

Conservation
Volunteers
Northern Ireland



**TWENTY FIVE YEARS OF
CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS NORTHERN IRELAND
AT CLANDEBOYE ESTATE
1984-2009**

Line drawing of Clandeboye House Sinéad Smyth
Produced by Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland, 2009

INTRODUCTION

This book outlines the history of Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland at Clondeboy Estate.

In summer 2009 Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland (CVNI) celebrated the twenty fifth anniversary of the organisation in Northern Ireland, with the official launch by Professor David Bellamy in April 1984. However another important milestone is the involvement with Clondeboy Estate and Lady Dufferin, which started in the autumn of 1984 and has now reached its twenty fifth anniversary as well. CVNI's facilities at Clondeboy Estate are its greatest resource and have allowed a huge range of educational and public awareness projects to take place. This book provides a brief overview of the main projects and activities that have taken place at Clondeboy Estate over the last 25 years.

There have been huge changes in Northern Ireland and the world as a whole since 1984. Much of CVNI's work is influenced by availability of funding and many of the earlier projects came to a natural end and were subsequently replaced by other projects. During the 1980s unemployment was high and CVNI was heavily involved in training and support of the unemployed, but this area of work declined in the late 1990s with increasing prosperity and falling unemployment. In recent years there has been an increasing focus on activities to help the unemployed gain skills relevant to seeking employment.

During the first decade of CVNI Northern Ireland was still in the grip of the Troubles, but the ceasefire and Good Friday Agreement brought peace and a new devolved government. Over recent years CVNI has been involved in supporting the peace process by delivering cross-community environmental projects which have offered a new way for people from Protestant and Catholic communities to work together on joint projects to improve their local area.

During the last 25 years CVNI has moved from delivering basic one-day training courses to be an accredited centre for a range of nationally recognised qualifications such as NVQs and holding contracts to deliver government training programmes such as Training for Success.

The concept of biodiversity emerged after the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio and much of CVNI's work now focuses on biodiversity and achieving actions which are part of the national targets to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

In the future, actions to promote awareness of climate change and to reduce our carbon footprint will be an increasingly important part of our work.

Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland is immensely thankful to Lady Dufferin for her ongoing support and the huge resource which she has given to us over the last 25 years.





SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

The combined achievements of all the projects based at Clondeboye over the past 25 years are huge and include:

200,000 people involved

80,000 volunteer workdays in practical volunteer projects

185 international volunteers

85,000 children and young people

410 schools

428 community groups

4 million trees

4 million native trees supplied to projects across Northern Ireland

Production of 1.3 million native trees grown from seed of local provenance

375,000 trees planted in County Down

1.5 million trees planted across Northern Ireland in the Millennium Tree Campaign

2,000 training events

1,200 short training courses

108 week-long Natural Break working holidays

52 cross-border training events for Conservation Volunteers Ireland involving 592 people

1,402 unemployed people involved in employment and training programmes

885 young people involved in structured personal development programmes

35 twelve-week Prince's Trust Team Programmes

£5 million raised for Northern Ireland-wide programmes

80,000 people involved in the Millennium Tree Campaign

12 community peace and reconciliation projects across Northern Ireland

The main projects based at Clondeboye Estate are listed in chronological order from late 1984 to the present day in the following sections.

NORTH DOWN WEEKEND VOLUNTEERS

625 days of work

6,000 volunteer workdays

Time-period: 1984 - present

Geographical Area Covered: North Down area and sometimes Ards.

Project Overview

CVNI's original Director, John McClean, lived in Bangor and set about establishing CVNI's first weekend volunteer group in the town because he already had good contacts in the area. The group was established in early 1984 and started doing projects around Bangor mainly for North Down Borough Council. In an attempt to expand the sites the group worked on, John McClean wrote to Clandeboye Estate to ask if there would be any work they wanted undertaken. This resulted in a tree planting event in Clandeboye which led on to CVNI's 25 year relationship with Lady Dufferin and Clandeboye Estate.

Achievements

The weekend volunteer group has undertaken extensive woodland management work in Clandeboye Estate and at other locations as well as footpath work, fencing, pond management and dry stone walling.

Over the 25 years of the group's existence it has undertaken a practical project nearly every second Sunday, which is in the region of 625 days of work and around 6,000 volunteer workdays.



WEEKDAY VOLUNTEERING

6,000 days of volunteering activity

45,000 volunteer workdays

Time-period: 1985 - 2002 at Clondeboye and from 2002 - present in Bangor

Geographical Area Covered: County Down and sometimes Belfast.

Staff Currently Involved: Chris Wood, Billy Palmer

Project Overview

In 1985, soon after gaining the use of Dendron Lodge as a base in the Bangor area, CVNI started to run what was called at the time a “mid-week group”, offering volunteering during the week instead of at weekends. Nearly 25 years ago, the organisation across the UK was primarily focused on working holidays and supporting weekend volunteering. Volunteering during the week was a new idea and to some extent driven by rising unemployment. Weekday volunteering soon grew and within a few years volunteer projects were taking place from Monday to Friday every week. A full-time member of staff was employed to run the group and had a minibus to take the volunteers to and from the work location, with tools and materials transported in a trailer. The Bangor group would work anywhere in about a 25 mile radius of Bangor town. Many sorts of people have volunteered, ranging from retired people to the unemployed and from students to part-time workers. Sometimes there have been so many people we cannot take them all as there are only 15 seats in the minibus. The weekday group, more recently called a “Conservation Action Team”, undertakes a wide range of practical work including tree planting, fencing, footpath construction and repair, creation of school nature gardens, enhancement of urban open-spaces and many other sorts of conservation work. Many people need conservation work undertaken, but find it hard to find anyone to do it. CVNI fills this niche very well and provides a conservation work service to landowners and this is one of our unique selling points. While there are many organisations involved in the environment, CVNI is the only one that will give advice on any land management subject and can often do the work as well.

