

# GREEN SKILLS PROJECT

## CASE STUDY 3: ST. NEOTS RIVERSIDE PARK

20th September - 15th November 2023

### WHAT DID THE PROJECT INVOLVE?

The project was made up of two primary tasks:

#### Deadwood Habitats

Construction of a green treated timber fence around the standing deadwood with attached bat boxes.



#### Increasing tree canopy cover

Planting of a variety of native trees, both inside the fenced area and adjacent to the miniature railway in Riverside Park

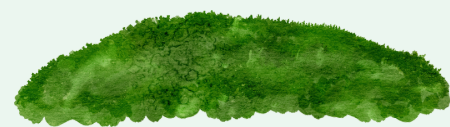


### OUTCOMES:



#### INCREASED BIODIVERSITY

Preserving standing deadwood serves as an invaluable habitat for a diverse array of species. Thousands of invertebrates depend on deadwood for both sustenance and shelter, forming a crucial part of the ecosystem for various species, including bats and birds. The standing deadwood also serves as excellent nesting sites for bats, providing proximity to their food source and an open canopy that aligns with their predation methods. Standing deadwood supports a variety of fungi, lichens and moss and over time contributes rich organic matter to the soil, enhancing its nutrient content.



The project also successfully led to the planting total of...

**23**  
trees

**54**  
shrubs

**250**  
bulbs

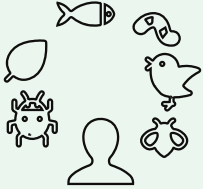
These plantings exclusively consist of native species, expanding the ecological range and showcasing a diverse array of flora. The benefits include:



The trees play a crucial role in reducing atmospheric CO2 levels, thereby contributing to the mitigation of Climate Change.



These trees contribute to soil stability, curbing erosion and serve as effective flood mitigation measures through various mechanisms.



In the designated habitat pocket, the trees not only provide a habitat but also serve as a food source for numerous species of birds and invertebrates. Complimenting the trees, shrubs and bulbs also contribute to this ecosystem. The bulbs prove beneficial for various species of bees, both hive and solitary.





## INCREASED SAFETY

The fence line was constructed to prevent the public from getting too close to the standing deadwood, ensuring that if it breaks or falls over, it poses no danger. Without this protective barrier, the standing deadwood would need to be removed, resulting in a loss of a valuable habitat.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**





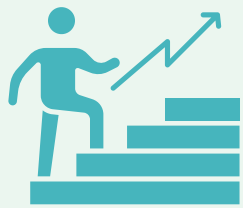
## EDUCATION & GREEN SKILLS

The project recruited six unemployed individuals aged between 19 and 65. Out of these six participants, four chose to stay. The participants acquired technical skills, demonstrating competence and comfort in utilizing tools such as drills, impact drivers, nylon cord strimmer and leaf blower. As the project progressed, there was an increase in communication skills and improved team cohesion. The group also swiftly grasped the tree planting process, feeling confident in their ability to plant trees independently in the future.

Three participants successfully completed the level 1 award in Practical Horticulture, with one individual having already completed the award previously, using the training sessions as a refresher.



In addition to the practical aspects, indoor sessions focused on communication, conflict resolution and self-esteem. Initially responses to unit failures of the Level 1 award in Employability ranged from anxiety to anger. However, by the end of the project, individuals displayed increased confidence and improved coping strategies when faced with such strategies.



## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the exit surveys, all four individuals expressed that either their physical health, general well-being or confidence had improved during the course. At the start of the project, several group members experienced personality clashes, leading to conflicts during certain tasks and activities. However, as the project progressed, the group established a positive rapport and gained a better understanding of each other.

“having people know I am better than I think then helped me realise it too”

“i think it is a hugely helpful course which has done a lot of good for me”

“really nice little project, good people, well organised”

“experience was great, good balance of practical and theory. Good structure and organisation. Helps people progress or get back on their feet.”

## LESSONS LEARNT:

This project has successfully achieved its goals, establishing a new pocket habitat and fostering increased biodiversity in the area. However it hasn't been devoid of challenges leading up to this point. One primary issue encountered was the public's interactions with the project. During the construction of the fence to safeguard the standing deadwood habitat, minor vandalism occurred, with text being written on the wood. The issue was promptly addressed, and signage was subsequently installed on the fence. Following the planting of trees, public interactions with the project notably improved.

Moving forward, it is imperative for us to enhance communication with the public by incorporating signage and social media notifications, ensuring that the community is fully informed about the positive actions taking place. This necessitates thorough preparation, including the creation of pre-made signage and the release of social media posts before the project commencement.

