



Nextdoor Nature

#TeamWilder Communities in Action

CASE STUDY: Friends of Alderman Kneeshaw Park, Bilton Grange, East Hull

Tell us a bit about your group/community:

The Friends of Alderman Kneeshaw Park (FoAKP) are a group of dedicated volunteers with a passion for regenerating and reigniting local people’s love of Alderman Kneeshaw park – also known locally as Barham Park.

Working in partnership with the community, we listen to their voices and ideas and strive to turn ideas into reality, to create a place where everyone feels safe, families can grow, and memories are made. We support events in the park, encourage local groups to collaborate with us, and work to increase the biodiversity of the park and support people to value and connect to their local wildlife here.

How did you get started on your #TeamWilder journey?

Having had several walks around the park and talked about how we could improve the natural environment and make the park work better for both people and nature, we approached Andy, having known him through a previous job role and having been made aware that he was now working at Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. We didn’t know about #TeamWilder at this point, but when we met and found out more about the aims of #TeamWilder and how Andy could support us through his role as Wilder Communities Engagement Officer, it turned out to be ideal timing for us to begin working in partnership.

What actions have you taken for wildlife in your community and why?

One of the first things we did was try to become more aware of what wildlife we have resident on or using the park – and not just learn about that ourselves but also plan for how we could engage the local community in learning about how the park functions for nature.

As we explored this more, the [City Nature Challenge](#) became a key part of this plan – working with Andy we connected with the [NEYEDC](#) team who were co-ordinating Hull’s first ever entry into the competition – we ended up joining the organising team and becoming one of the city’s three host sites for the event. We set up a project for the park on [iNaturalist](#) and contacted lots of local wildlife experts and enthusiasts who generously agreed to lead walks for members of the public so that they could learn more about the flora and fauna here and take an active role as citizen scientists, capturing baseline data for the



site. This data has then fed into our decision-making around what actions to take on the park to support the species we have, and the missing species that we’d like to provide for.

We engaged a local youth organisation to support the City Nature Challenge, and then to choose and research their favourite species that were spotted at the event, in order to create some interpretation panels highlighting how these creatures use the park. The young people did an amazing job of creating a series of six information panels and we have had these designs produced and mounted on





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steel posts in relevant locations around the site to create a permanent nature trail which both gives information about the species found here and includes an interactive online set of challenges that park visitors can undertake to have fun – and hopefully increase their sense of connection to the site.

In terms of practical actions for nature on the park, our early work included planting 80 alder buckthorn saplings to provide food source for brimstone butterfly caterpillars, as well as planting ramsons and incorporating more deadwood into a shaded area near one of our buildings to create more habitat and food source for beetles and other insects.

We also created access into a small, wooded area so that people could enter and observe the wildlife there. We have then improved this area for wildlife by opening up the canopy to allow more sunlight into some areas and planting native woodland plants such as bluebells and anemones to provide early-season pollen and nectar, and improved it for people by incorporating nature carvings into tree stumps, thanks to the work of one of our creative volunteers.

We've also worked with schools to build bat boxes which have been mounted in mature trees on an embankment which runs around the perimeter of the park.

More recently, Hull City Council approached us with the offer of some Levelling Up funding and some design proposals for how this could create new landscaping on the park. We were keen to ensure that any changes had a focus on nature at their heart and so, working with Andy, we were able to make suggestions to the Council about alternative ideas, materials and planting schemes. The outcome of this work has been multifaceted:

- We now have an orchard on site which provides pollen and nectar for insects and will provide fruit for people in the future; the Council have agreed to a change in mowing regime in this area too, so that the orchard has areas of long grass and wildflowers such as yarrow coming through.
- We have planted 5,000 daffodil bulbs along an entrance pathway to the park to provide a little early pollen for emerging bumblebees but have also sown these areas with yellow rattle seed and agreed with the Council that they won't be mown until September, so that they can act as pollinator strips throughout the summer.



Another early project was our initial 'mini community allotment' – although this is primarily a 'people project', with the aim of reducing social isolation and creating opportunities for people to learn new skills, we were also conscious to build environmental thinking into every step of the process, from building the raised beds from upcycled materials, to avoiding peat-based compost and instead liaising with our local council to obtain compost created from brown bin waste, to planting areas with lots of flowers to provide food for pollinators alongside the crops for people to harvest.