Achievements

Over the first few years weekday volunteering was carried out over 2 days each week, but then increased to 4 or even 5 days. In the past 25 years this amounts to around 6,000 days of volunteering activity and, assuming an average of 9 people every day, around 45,000 volunteer workdays over the past 25 years.



PUBLIC TRAINING PROGRAMME

1,200 short courses

Time-period: 1985 - present

Geographical Area Covered: the vast majority of CVNI training events are based at Clondeboye but attracts participants from across Northern Ireland and further afield.

Staff Currently Involved: Gary Thompson, Linda Wilson, Robert Shearman and others.

Project Overview

Since the early days Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland has run an on-going programme of short, self-contained courses, often over one or two days, covering many subjects relevant to understanding and improving the environment. These courses are advertised and open to the general public and anyone who is interested in learning conservation knowledge and skills. Courses can be divided into three main categories:

Practical Skills

Practical skills training events provide the skills to improve many aspects of the environment safely, to a good standard and are the backbone of any conservation project. Examples include:

- Hedgelaying
- Dry stone walling
- Fencing
- Path construction
- Wooden structures such as gates and bridges
- Pond construction
- Tools and safe tool use
- Chainsaw use

Habitat Management

Training events provide understanding and knowledge of many different habitats and the species in them, including species identification, survey methods and the development of habitat management plans and the skills needed to retain or enhance biodiversity. Examples include:

- Pond creation
- Woodland management
- Meadow creation and management
- Site surveys and habitat management plans
- Plant and species identification

Leadership and Management

Training to help develop abilities to lead and organise others in a range of situations is an important skill which is sometimes overlooked. Examples include:

- Leadership of practical conservation projects
- Project planning
- First aid
- Health and safety

Achievements

In the first few years the public course programme numbered around 15 events per year, but since 1990 the number of events has been typically 25 or more per year. Over the last 25 years we have run in the region of 500 short courses based at Dendron Lodge.



WORKING HOLIDAYS

108 Natural Break working holidays

1,080 people involved

5,400 volunteer workdays

Time-period: 1985 - 2001

Geographical Area Covered: Holidays based at Clondeboye undertook work in North Down, Ards and the greater Belfast region.

Project Overview

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, later to become BTCV, started in 1959 running work camps to involve young people in managing nature reserves and to do other important conservation projects. In more recent years this early work evolved into the working holiday programme which became known as “Natural Breaks”. A typical Natural Break involved 12 people for a week and they undertook 5 days of practical conservation work, as well as a day of sightseeing.

Natural Breaks took place throughout the year including mid-winter, although the majority took place during the summer months. Work included fencing, pond management, woodland management, tree planting, dry stone walling, footpath construction and many other activities. The benefits of Natural Breaks included having a group of people to work on one project and often complete it during the week, as well as a way to bring people from different backgrounds together. Many of CVNI’s Natural Breaks had participants from England and sometimes Europe and even America.

Achievements

Natural Breaks were based at Clondeboye from 1985 to 2001. In the earlier years there were generally around 4 Natural Breaks per year based at Clondeboye and this increased to 8 in the 1990s, with a total of 108 Natural Break holidays based at Clondeboye over 16 years. Assuming an average of 10 people on each holiday, this involved 1,080 people and achieved 5,400 volunteer workdays.





WORK WITH SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES

Work with over 100 schools in County Down

Work with 300 community groups and other organisations in County Down

Time-period: 1985 - present

Geographical Area Covered: Originally North Down, but expanding to all of County Down and, more recently, some work province-wide.

Staff Currently Involved: Stephen Mallon, Andy Smith, Susan Lynn and Chris Wood

Project Overview

CVNI has supported schools and communities from Clondeboye for almost all of the last 25 years. This has included advice on designing wildlife areas, choosing trees for particular sites, sources of funding and help with practical work. As the number of staff based at Clondeboye increased so did the scale of what could be offered to schools and communities. Initially education officers were employed under the ACE scheme in 1986 and they worked at assisting schools in the Bangor area which wanted to undertake environmental projects in their own grounds. As the years passed this service was further developed. In addition to support for schools, a succession of field officers provided more general advice to communities like, for example, how to make improvements to urban open spaces in housing estates. They also undertook a lot of practical work for community groups. By the end of the 1990s there were more staff based at Clondeboye and it was possible to cover a much bigger area and work was being undertaken with schools and some community groups as far away as Downpatrick and Newcastle. The Prince's Trust Team also worked with schools, often helping a school to improve their grounds as a project for the "Team Challenge".

More recently, various Clondeboye-based projects such as the Northern Ireland Tree Campaign have operated across Northern Ireland and this has extended our sphere of influence from County Down to most of Northern Ireland. At the



present time, the Green Machine project provides educational workshops to schools with some follow-up practical projects. The Biodiversity Campaign involves both schools and other youth groups and community organisations in small-scale biodiversity projects. Both the Green Machine and the Biodiversity Campaign operate across Northern Ireland.

Achievements

Over the years we have undertaken some sort of practical project with over 100 schools in County Down. The

number of community groups we have worked with is also substantial and more than 300 groups in County Down were registered with the Millennium Tree Campaign.

Two examples of the sort of work we have undertaken to support community groups are as follows:

a. The Crawfordsburn Village Group renovated and restored Crawfordsburn Millpond during the 1990s with CVNI's help. This involved removing debris from the silted up pond and also repairing the sluice system to allow better control of the water level. This project won a Shell "Best of Britain" Award in 1995.

b. CVNI took on to plant a new community woodland at Bowtown in Newtownards on behalf of the Woodland Trust. This involved planting a 5 acre site with native trees during the 1999/2000 planting season, as well as creating a path system, perimeter fence and access point from the main road. This involved working with the Bowtown Community Group and involving local people and children in tree planting events.



