

# Countryside and Greenspace News

## March 2011

Welcome to this third edition of the **Countryside and Greenspace Newsletter** - providing the latest news on the development of the Borough's green infrastructure: its parks, greenspaces, countryside, trees, woodlands and river corridors.

A great deal is going on and as ever this newsletter only gives a brief summary of the latest developments.

If you need more information on any of these topics please visit the website:

[www.stockton.gov.uk/countrysideandgreenspace](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/countrysideandgreenspace)

Or get in touch with us directly:

**Email:** [countrysideandgreenspace@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:countrysideandgreenspace@stockton.gov.uk)

**Phone:** (01642) 526871

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**Stockton-on-Tees**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Graham Clingan**  
Countryside and Greenspace Development Manager  
Tel: (01642) 526870 • Mob: 07790 608248 • [graham.clingan@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:graham.clingan@stockton.gov.uk)



# Park Regeneration & Spaces for Play

Several exciting and innovative projects continue to be delivered through these programmes. All nine Year 2 Spaces for Play projects were successfully completed during 2010 and are proving to be hugely popular, while several more play and parks projects are moving ahead this year.

Many schemes have been supported through the national Playbuilder programme. In October we received confirmation that central government would provide the full £439,000 earmarked for the final year of the programme in Stockton Borough. However, as in previous years we are also working with local partners to match this money with other external funding wherever possible. Indeed over the past four years over £1.5m external funding has been secured for parks and play projects, in addition to the £1.1m Playbuilder grant.

In delivering the Spaces for Play Programme Stockton Council has adopted the design principles developed by Play England:

[www.playengland.org.uk/Page.asp?originx\\_2757hp\\_70994779705616h30y\\_2008630728a](http://www.playengland.org.uk/Page.asp?originx_2757hp_70994779705616h30y_2008630728a)

A key concept is that risk and challenge are an inherent part of children's play experiences, contributing to their development and enjoyment. New schemes are assessed using a risk-benefit analysis which takes account of this.

## Spaces for Play - projects completed in 2010



### St Margaret's Play Area, Eaglescliffe

Children from across Eaglescliffe have helped to shape this extremely popular play area with funding from Playbuilder and Egglecliffe & Eaglescliffe Parish Council. Several designs were submitted with the children helping to choose the final scheme. This includes a wide variety of equipment for children of all ages and abilities.

The site was formally opened on the 13 July, 2010 by children from Junction Farm Primary School, Eaglescliffe and Egglecliffe CE VC Primary School with Junction Farm Primary singing a song that they had composed for this special occasion



### Mary Street

Work is complete on the development of open space at Mary Street, Thornaby. The project is a great example of how Stockton Council can work in partnership with HMP Kirkclevington Grange and the Probation Services Community Payback Team.

## John Whitehead Park, Billingham

The satellite play area at John Whitehead Park provides social play opportunities specifically for older children. They told us the priority was to create an area to hang out, but still be active. The children helped to choose the equipment, with the four favourite pieces being installed. The 'Hurricane Swing' has proved the most popular and the area is being really well used.

## Wynyard Woodland Park



As part of a wider redevelopment of the park a new play area has been constructed in a highly attractive woodland setting. Visitors to the park will glimpse the top of the pyramid towers over the tree tops and children are excited to discover what lies ahead. Tall upright trunks of the wooden climbing forest equipment really add to the woodland environment – creating a stimulating and exciting play space for children of all ages.



## Other Projects

Small schemes have also been delivered at Long Newton, Fred Hall Field in Carlton, Mount Pleasant Grange Travellers site in Stockton and Victoria Recreation Ground in Thornaby

## Spaces for Play - Current Proposals

A further round of projects is being planned for this year, again funded largely through the Playbuilder Programme. The proposed sites are as follows, although please note that the schemes are at different stages of development and some would only go ahead subject to further local consultation:

- Blue Hall Recreation Ground, Norton
- Amberley Way, Eaglescliffe
- Bishopsgarth Park
- Former Redbrook School Site, Roseworth
- Windmill Park, adjacent to Ingleby Mill School, Ingleby Barwick
- Leven Park, Yarm
- Preston Park

As in previous years, local children and the wider community have been actively involved in the projects. Funding from the Playing Out programme enabled us to bring in some great artists and designers to inspire the children and help to generate some fantastic project ideas. For example:



- At Windmill Park artist Gilmar Ribeiro has worked with children from the adjacent primary school to help inform the design; a combination of natural spaces such as ponds, woodland and meadow mixed with formal play equipment.

- Artists Infinite Edge worked with school children from Bishopsgarth School and St Mark's Elm Tree CE Primary School to develop proposals for the scheme at Bishopsgarth Park. Several ideas emerged from the workshops with a natural play space theme emerging as the starting point for the design. Stone boulders and wooden logs along with low level mounding and groundworks are at the core of the design and were created into a model.
- At Blue Hall Recreation Ground artist Lee Brewster has worked with local children to help design the space and create bespoke play equipment for the site.

