern Primary, Naird Lane and Stirchley Avenue. The Valley contains varying habitats ranging from Ancient Semi-natural woodland, various grasslands, a brook and small Fen. Part of the Valley is a County Wildlife Site of approximately 12 hectares. Ancient Semi-natural woodland is considered a rare and irreplaceable resource that cannot be re-created if lost and in spring is a sea of Bluebells. There are species rich grasslands, which in June are a mass of Orchids and the unimproved grassland is home to one of the last of Telford's colonies of Ding Skipper Butterfly.

Objectives:

- to make Hollinswood and Randlay Valley safely accessible to people of all abilities
- to educate all on the extent of wildlife, flora, fauna and the history of Hollinswood and Randlay Valley
- to make Hollinswood and Randlay Valley a place to be enjoyed by people of all ages
- to involve residents of Hollinswood and Randlay and the wider borough, visitors, local groups and conservation organisations in the management of Hollinswood and Randlay Valley, seeking to work in partnership with Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council and Borough of Telford and Wrekin Council
- to form links and work co-operatively with the local authority, businesses, community groups, charities, schools and other appropriate organisations, with particular regard for the existing users of Hollinswood and Randlay Valley
- to organise, host and fund events and activities within or associated with Hollinswood and Randlay Valley, consistent with the above objectives

Actions:

In November 2010, two evaluation meetings were held to gauge the community feelings. In January 2011, a "Friends" group was formed to promote and protect the green space known as Randlay Valley or Randlay Wood, working in partnership with Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council and Telford and Wrekin Borough Council.

Achievements:

- Set up a Committee, constitution and bank account. Action Plan started
- Set up a website and produced newsletters for every household
- Attended Fun Days etc to promote the Friends
- Organised, hosted and funded events and activities within, or associated with, Randlay Valley
- Supported Shropshire Community NHS Trust 'Green Gym' volunteers' project of footpath and step improvements commenced during the Telford Access to Nature Partnership
- Set up and led a monthly 'Walking for Health' walk starting from Hollinswood Neighbourhood Centre at 10.15am on every 3rd Wednesday of the month
- Held discussions with Hollinswood Infant Schools for a possible Forest School site
- Commenced community led discussions concerning the social and industrial heritage of the area.
- Became affiliated to Telford Green Space Partnership
- Designed 3 interpretation boards funded through Telford Access to Nature (see below)
- Improved access with 1 upgraded footpath, 45 steps, 2 picnic benches and 5 park benches
- Held 2 family bug hunts with Shropshire Wildlife Trust, and a family bush-craft day with Small Woods Association
- Carried out conservation volunteering days with Butterfly Conservation
- Carried out coppicing, scrub clearance and path maintenance
- Commenced working with Telford and Wrekin Council to write and implement a Management Plan piloting the use of CMS software
- Forged links with wider community including bird box construction with Hollinswood Junior and Infant Schools; litter picks with the local Cubs, Guides and Scouts
- Carried out litter picking with support from the local MP, Scouts and Borough Environment services
- Achieved funding to commence thinning, improve a footpath and obtain tools for voluntary work
- Site visit by Natural England to discuss potential Local Nature Reserve status

Lessons learnt:

- important to set up a Friends group constitution as early as possible to make clear the objectives and constitution directives
- promoting the Friends group to the whole community, through various media, reinforces the long-term commitment and issues which arise
- community involvement develops when a common task, such as litter picking, is shared and everyone sees the improvements they are helping to achieve
- support from the local MP, Parish Council and Borough Council (land-owner) is crucial from the start
- importance of ensuring each project has a high media profile, political support from local politicians and site visits from funders

Critical success factors to take forward:

Mechanisms are in place to ensure the benefits of the project will be sustained longer term after funding from Natural England ends:

- implementation of a Management Plan
- partnership working along with knowledge shared between TGSP members
- funding applied for through, for example, Reaching Communities and Sita
- supporting Change and Impact training are key success factors



Big Lottery Peoples' Millions: Successful Funding

Location: Apley Wood, Telford, Shropshire, West Midlands

Partners: Small Woods Association, Friends of Apley Wood, Telford and Wrekin Council

Background: Apley Wood is a historic landscaped park to the north west of the town, owned by Telford and Wrekin Council and used as a community green space. It is adjacent to the Princess Royal Hospital and the Severn Hospice.

Friends of Apley Wood had achieved some good early successes working with the council, including the removal of a car park that had been used for drug dealing, and Small Woods was running a PCT funded health project focusing on the north of Telford, which included works at Apley, including family bushcraft days. On one of these the Venture Out project officer, Matt Beech, got talking to the Friends of Apley Wood chairperson, Sean Thomas, about everything that needed doing at the Park. This was followed by a meeting between Sean Thomas, Adrian Corney from Telford and Wrekin Council and Jude Walker from Small Woods, at which the idea was hatched to bid for lottery funding for the Park.

Objectives: to enhance the Apley Wood Park for use by local communities and schools, including access, signage and facilities, and to support the development of an active and trained volunteer group from the local community; and to provide facilities for local schools, including some initial supported sessions.

Actions:

Adrian Corney had already written a management plan for Apley Wood. This was updated and adapted by Jude Walker working with Friends of Apley Wood for submission to Peoples' Millions for £50,000 to deliver a work programme at Apley which involved all three partners and the local community. Bringing people together for the TV filming proved very cohesive and really supported the whole project. Although the bid was not successful at gaining sufficient votes to win the Peoples' Millions outright, Big Lottery launched a scheme to celebrate the PM programme called 15th Anniversary Awards which was allocated to groups who had been runners up in the various regional finals for Peoples Millions, so Apley received the funding anyway.