THE WOODLAND TEAM

Employment and training of 190 unemployed people

Time-period: 1986 - 1999

Geographical Area Covered: North Down and Ards.

Project Overview

CVNI originally came to Clondeboy to plant some trees to help sustain the large area of woodland. Much of Clondeboy's woodland at that stage was quite neglected with large areas of Rhododendron and many areas of woodland with trees predominantly of the same age and few younger trees developing to replace older trees. With this problem in mind it was decided to establish a practical work squad to undertake woodland management activities both within Clondeboy Estate and other areas of woodland in North Down. Fifteen staff were employed in early 1986 on the Government's Action For Community Employment Scheme (ACE), which offered a year of work to the long-term unemployed. Work was undertaken in a series of compartments scattered around the estate, with compartments being typically 2 to 3 acres in size. Work included clearance of Rhododendron, thinning of young plantations and removal of older trees to make way for under-planting. A lot of tree planting was undertaken each winter. Employees on the Woodland Team received training in relevant skills such as chainsaw use and this made them better able to do the work required and also more able to seek full-time employment after their year on the ACE scheme.

Achievements

The number of employees varied with available funds but averaged 14 staff for most of the 13 years the Woodland Team was in operation. Some posts were replaced more than once in a year, as staff moved on to full-time employment and the total number of people employed on the Woodland Team project was around 190.

A substantial area of Clondeboy woodlands was improved and regenerated and tens of thousands of native trees were planted. The efforts of the Woodland Team, Clondeboy Estate staff and others were rewarded by the Duke of Cornwall's Award for Forestry and Conservation in 1991, for the management work undertaken in the northern part of the estate stretching from north of the lake to the Clondeboy Avenue.



DENDRON LODGE TRAINING CENTRE

2,000 training events

Time-period: 1985 - present

Geographical Area Covered: Located at Clondeboye, but attracting participants from Northern Ireland and further afield.

Staff Currently Involved: Karen Kane, Billy Palmer

Project Overview

From the early days training was a key part of CVNI's activities. To improve the environment requires the knowledge and skills to undertake work such as tree planting, fencing or rebuilding a dry stone wall. Dendron Lodge was first used for running training events in 1985 and subsequently Lord and Lady Dufferin generously gave CVNI the use of the building on a long-term basis and it was extensively renovated in 1987. This greatly increased the scale of training activities that were possible. Dendron Lodge provided an ideal venue for both one day and residential training events. Dendron Lodge is also used as a venue for regular meetings of CVNI staff from across Northern Ireland and also meetings of CVNI's Regional Committee. When not used for CVNI activities Dendron Lodge is rented to other groups for training events and meetings.

Summary of Achievements

The training achievements run at Dendron Lodge are listed in other sections of this report, but include:

Past training activities:

- ACE Training
- Training for Prince's Trust Volunteers
- Cross-border training for Conservation Volunteers Ireland
- Millennium Volunteers training
- Training events which were part of the Millennium Tree Campaign and the Northern Ireland Tree Campaign
- Managing for Biodiversity training events
- European Social Fund NVQ Training

Currently Dendron Lodge is used for training in the following areas:

- CVNI's public training programme
- Training to support NVQ assessments
- Training for New Deal/Steps to Work clients
- School visits and educational events
- Horticultural training programmes as part of Training for Success
- European Social Fund training for unemployed people
- Training events as part of the CVNI Biodiversity Campaign



TREE NURSERY

Supplied 4 million native trees

Production of 1.3 million native trees from local provenance seed

Involvement of 150 international volunteers

Time-period: 1987 - present

Geographical Area Covered: Located at Clondeboye but supplying trees across Northern Ireland and sometimes in the Republic of Ireland.

Staff Currently Involved: Pascal McCaughan, Karley Kane and Donna Shanks

Project Overview

Some of the first practical projects CVNI ever undertook involved planting trees and, since then, trees have been a major part of CVNI's activities with a Millennium Tree Campaign and the Northern Ireland Tree Campaign heightening interest and media profile. In 1984, CVNI acquired the use of a small walled garden at the rear of a hotel at Dunmurry to grow trees and started collecting local tree seed to plant. The site at Dunmurry was not secure and suffered from vandalism and was also under threat of housing development, which limited its usefulness. In 1987, CVNI's nursery moved to a permanent home in the walled garden at Clondeboye Estate and Pascal McCaughan was employed to run it.

It is interesting that in the early days of CVNI it was widely believed by many conservationists that it was better for wildlife to grow trees from locally collected seed rather than plant native tree species imported from Great Britain and Europe. It was not until the twenty first century that work on tree genetics by Queen's University proved that the original tree population of Northern Ireland was genetically different to trees in England and Europe, proving the theory to be correct.

CVNI volunteers collect a large amount of tree seed each autumn from woodlands in remote areas such as the Glens of Antrim or the shores of Lough Neagh and this seed is processed and stored at the tree nursery for planting after one or two winters of pre-treatment. Tree seed is planted and grown on for several seasons and the majority of trees produced are in the "whip" size range (60-90 centimetres or 2-3 feet), which is the tree size most commonly used for planting.

Many people come to volunteer in the tree nursery because they are interested in growing trees and in the early 1990s volunteers from other countries started to be involved. CVNI rents a 5-bedroom house in Bangor which allows us to host



volunteers and the time volunteers stay with us ranges from a few weeks to a year or more. We have had the greatest number of foreign volunteers from Germany but people from many countries have volunteered including France, Spain, Brazil, USA, Republic of Ireland, Austria, Hungary, Luxembourg, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand and Kenya. In a typical year we would have at least 10 international volunteers and over 15 years this has numbered more than 150 people.



Achievements

In early years the nursery only occupied part of the walled garden and output was quite small, but for many years the tree nursery at Clondeboye has supplied around 200,000 trees each winter, with around 100,000 of these being our own home grown trees. A conservative estimate would be that over the last 20 years we have supplied 4 million trees and around 1.3 million are home grown trees of local provenance. Trees from Clondeboye help support CVNI's tree planting projects across Northern Ireland, but are also sold to generate income to support CVNI and are planted by many other people ranging from small garden owners to big landowners.