One of the big focuses of the Levelling Up input was to create a new space near the front of the park as a focal point; the idea was to create a landscaped feature where people could sit and relax and enjoy their surroundings in close proximity to the children's playpark. Again, we were keen to see benefit for wildlife and a focus on nature foregrounded in this area. We named the area 'Restoration Island' and worked with the Council to alter the original design to incorporate timber seating instead of concrete, native trees instead of the proposed bamboo etc. The key element though was to introduce swathes of wildflowers; this was actually part of the council's own proposal, and is a work in progress in terms of how we work together to manage it effectively- but the area is currently a riot of dog daisy, vetch, knapweed and other nectar-rich species, is buzzing with bees, hoverflies and other pollinators and a real talking point for people visiting the site.



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In terms of the 'why' we have done all this work – it feels very purposeful, it feels very relevant given the state of the world and the environment currently, it is something we can do gradually, by taking lots of small steps, as and when capacity allows, which collectively and over time add up to a significant impact. Also, we have been keen from the beginning to engage as large and diverse a swathe of the local community in our work as we can, and helping people to engage with nature and understand the value in this green space and see that it is THEIR space to enjoy and to nurture, felt like a great way to instigate a programme of inclusive community engagement on the park.

What resources or support have you used along the way?

During the time of our #TeamWilder partnership we have transitioned from being an unincorporated community organisation to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Although being part of #TeamWilder was not the instigator behind this change it did help us to build a focus on nature into our central aims and objectives. [Hull CVS](#), [Humber Forum](#) and [Sector Connect](#) were all helpful in supporting us to understand the various legal structures out there and choose the best one to suit our aims and needs.

[Living with Water](#) were an organisation that Andy connected us to who have generously provided us with free water butts and advice around water management on site.

[Hull City Council's tree team](#) regularly provide free bark chip for our pathways and have provided compost for our raised beds via their green waste recycling scheme.

A group of young people undertaking their [Duke of Edinburgh awards](#) reached out to us and now come regularly to support our work as part of their engagement with this scheme.

[Hull Kingston Rovers Community Foundation](#) have recently visited to see how they can support our future ventures, along with several local care providers – we are keen to build on these partnerships as we expand our growing areas and grow our capacity to offer more community sessions.

As a result of a local resident who works for the NHS seeing our project on his evening walk and becoming interested we have formed a relationship with a local hospital who have donated two huge compost bins and some pallets for our community allotment, and in return we have built some bird nest boxes for them to put up at a local hospital site.

A [local landscape designer](#) who has a real passion for nature has seen what we are doing and generously donated time and resources to help us design our community growing spaces.

We've done the [RSPB Big Birdwatch](#) and found this helpful in understanding more about the bird species on the park.

Following on from this Levelling Up partnership work, we have negotiated with the Council to have access to an under-used pavilion building on site which we now use as our meeting space; we have created a second community allotment around this pavilion, adding further raised beds here where group members grow fruit and veg and donate a portion of the produce to the nearby community foodbank – but again we also allow some plants like radishes and other brassicas to go to flower and seed to provide food for insects. We have built compost bays in order to recycle our green waste, but these also work very effectively as natural 'bug hotels'! We have incorporated mini ponds and planted these with native marginals from a local nursery; installing water butts to capture rainwater from the pavilion roof allows us to top these up naturally, as well as to water our food plants. We've put up bird nesting boxes and bat boxes on the building, added bee posts made from natural materials to our raised beds, planted fruit trees and added climbing plants along the perimeter railing too.

All this is topped off by a lovely mural which was created for us via some partnership work with Centrica as part of their [Community Social Responsibility programme](#). A local volunteer worked up a design but we encouraged Centrica staff to be creative and incorporate their own ideas and the results were fantastic – this makes our project really visible to passers-by and the effect of the mural in combination with the planting has generated lots of local interest and led to a great group of new volunteers joining us!





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Through the [UK Government Levelling Up funding](#) that was granted for improvements on the park we were able to request lots of equipment to help with our development and maintenance tasks, from spades to gloves to a water bowser for our orchard. Funding from this scheme has also paid for training for our volunteers in site management skills including fruit tree pruning.

We worked with six primary schools over several months and, in engaging classes of young people in the planting of bulbs and sowing of yellow rattle, we enabled them to 'learn by doing' about how the simple acts of planting and sowing can create habitat and food source for a range of species, from bees to spiders to small mammals. Using photographs of key species to engage discussion was a good way to start off the activity, and then finding living examples of beetles, worms etc as we worked was exciting for the children and created many opportunities to talk about the local ecosystem and their role in nurturing it. It was especially rewarding to see some of the young people who were more squeamish about handling worms and other invertebrates becoming used to the idea and gradually intrigued to find out more facts about how they live and their role within the ecosystem.