Achievements:

- £50,000 successfully drawn down from Big Lottery
- 100 Volunteers trained and supplied with tools
- Access to and within the park enhanced including paths, benches, decking and signage
- Habitats managed and improved, including woodland, ponds, hedges and meadows
- 41 Education sessions and events delivered, including forest schools, bush craft, chain saw sculpture, moth trapping and celebration barbecue
- Provision of a warden post and web site

Lessons learnt:

Creating a film of those involved before a project starts is a great way of bringing people together and demonstrates public support for improvements to funders.

Funding applications are achievable as a partnership (and preferred by most funders), but any partnership agreement needs to be agreed in advance, and each partners' objectives clearly set out. This is a demanding process, involving trust and openness, and cannot be skimped. Partners bring different perspectives, all of which are useful, but require managing to achieve a successful project.

Active people on the ground are essential to building community confidence, but are most difficult to find funding for.

Effective PR can enhance success just by raising the profile – local residents recognise the project in local media which reinforces their own positive experiences. A high project profile has a positive impact on funding availability for the future.

Quotes from participants

“Elated and desirous to participate in more activities”

“Great to have family time together in the open air”

“More engaged with local area. Confident at foraging and shelter making and we would like to learn more”

“Very good day out and encouraged the children to play outdoors”

Critical success factors

Project initiation by three partners, one each from Council, community and NGO viewpoints

Proposal built on previous works by all three partners

Clear need for the project, with other community and council support



Case Study 5: The Little Acorns Family Group

The Little Acorns Family Nature Group

Location: Severn Gorge Countryside Trust landscape, Ironbridge, Shropshire, West Midlands

Partner: Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

Background: One of the main objectives of the Telford Access to Nature Partnership (2009-12) was to engage local communities with their local green spaces. During one community day, a mother said she didn't use the woodlands as she didn't know what to do with her children in them. So during the summer of 2011, a programme of family guided activities proved very popular in our woodlands. Evaluation showed a huge interest in continuing the programme. One child suggested the name 'Little Acorns' which proved popular.

The funding for this programme came from the Access to Nature Programme which is run by Natural England and is part of the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments.

Objectives:

- To engage families with nature through nature activities
- To encourage more families to enjoy the woodlands and local green spaces
- To build on their learning by sharing new skills with others
- To give parents and carers the confidence to visit the woodlands for family walks and activities
- To support each other and share knowledge
- To provide 'champions' to support new programmes

With the Telford Access to Nature Partnership ending in July 2012, further funding, from Natural England and BIG Lottery, was made possible to maintain sustainability pending a successful application. In August 2012, the application was successful and Supporting Change (6 months) and Impact funding (further 6 months) commenced on November 1st 2012. One of Severn Gorge Countryside Trust's objectives was to put together an Outdoor Learning Programme which included family woodland activities. Identification and knowledge skills have been built on and interest shown to start the John Muir Family Award in 2014.

Actions:

- Explore the woodlands together to enable familiarity when walking as a family
- An annual programme of different outdoor physical and sensory activities during every school holiday
- A Volunteer leader trained to help engaging larger groups on walks or activities
- Practical skills in monitoring to improve child and adult knowledge and understanding of the natural world
- Engage professional tutors for some activities and to improve field ecology skills

Achievements:

- All 23 Severn Gorge Countryside Trust woodlands and green spaces have been explored
- Programme in 2013 including fun with fossils, tracking animals, orienteering, geo-caching, river surveys
- 2 Volunteer leaders trained in Volunteer Leadership, First Aid, Walking Leader, Nature Activities for Children
- Skills achieved in wild flower and green leaf ID, river kick sampling, winter tree ID, owl pellets
- Professional tutors engaged for fossils and tracking, Field ecology skills in green leaf ID, winter tree ID, river kick sampling, fungi ID

Organic outcome: A new programme for parents has been initiated called 'Mighty Oaks' and shall be led by our 2 volunteer leaders. This was after a request from a 'Little Acorn' parent to have their own programme during school term time.

Lessons learnt:

By keeping the group numbers small, friendships have grown between children and parents. Too big a group and learning isn't achieved to the same extent as concentration drifts.

Keep the activities short and sweet to keep their interest, and ensure the children have 'down time' in order to play. Make the activities different on each occasion.



Dissecting Owl pellets



Greenery for Tea: Wild Garlic



Fun with Fossils

Quotes from participants:

"Ianto really enjoyed his forage in the woods with the Little Acorns yesterday. He told me all about the things that can be eaten from the countryside and obviously amazed that you can eat nettles, I was really sorry I missed out on this".

"Thank you so much for taking the girls out yesterday, they had a great time and had lots to tell me about when I got home. Can you book all three of us on the 'Greenery for Tea' and 'Fun with Fossils' during the Easter holidays please?"

Critical success factors:

- Be organised with the programme, advertise well in advance and ensure people book their place
- Each walk or activity is maximum of 2-3hrs and has a maximum of 12 people making a better learning environment
- Make sure children wear warm/waterproof old clothes and strong shoes/wellingtons
- Insist on parents looking after their OWN children. You are not a crèche!
- Have fun and keep smiling! Be as excited as they are and always interested in their conversations
- Biscuits are always popular for a mid-break! Ask the parents to bring drinks and snack however long the activity
- Involved your parents in the activities so they learn and engage with their children
- Photographs: A permission form is signed when new families join with their contact and emergency details