CVNI DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Fundraising activities generating £2million for CVNI projects across Northern Ireland
The Millennium Tree Campaign involved 80,000 people planting 1.5 million trees across Northern Ireland

Time-period: 1988 - 2001

Geographical Area Covered: Based at Clondeboye but influencing all of CVNI's province-wide operations.

Project Overview

The first Director of CVNI was John McClean and for the first 5 years his office was at the organisation's original premises in a cricket pavilion at Cherryvale Playing Fields on the Ravenhill Road in Belfast. As the organisation expanded, this location became unsuitable and overcrowded and John eventually moved his office to Ballyleidy Cottage at Clondeboye, and was based at this location for a further 13 years.

Achievements

As Director of CVNI John McClean was the planner and driver of almost all the projects listed in this report up to the end of the 20th century. During the time John was based at Clondeboye his fundraising activities generated around £2million for CVNI projects across Northern Ireland. Perhaps his greatest single achievement was the Millennium Tree Campaign, which inspired communities and individuals to plant a tree for every citizen in Northern Ireland to mark the new century. The Millennium Tree Campaign was a huge success and involved around 80,000 people in planting more than 1.5 million trees across Northern Ireland.



ACE TRAINING

Employment and training of 740 people

Time-period: 1985 - 1999

Geographical Area Covered: Based at Clandeboye but supporting people from CVNI offices across the province.

Project Overview

From late 1983 CVNI started to employ staff on the Government's "Action For Community Employment Scheme" (ACE), which offered a year's work to the long-term unemployed. Initially four staff were employed within a few months of the original Director's employment and the number grew significantly with more staff employed in 1985 and 1986, increasing the scheme to 35 staff. Further staff were employed across all CVNI's offices in 1990 and this increased the workforce to 50 people. Some staff only remained employed for a short time and then moved on to full-time employment, so some posts might be occupied by two or even three different people in a 12-month period and in a given year the ACE scheme might have employed 70 or more people. For the first number of years participants on the ACE scheme were provided with on-the-job training and also attended occasional training courses, but from 1990 onwards the scheme required each employee to have a structured programme of training extending to about 6 weeks spread over their year on ACE. This included a 3-day induction and training in customer care, job-search and skills relevant to the post they were employed to undertake. Mary Maxwell was employed to co-ordinate the ACE training programme and this was based at Clandeboye. ACE staff based at CVNI's five offices across Northern Ireland travelled to CVNI's Training Centre at Clandeboye to undertake the core training courses. The residential accommodation at Dendron Lodge made it possible for ACE staff to stay over several days for longer training courses.

The ACE scheme was finally wound-up in 1999 as the economy continued to improve and unemployment in Northern Ireland declined to a new record low.

Achievements

All of CVNI's ACE staff received training at Clandeboye and this would have involved a total of around 740 people over the 16 years that CVNI ran the ACE scheme. The training helped all of these staff to better undertake the work they did for CVNI and also to move on to full-time employment in many other occupations.



PRINCE'S TRUST TEAM PROGRAMME

35 twelve-week Team Programmes

525 young people involved

Time-period: 1992 - 2004

Geographical Area Covered: North Down/Ards.

Project Overview

The Prince's Trust Team Programme provided a 12-week personal development programme for young people aged 16 to 25 and recruited both unemployed participants and young employees, who attended the Programme as part of their staff development process. The Prince's Trust did not run this Programme themselves, but sought other organisations to run it in their name and CVNI became a "delivery partner" for the Team Programme (known at that stage as the "Prince's Trust Volunteers Programme") in 1991.

The 12-week course was structured as follows:

Week 1: Induction and team building

Week 2: Teambuilding residential

Week 3: Short courses e.g. first aid

Week 4: A short community project

Week 5: Workshops e.g. Prejudice Awareness or Disability Awareness

Weeks 6, 7 & 8: Work placements and planning the Team Challenge

Weeks 9,10 & 11: Team Challenge e.g. building a schools garden

Week 12: Completion and certificate presentation

Participants also completed City & Guilds Key Skills qualifications in Communication, Working With Others, Improving Own Learning, and a Profile of Achievement.

Achievements

Over a period of 12 years CVNI ran 35 Team Programmes based at Clondeboye, with 3 Team Programmes per year. A team typically involved 15 young people so, over the 12 years of running the Team Programme, we worked with around 525 young people.



TRAINING FOR CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS IRELAND

38 short training events involving 418 people from the Republic of Ireland

14 five-day Community Environmental Leadership courses involving 180 people

Time-period: 1992 - 1993, 1999 - 2000 and 2004 - 2005

Geographical Area Covered: Based primarily at Clondeboye and Dublin, but also other locations in the Republic of Ireland.

Project Overview

During the late 1980s a number of environmental organisations in the Republic of Ireland set up a group to establish a volunteering organisation along similar lines to CVNI. Conservation Volunteers Ireland (CVI) was established during 1990 and employed its first Director to start developing the new organisation. John McClean who was Director of CVNI during this era sat on the steering group which established Conservation Volunteers Ireland.

CVI needed to provide training and development for its staff and volunteers and CVNI was well placed to provide training and support. A successful application to a European programme called “Euroform” provided funding for CVNI to deliver a series of cross-border training events for CVI to help the new organisation develop new skills. Over two years this funded 38 training events involving CVI staff and volunteers from various community groups and organisations that CVI worked with. Around two-thirds of the training events took place at Clondeboye and Dendron Lodge provided accommodation for participants to stay overnight for training events lasting typically 2 or 3 days. The Euroform funded relationship with CVI came to an end in 1993 and a small amount of training continued to be provided on an occasional basis.