[Butterfly City](#), a local initiative that supports the creation of habitat for butterflies and linked educational activities, have donated alder buckthorn saplings for us to plant on site to attract brimstone butterflies and have been supportive of our community and school events and helped us to learn more about the butterfly species that use the park.

Andy has created an Activity Resource Pack for us to help us target nature-focused activities at families. This has really come into its own recently as we have a group of young people aged 12–16 who attend the park weekly and they have taken ownership of selecting and running activities from the pack to provide activities for toddlers and younger children attending the sessions.

Has your group empowered or involved others as part of your journey?

We are keen with everything we do to take our lead from the community and create opportunities for them to connect with the site and each other, and influence what happens here.

Similarly to the nature trail project, which grew out of our commitment to involving young people more in decision-making on site, with our more recent bulb planting and pollinator strip project it was always the aim to give smaller children an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the site – not just educating them about creatures and wildlife habitat in the park but also helping them to see that they can change their local environment for generations to come, and that they have roles as future guardians of the park.

As a knock-on effect from this, one of the primary schools involved has asked us for advice on how they might create a communal garden on their own site which will give the children opportunities to create space for nature; and Barry, one of our key volunteers, has agreed to a site visit to help them plan their space.



Our community allotment project has also been a great way to engage and involve new people in the park- in many cases people who have previously had no great interest in gardening or the environment. Kevin, a recent recruit, is one such example – he said recently, "I've always wanted to do something on this park but never dared as I worried people would think I was crazy" – but seeing our group in action has given him the courage to come forward and he is now fully committed, visiting the site multiple times a week for watering and gardening and encouraging others with his enthusiasm and good humour.



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What differences for people have you noticed as a result of your actions?

The perception of the park being cared for is altering for the better as a result of our actions. People's understanding of what we are trying to achieve in support of nature is beginning to be understood, though we're aware there is more work to be done here.

People, through their involvement in the weekly gardening group, are feeling like part of a community rather than just passing through the park – some of the gardening volunteers come here now genuinely feeling like the space belongs to them, and knowing they are part of a supportive community. It feels like what we are doing is community-building. We're seeing volunteers learn from each other, sharing skills and building friendships. Our [Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Community Champion](#), Barry, is a great advocate and a lovely guy – and nature in our own gardens is benefitting from the things we are learning from him at the park!

Has being part of #TeamWilder changed the way that you or other people in your community feel about nature and your local area? If so, how?

The biggest change that being part of #TeamWilder has brought about has been making nature relevant to the neighbourhood – making nature really simple and accessible for everyone.

We feel more connected to our local area because of the work we've done on the land, but also because of the work we've done to bring in different partners – from the school children planting on the park to the link with the local foodbank to whom we supply produce, the local supermarkets donating plants for our community garden – these mean that the connections we have now go much wider than the park itself – whilst at the same time the park becomes a focal point for the community and for community-led action, bringing people closer and creating new opportunities both on and off site.

It seems like our work is inspiring others now too – we recently attended a Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Empowerment Day at [Hull Museums](#) where we gave a presentation about our journey so far and ran a stall in the gardens; we were approached throughout the day by various other individuals and community groups to ask how they could replicate some of the things we are doing; the [Friends of Pearson Park](#) are one that have since followed up to arrange a learning visit to our site at which we are looking forward to giving them a tour.

In short, the old adage, "If you build it, they will come!" is really proving true for us!

What differences for wildlife have you noticed as a result of your actions?

We have seen brimstone butterflies on the park as a result of our alder buckthorn planting.

We have frogs now on site, using our mini-ponds on our community allotment.

'Restoration Island' hosts a huge range of flora thanks to the wildflower sowing, and this has led to an increase in insect activity, especially many varieties of bees and hoverflies.

Creating our community allotment around the pavilion has also led to a noticeable increase in insect activity, feeding on the fruit trees and other flowering plants.

Our bat boxes have only recently gone up and our pollinator strips are still establishing, but we are excited to see if these will work to provide more habitat on site.



Have your #TeamWilder actions left you or members of your community feeling physically or mentally healthier?

The physical activities involved in what we do leaves us feeling tired but fulfilled; people are getting regular exercise through our gardening and conservation tasks and this is undoubtedly good for our physical health.



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Sometimes the effort of running a group with so much different activity going on and so many different challenges to deal with can feel overwhelming, but supporting each other in this and also having the support of [#TeamWilder](#) has definitely been beneficial for our mental health – having their backing and support gives us confidence and helps our voice to be heard; we would almost certainly have given up by now in the face of some of the challenges we have faced if not for their unwavering support!

Have you faced any challenges or barriers in taking your action for wildlife? If so, what were these and how have you tried to overcome them?