With the ending of hostilities in Northern Ireland a new era dawned and the European Union provided a funding programme known as “Peace” to help build cross-community contact. This programme included a cross-border measure and CVNI worked with CVI to develop a new training initiative known as “Community Environmental Leadership” which was a 5-day course covering the 4 main areas needed to run a successful community environmental project which were: Practical Skills, Habitat Knowledge, Leadership Skills and Communication & Presentation Skills. This package was successfully delivered on 6 occasions with an audience of people from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The Peace programme was replaced by Peace II in 2001 and an application was made to run further Community Environmental Leadership courses. These required accreditation and the original course was revised with a fifth unit on social enterprise and community business. The new course was accredited through the Open College Network.

Eight Community Environmental Leadership courses were run at Clondeboye during 2004 and 2005 with an audience of equal numbers of people from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This was again very successful and received good feedback from all participants.

Achievements

- Euroform - 38 training events involving 418 people from the Republic of Ireland
- Peace I - Community Environmental Leadership course: six 5-day courses involving 84 people from all over Ireland
- Peace II - Community Environmental Leadership Course: eight 5-day courses involving 90 people from all over Ireland, with many gaining a Level 2 Northern Ireland Open College Community Environmental Leadership certificate

CITY & GUILDS ASSESSMENT CENTRE AND OTHER ACCREDITED TRAINING

200 people gained NVQ qualifications

Time-period: 1994 - present

Geographical Area Covered: based at Clandeboye but Northern Ireland-wide.

Staff Currently Involved: Karen Kane, Gary Thompson, Bertie Fisher, Barry McCabe, Linda Wilson and Robert Shearman

Project Overview

For the first 10 years CVNI ran training events which showed people how to do many practical skills but had no formal accreditation. During the early 1990s qualifications called National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) were being developed and accreditation of training became much easier. CVNI applied to become an assessment centre for the NVQ in Environmental Conservation and was granted Assessment Centre status by City & Guilds in the summer of 1994.

Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland now provides training and assessment opportunities approved by the following awarding bodies:

- City & Guilds/National Proficiency Tests Council
- Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
- Northern Ireland Open College Network

CVNI is also approved as training provider by Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for land and environment.

Summary of Achievements

- Approval to deliver City & Guilds/National Proficiency Tests Council qualifications has allowed us to provide National Vocational Qualifications to a large number of people and this has helped them gain employment
- Approval to deliver Chartered Institute of Environmental Health qualifications to provide short accredited courses in subjects such as Health & Safety and Environmental Awareness
- Approval to deliver Northern Ireland Open College Network qualifications allowed us to create our own accredited Community Environmental Leadership Course

Further information on accredited training is given elsewhere in this book.



THE NVQ UNIT

100 volunteers gained full NVQ qualifications

Time-period: 1995 - 2001

Geographical Area Covered: Based at Clandeboye but working province-wide.

Project Overview

After becoming approved as an assessment centre for City & Guilds qualifications in 1994, CVNI sought funding to develop the accreditation of volunteer training. In 1995, a funding package made up of money from European Social Fund and the Community Volunteering Scheme allowed CVNI to employ three staff, based at the Ava Rooms at Clandeboye, as a specialist unit to deliver NVQ qualifications to CVNI volunteers across Northern Ireland. Several staff became approved as NVQ assessors and began to assess volunteers. The assessment process involved an assessor watching the candidate undertake a particular activity such as planting a tree or building a section of dry stone wall. The assessor completed an assessment form, which was based on nationally agreed standards for that particular activity, and asked the candidate questions and this was generally backed up by other evidence such as photographs. In this way skills, which volunteers had learned, could be documented. Initially CVNI delivered the NVQ in Environmental Conservation and later went on to add the NVQ in Amenity Horticulture to the list of approved qualifications. An NVQ is generally composed of 7 Units and a candidate can be certified for as little as one Unit, but must complete all 7 Units to gain the full NVQ.

Achievements

Over 100 volunteers gained full NVQ qualifications and many others gained some Units towards an NVQ. We know of many instances where the NVQ qualification gained through volunteering with CVNI was instrumental in helping people gain full-time employment, often in the environmental field.



EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE

35 young Europeans involved over 12 years

Time-period: 1997 - present

Geographical area covered: Based at Clandeboye and with some volunteers working on projects in the local area or across Northern Ireland.

Project Overview

European Voluntary Service is a European Union initiative which allows young people from Europe to undertake a period of up to one year of voluntary work in another European Union country and in other countries on the edge of the European Union. At Clandeboye we are approved as a “hosting organisation” and in summer 2009 we had four young women with us on European Voluntary Service. All four volunteers live in a house which we rent in central Bangor.

The volunteers who were based at Clandeboye in summer 2009 were:

Name	Country	Age	Length of stay	Volunteering activity
Amandine Miguel	France	24	11 months	Work with the Green Machine education project including painting new panels for the inside of the lorry and work with school children.
Antje Jäger	Germany	21	12 months	Working in the tree nursery.
Silvia Ayres	Sweden	22	6 months	Working on the biodiversity campaign, including work with groups and writing material for the web site.
Inmaculada Garcia	Spain	25	12 months	Working in the tree nursery and educational projects.

Achievements

CVNI has been hosting EVS volunteers at Clandeboye since 1997 and this has involved a total of 35 young Europeans being involved in our work.



MILLENNIUM VOLUNTEERS

360 young people

1,500 days of volunteering

Time-period: 1999 - 2008

Geographical Area Covered: Based at Clondeboye but operating province-wide.

Project Overview

Millennium Volunteers was a programme to promote volunteering to young people aged 16 to 25, who made a sustained commitment to volunteering of at least 200 hours. The volunteering could be spread evenly throughout a twelve-month period or undertaken in chunks, allowing young people to embrace volunteering as an opportunity to complement, rather than interfere, with other commitments such as education, employment and hobbies. The Millennium Volunteers Programme aimed to meet local need and benefit communities as well as provide opportunities for the young people involved to gain experience, recognition and training through structured and supported activity. Some Millennium Volunteers worked directly on CVNI projects, while others were placed in community organisations and other volunteering projects.

Achievements

During the 9 years of Millennium Volunteers CVNI worked with an average of 40 young people across the province each year, involving 360 young people in total. Many Millennium Volunteers exceeded their target of 200 hours of volunteering but, even if they only achieved 200 hours each, this is 12,000 hours in all or equivalent to 1,500 days of volunteering.



NEW DEAL/STEPS TO WORK

360 unemployed clients involved and supported

Time-period: 1998 - present

Geographical Area Covered: North Down and Ards.

Staff Currently Involved: Chris Wood, Billy Palmer

Project Overview

New Deal was introduced by the Labour government at the end of 1997 as an initiative to help the long-term unemployed back into work. The structure of the programme was significantly changed in 2008 when the scheme was re-named as “Steps to Work”. New Deal clients were involved with our weekday volunteer group or Conservation Action Team, first based at Clondeboye and later at our Bangor office in Balloo.

Most New Deal clients came for 13 weeks for what was called an “intensive activity period”. The idea being that, for somebody who has been unemployed, it is beneficial to do a short period of work requiring them to improve their abilities in terms of attendance, punctuality and working with others. All participants receive regular job-search training in skills such as completing job application forms and interview skills. They also receive on-the-job training in practical conservation skills and some also complete NVQ units.

Achievements

Over the last 12 years we have typically worked with 30 New Deal/Steps to Work clients per year with a total of 360 clients over this time-period. Many went on to gain full-time employment. A mark of the success of CVNI’s service in this area was that many New Deal clients continued to volunteer with CVNI after their required attendance had finished.



THE MILLENNIUM TREE CAMPAIGN IN COUNTY DOWN

375,000 trees planted in County Down

Time-period: 1996 - 2000

Geographical Area Covered: Province-wide, although staff based at Clandeboye focused on the Millennium Tree Campaign in County Down.

Project Overview

The Millennium Tree Campaign had the objective of marking the new century by planting 1.5 million native trees across Northern Ireland and this equated to one tree for every citizen of Northern Ireland at that time. During the Millennium Tree Campaign it is estimated that 80,000 people and over 1,500 organisations (including 600 schools) took part in the planting of the one and a half million trees.

The Millennium Tree Campaign was based at CVNI's head office in Belfast, but staff based at Clandeboye ran the campaign activities in County Down. The tree nursery also played a major part in the campaign by supplying many of the trees and also as a focus for growing trees from seed, which was a major part of the campaign's educational activities.

Staff based at Clandeboye provided advisory site visits to landowners, worked with schools and supported community groups across County Down to learn more about trees and planting trees.



Achievements

The contribution of the Clandeboye component of the Millennium Tree Campaign was substantial with around 25% of all the trees planted in County Down. Clandeboye staff, therefore, supported the planting of around 375,000 trees in the county. The tree nursery supplied many of these trees and also many of the trees planted across the rest of Northern Ireland, which contributed to the one and a half million trees that were planted.

FUNDRAISING & DEVELOPMENT

*Over £3 million raised for CVNI projects
12 peace and reconciliation projects worth £480,000*

Time-period: 2001 - present

Geographical Area Covered: Based at Clandeboye but supporting CVNI's operations province-wide.

Staff Involved: Robert Shearman

Project Overview

After the departure of John McClean in 2001 there were various changes to CVNI and Robert Shearman was promoted to undertake fundraising for the whole organisation across a wide range of funders.

Achievements

Over the eight years Robert Shearman has been involved in fundraising he has raised in excess of £3 million across many different funders and supporting many different CVNI projects. Robert believes his greatest success was Peace II from which he was successful in raising around £480,000 across 12 projects. This European fund aimed at helping to support the peace process in Northern Ireland, to bring people from Protestant and Catholic communities together and to break down barriers and build trust. The Peace II grants were as follows:

North Down Local Strategy Partnership

Funding to undertake a social audit of deprived wards in North Down. Total funding: £5,000

Coleraine Local Strategy Partnership

Support of communities in six areas to improve their environment. Total funding: £43,000

Larne Local Strategy Partnership

Funding to run a community-focused project developing urban open spaces and community areas over two years. Total funding: £38,650

Newtownabbey Local Strategy Partnership

A project called "energising communities" to build community involvement and new community groups in target areas of Newtownabbey district over one year. Total funding: £53,000

Derry City Council Area Local Strategy Partnership

Funding for training unemployed volunteers to Level 1 NVQ over 2 years. Total funding: £40,000

Magherafelt Area Partnership

Funding to run a programme of cross-community tree planting projects over three years. Total funding: £9,000

Armagh Local Strategy Partnership

Funding to work with ten communities over two years on environmental and health issues. Total funding: £110,000

Limavady Area Partnership

Funding to run a programme of cross-community tree planting projects over two years. Total funding: £5,000

Newry Local Strategy Partnership

To run a community-focused project developing urban open spaces and community areas in Newry with a view to improving the cities appearance. Total funding: £76,246

ADM/CPA Cross-border funding

Cross-border funding with Conservation Volunteers Ireland to run the Community Environmental Leadership course over two years. Total funding: £75,000

Limavady Local Strategy Partnership

To carry out tree planting in the borough and run a community conference. Total funding: £6,000

Coleraine Local Strategy Partnership

To work with the community in Ballysally and plant trees and wildflowers. Total funding: £25,000

THE GREEN MACHINE

Educational workshops and projects involving 35,000 children and young people

Time-period: 2002 - present

Geographical Area Covered: Based at Clandeboye but operating province-wide.