Our main challenge has been the struggle at times to make progress in the face of competing agendas and other priorities among local decision-makers.

Another challenge has been that of changing perceptions among members of the public – changing the ways that things are done and moving people out of their comfort zone always presents challenges. Helping people to understand change via education about the real value that this park can have for nature and for people is a long journey, with ups and downs along the way.



We are working on overcoming these challenges by developing a community-led regeneration strategy, which includes consultation at public events and monthly meetings open to the whole community. We are also working with Andy to develop a site vision document for the park, which we hope to co-create with local councillors, the Local Authority Open Spaces team and other key site

stakeholders, before taking out to consultation within the local community. We're doing this in an effort to ensure that everyone in this area feels they can have a voice in how the park should function, and that agreements can be reached with local decision-makers on how to best manage the site to ensure it works as well as possible for people and for nature.

Has your group formed any new connections or relationships?

We have made a huge amount of new connections since our [#TeamWilder](#) journey began. We have already mentioned many

here such as [Child Dynamix](#) who created the nature trail project and the primary schools who have supported our pollinator strip planting.

We were already working with Hull City Council, but this relationship has developed as a result of liaising around the various projects our group has sought to undertake on site, and so we now have regular meetings to look at site development and management issues, and are working with them to hopefully progress a much larger community growing space on the park under their forthcoming '[Right to Grow](#)' initiative.

Through the City Nature Challenge, Andy helped us to connect to experts from [Hull Naturalists](#), [The Deep](#) and [Bishop Burton College](#) who we now know we can call upon for future citizen science actions at the park.



We are working with [Hull and East Riding Timebank](#) on a programme to reduce chronic loneliness, using gardening and outdoor activities to hopefully enable people who are feeling lonely to feel connection and pride in place, with nature and the park, but also, critically, with each other.

Our community allotment and the visibility this brings at the front of the park has attracted numerous organisations to approach us about collaborative work – most recently [Northcott Sixth Form](#), a college for young people with learning disabilities who have been keen to get involved in using the space; they now attend regularly for sessions and have been a massive support in developing the allotment site.

Really...the list is huge!

Has your involvement in [#TeamWilder](#) supported you to speak to local decision makers, like your local council, housing association or MP? If so, what have been some of the results?

Right from the beginning of being involved with YWT, one of the things that we were doing was thinking about the whole of the park, in order to understand how we might enhance biodiversity here – looking at the whole layout of the site and what we might do in different areas. The Council had some



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Levelling Up money that they wanted to use to renovate the park and Andy was quite pivotal in negotiations around that, because he was able to talk to the Council about what sort of things our group was trying to do and how the landscaping works that they wanted to do could actually be made to fit better with what we wanted. They were very keen to listen to what the community wanted, so we've ended up with a scheme which means that we have lots of wildflowers now that are good for attracting pollinators, and fruit trees which means that later on when they're big enough to bear fruit, people can forage and take what they like.

It's been really good working with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to develop the site plan and knowing that when we talk to the Council, because of the work we've done to think about and plan things, we've been able to talk from an informed position. That sort of vision for the future is a really important thing that we've managed to achieve through this partnership work.

What have been your favourite nature moments or encounters with wildlife as part of your journey so far?

There have been so many lovely moments – watching the school children's delight at finding and saving worms when we have been digging our trenches for bulb planting, and seeing some of them move from being squeamish about handling them to intrigued and enthusiastic to carry them off to a safe space, or seeing a young girl develop an obsession with snails during our bioblitz and her excitement every time she found a cluster of them on a tree, or a new species with a different shell.

There was also a time when our group were inside the pavilion and we heard a scream from outside – "The butterflies...they've come!!" – it was Debbie's excitement to see some of our alder buckthorn plants covered in brimstone caterpillars – in some cases there were more caterpillars than leaves! We even tied some of our saplings together so that the caterpillars could move from one to another! It was a lovely moment – one of those that really makes you feel like you're making a difference.

What do you plan to do next?

- Planting 7,500 more daffodil bulbs.
- To continue annual involvement in the City Nature Challenge and involve more people in helping us to monitor species via the iNaturalist project we have set up for the site.
- Developing our site vision and taking this out to consultation.
- Develop interpretation for Restoration Island to help people understand the impact the change here will have for wildlife.
- Continuing to grow the organisation and involve more individuals in our regular community sessions and larger community events.
- We're planning to submit an application to the Heritage Lottery fund to build capacity within the charity of FoAKP Charity and hoping to use supporting knowledge from YWT on conservation aspects of this.



Contact us or find out more:

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