Staff Currently Involved: Stephen Mallon, Robert Shearman

Project Overview

The Green Machine provides educational workshops for children and young people and has a mobile learning and promotional facility in a customised lorry. The Green Machine project has two main objectives:

The first phase - educational workshops and learning events

To provide learning events to generate greater environmental knowledge, understanding and insight into what groups and individuals can do to lessen their impact on the environment and to make improvements. Workshops that we offer include:

- Recycling and waste management awareness, looking at personal and local consumption
- Basic ecology, looking at the life cycles of species and the food chain
- Biodiversity - activities looking at the wealth of living things that inhabit Northern Ireland
- Environmental Art - using natural and recycled materials
- Environmental appreciation work using "Earth Education" methods
- Personal environmental audits where participants look at their own environmental impacts
- Design of environmental improvements to school sites or local open-space areas

The basic menu of workshops and learning events is tailored to the needs of particular groups. Workshops with schools are built around the Key Stages of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

The second phase - practical action

A natural progression from awareness and understanding of the environment is to identify ways of improving the local environment either through modifying individual lifestyles or group projects. We aim to generate an identifiable group project or follow-up action from half the groups we are involved with. Many others make changes on an individual basis.

Examples of practical actions which this project will stimulate include:

- Enhancement of public open-spaces in urban areas
- More environmentally friendly management of gardens or grounds
- Pond construction or meadow planting and management
- Waste reduction and recycling
- Energy conservation activities

Achievements

During the 12 months of 2007 the Green Machine achieved the following outputs across Northern Ireland:

Total Participants	4307
Number of Workshops	125
Lifestyle Change Projects	42
Practical Projects	21
Attending Large Public Events	5

The Green Machine has been running since the autumn of 2002 and, since then, has worked with between 4,000 and 6,000 children and young people per year, bringing the overall total number of children and young people involved to around 35,000.



THE NORTHERN IRELAND TREE CAMPAIGN

23,536 people involved on 223 sites

128 community groups, 105 schools, 16 local authorities

251 growing trees from seed workshops involving 4866 people

899 events

900,000 trees

Time-period: 2003 - 2008

Geographical Area Covered: Based at Clondeboye and covering all of County Down.

Project Overview

The Northern Ireland Tree Campaign was a major biodiversity campaign celebrating our natural heritage, our trees and our people. The campaign built on the success of CVNI's Millennium Tree Campaign which planted one and a half million trees to mark the Millennium and helped to strengthen CVNI's media image and standing across Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Tree Campaign involved a large number of people in planting trees, but also ran workshops on growing trees and other events focusing on biodiversity and making people aware of Northern Ireland's unique biodiversity.

Achievements

The achievements of the Northern Ireland Tree Campaign across County Down were as follows:

- 23,536 people were directly involved
- Work undertaken on 223 sites
- 128 community groups involved in improving their local area
- 105 schools involved in planting trees
- 16 local authorities involved
- The combined total of all events is 899
- Extensive press coverage and web promotion and some TV and radio coverage
- CVNI plants about 150,000 trees per year so we promoted the planting of about 900,000 trees
- We ran 251 workshops on growing trees from seed with 4,866 people





BULLDOG

PROPERTY
OF
SPORTS ACADEMY
Change

TRAINING FOR SUCCESS AND APPRENTICESHIP NI

*40 trainees achieving a full NVQ qualification and other short courses
35 trainees moved on to employment or further training*

Time-period: 2005 - present

Geographical Area Covered: Based at Clondeboye but province-wide.

Staff Currently Involved: Bertie Fisher, Linda Wilson, Barry McCabe, Robert Shearman

Project Overview

Training for Success is a government scheme funded by the Department for Employment and Learning to provide training and qualifications for young people aged 16 to 19. It has a number of different strands including:

Skills for your Life

Addressing personal and development needs for school leavers with no qualifications.

Skills for Work

Helping young people gain skills and a vocational qualification at Level 1 to be able to gain employment, to progress to Pre-Apprenticeship, Apprenticeship provision or to further education. Trainees on this option currently undertake the Level 1 Certificate in Horticultural Skills.

Pre-Apprenticeship

Providing young people with a Vocationally Related Qualification at Level 2 to help them secure employment. Trainees on this option currently undertake the Level 2 National Certificate in Horticulture. Trainees on all these options currently receive training at Clondeboye 1 or 2 days a week and spend the rest of their time on work placements at, for example, golf courses, garden centres, tree surgery firms and landscape contractors.

Achievements

In recent years CVNI has run this scheme on a very small scale with, typically, 8 trainees per year. However, our aim is to expand this scheme and there are now 16 trainees based at Clondeboye. Training for Success has also been delivered at our Belfast Office since October 2009. We also plan to start running Apprenticeships NI during autumn 2009 and this provides a training package for those already in employment e.g. council parks staff. To date, all past trainees on Training for Success have had positive outcomes, gaining their qualifications and moving on to either further education or full-time employment.



MANAGING FOR BIODIVERSITY

41 land management training events involving 400 participants

Time-period: 2006 - 2007

Geographical Area Covered: Based at Clondeboye but province-wide.

Project Overview

This project delivered a series of specialist training events geared primarily to those who manage land. Many of the courses provided an introduction to identifying a particular group of plants, animals or fungi. The remaining courses covered introductions to the biodiversity of particular habitats, an overview of environmental legislation, surveying and some practical techniques.

Training event subjects included: Identifying Insects, Introduction to Environmental Legislation, Introduction to Northern Ireland's Habitats, Managing for Fungi, Managing the Coast for Biodiversity, Managing Rivers, Bugs and Us, Overview of Ireland's Marine Biodiversity, Recognising Mammals, Basic Ecological Surveying and Sampling Techniques, Birds of the Belfast Hills, Phase I Surveying, Wildflower Identification, Priority Species and Priority Habitats - An Overview, Grass Identification, Identification of Sedges and Rushes, Identifying Fungi, Identifying Lichens, Environmental Legislation and Winter Wetland Bird Identification.

This project was funded with a grant from the European Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme.

Achievements

Over a 2-year period this project ran 41 training events and involved around 400 participants. Course participants represented government agencies, NGOs, business, councils, universities and individuals from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Staff from Ulster Wildlife Trust, Quarry Products Association, RSPB, Queens University, Belfast City Council, Environment & Heritage Service (now Northern Ireland Environment Agency), National Trust and many others attended. Feedback on all courses was excellent, with many attendees requesting more courses. The diversity of professional people was significant and this helped to strengthen CVNI's standing in the biodiversity and nature conservation field.



EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND TRAINING

Training and qualifications for 112 unemployed people

Time-period: 2006 - present

Geographical Area Covered: Based at Clandeboye but province-wide.

Staff Involved: Gary Thompson, Linda Wilson, Robert Shearman

Project Overview

Many unemployed people volunteer with CVNI and then go on to employment or other training. Our record in helping people into employment is very good. Since 2006 we have had support from European Social Fund to provide training and support to unemployed volunteers across our five offices.

CVNI is committed to involving people in the environment and helping them gain new skills and move towards education or employment. To this end we want to develop a flexible programme of training and support to allow us to help 40 people per year move towards employment.

Each participant is offered individual discussions/assessment of their needs to create a tailor-made package, generally focusing on qualifications available in the land-based sector. The main qualifications/training and support will include:

- Training and assessment in the NVQ in Horticulture at Level 1
- Training and assessment in the NVQ in Amenity Horticulture at Level 2
- Training and assessment in the NVQ in Environmental Conservation at Level 2
- Basic First Aid and 'First Aid at Work' certificate
- NPTC Chainsaw Certificate
- CIEH Foundation Certificate in Health and Safety in the Workplace
- European Computer Driving Licence
- Safe Use of Pesticides Certificate
- Essential Skills
- Northern Ireland Open College Network units/qualifications
- Job search, career planning and help with *curriculum vitae* development
- Interview skills
- Development of teamwork skills
- Development of communication skills

Achievements

To give some idea of the sort of results this programme achieves, in the three months January to March 2009 we achieved the following:

A total of 44 people joined the scheme.

Numbers of people achieving qualifications were:

- Tree climbing and Ariel rescue (CS381): 4
- Safe Use of Pesticides PA1 and PA6a: 5
- Four-day 'First Aid at Work': 6
- Forklift truck driving: 1
- Tractor and Trailer Driving: 3

Six people have also achieved accredited units on their NVQ course.



CVNI BIODIVERSITY CAMPAIGN

2000 people involved in biodiversity events in year one of the campaign

Time-period: 2008 - present

Geographical Area Covered: Based at Clondeboye and province-wide.

Staff Involved: Andy Smith, Susan Lynn and Robert Shearman

Project Overview

This project builds on the success of two previous biodiversity projects: The Northern Ireland Tree Campaign (2003-2007) and Managing for Biodiversity (2006-2007). It incorporates some of the most successful aspects of both these projects. The overall aim of the campaign is to make a large number of people in Northern Ireland more aware of our unique biodiversity through publicity, educational events, practical activities and training to provide increased knowledge of best practice for land managers. We will also



undertake management activities across a number of habitats linked to Habitat Action Plans (HAPs), including Species Rich Hedgerows; Oakwoods; Mixed Ashwoods; Lowland Meadow and Coastal Sand Dunes; to help demonstrate best practice.

The project aims and objectives are as follows:

Aim

To make a large number of people in Northern Ireland more aware of our unique biodiversity through publicity, educational events, practical involvement and also provide access to increased knowledge and best practice for land managers.

Objectives

- To promote biodiversity through press, web and other media to as many people as possible across Northern Ireland
- To run a programme of events where the general public can become involved in practical activities to understand and enhance biodiversity, including walks to look at different habitats, workshops, lectures, and practical action events e.g. planting wildflowers
- To run a programme of short training courses, seminars and site visits aimed at land managers, to make them better able to understand and manage habitats for biodiversity

- To undertake small-scale management activities across a number of habitats linked to Habitat Action Plans to help demonstrate best practice

Summary of Achievements

This is a new initiative, which, to some extent, is the successor to the Northern Ireland Tree Campaign as a main focus for CVNI's work in biodiversity. On the 2008-2009 year the project was well on course to meet its annual objectives of:

- Habitat management work, including hedgelaying, hedge planting, vegetation control, dune management, coppicing, tree planting, wildflower planting. Total of 35 events per year and 1,000 people involved
- Biodiversity workshops on propagation of plants through collection of seeds from woodlands, meadows and hedges with some groups involved in planting plants back at a later date. Total of 35 events per year involving 1,000 people
- Involving people in understanding habitats for biodiversity - visits and surveys with a total of 20 events per year involving 600 people
- Public biodiversity lecture series
- Improved knowledge and skills for land managers through a programme of 15 one day events per year involving 250 people



THE HISTORY OF CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS NORTHERN IRELAND AT CLANDEBOYE ESTATE

	1985	1990
North Down Weekend Volunteers	Blue	Blue
Weekday Volunteering	Red	Red
Training	Blue	Blue
Working Holidays	Red	Red
School & Community Work	Blue	Blue
Woodland Team	Red	Red
Dendron Lodge Training Centre	Blue	Blue
Tree Nursery	Red	Red
Director's Office	Blue	Blue
ACE Training	Red	Red
Prince's Trust Volunteers	Blue	Blue
Training for CVI	Red	Red
City & Guilds Assessment Centre		
European Social Fund Training		
European Voluntary Service		
Millennium Volunteers		
New Deal/Steps to Work		
Millennium Tree Campaign		
Fundraising & Development		
Green Machine		
Northern Ireland Tree Campaign		
Training for Success		
Managing for Biodiversity		
European Social Fund Training		
CVNI Biodiversity Campaign		

1995

2000

2005