The biggest scheme is planned for Preston Park, which will create a wonderful new extension to the existing play area. The chosen design offers scale and challenge, with the new equipment providing some really exciting play opportunities for children, enabling them to experience the natural environment high up in the tree tops.

Children will be able to swing and traverse bridges or simply sit quietly to meet and talk. The current toddler area will also be undergoing a refurbishment and will provide younger children with a stimulating and exciting space that will be modern in design and fit well within the environment at Preston Park.



## Park Regeneration Projects

### Wynyard Woodland Park

In addition to the play area mentioned above several other developments are taking place at this popular park, with funding from a variety of sources including Natural England, SITA Trust, National Grid and the Forestry Commission.

- We're making it easier for people to walk and cycle to the park from Stockton by improving the 'greenway' which runs from Hardwick to Thorpe Thewles, which includes part of National Cycle Network Route 1.
- At Pickards Meadow we are creating 10 hectares of new lowland meadow habitat from former arable land. This will become the largest managed area of this habitat in the Lower Tees Valley. A new pond and hedgerows will also form part of the project.
- While we are encouraging more people to arrive on foot, cycle or by bus, we have also provided additional car parking near to the main Station House visitor centre.
- Finally work is being undertaken to restore Thorpe Pond, and we're also starting some feasibility work into future woodland management works.

## Newham Grange Park

The Friends of Newham Grange Park secured over £100K to help with the ongoing regeneration of the park. The project was broken down into four elements:

- A footpath was constructed from Fir Tree Close to improve access. Importantly it also provides an attractive and safe route to school - whilst enabling children and their parents to enjoy the beauty of the park.
- New entrance features were designed by children from Grangefield School working with artist David Stephenson and installed near the beck at the southern entrance to the park.
- New picnic tables and benches were also fabricated by David, again working with local schoolchildren.
- The central area of the park, formerly an area of crumbling tarmac and weeds has been redesigned and rebuilt.

There has also been some recent consultation regarding the next phase of improvements. Proposals include lighting and cycleway improvements through the park.



## Working in Partnership with Teesside Probation Services and HMP Kirklevington

Many projects are carried out working with these partners. The fence around the play area at John Whitehead Park and the play equipment at Mary Street Thornaby were designed by Urban Design, fabricated at the prison and installed by the community payback teams.

At the Kirklevington Grange steel fabrication workshop prisoners are able to learn new skills and gain qualifications with the Open College Network. For a period of 12 weeks or longer the prisoners engage in projects that help voluntary and community organisations whilst they learn new skills that will help them reintegrate into the community.

To sum things up in words from a previous prisoner, Gary: "It allows prisoners to go to work in the morning with a smile on their face in the knowledge that yes they were in for a hard days work but...their efforts will benefit many people out there in local communities".

Probation Services Community Payback team are currently helping to construct the improved cycle links at Wynyard Woodland Park by clearing vegetation, buildings, paths and improving drainage.

Community Payback provides the opportunity for local people to have their say on how men and women, who have committed crimes, should make amends for the harm they have caused.

Unpaid Work is one of the 12 requirements in the Community Order, part of the Criminal Justice Act 2003. Offenders undertake a minimum of six hours a week and have to have completed their ordered hours within 12 months. The Probation Service supervises this work that allows offenders to undertake tasks for local communities and which meet the principles of restorative justice

# Playing Out

Climbing, outdoor art, sailing, orienteering, free-running, football, circus skills, street dance, cheerleading, laser tag, horse-riding, rounders, kayaking, tennis, 'Earth-walks', fishing, aerobics, cricket, story-telling... even playing on the beach in Newham Grange Park!

These are just a few of the exciting and stimulating activities that children and young people from across the Borough have experienced through the Playing Out programme during 2009 and 2010.

Playing Out is an outdoor activity programme delivered by a host of local organisations. It was funded up to March 2010 by NHS Stockton-on-Tees and coordinated by Countryside & Greenspace and Leisure & Sport Development. It has given thousands of children and young people from across the Borough the opportunity to take part in a vast range of outdoor activities. Playing Out has helped children and young people make the most of their local outdoor spaces, enjoy many new experiences, and get fitter and healthier in the process.



In total 30 diverse programmes of activity were delivered at locations across the Borough, and feedback shows just how much the children and young people enjoyed the activities, and that in a number of cases it has encouraged those taking part to think differently about their own health and lifestyles:

- "I found that it was really fun and I found out loads more about Preston Park. They showed us things that we might not have seen before but they let us find out things for ourselves. I loved working with the artist and the writers." (Story-telling Trails)
- "Some of the young people have said that they feel much fitter now than when the football sessions first started. A couple of the young people said that they sleep much better now that they are participating in regular exercise" (Caught in Sport)
- "The cage has encouraged some young people to join local football teams, two are trying to stop smoking and others who don't like playing full side football are quite deceived by the small looking cage – but are shocked by the amount of energy they need to use when in the cage" (The Cage, Kick Tees Valley)



'Playing Out' also provided some valuable funding to enable children and young people to play an active role in the design of many of the new 'Spaces for Play' being developed across the Borough. Children visited parks with artists and designers and through some really creative work helped to generate some fabulous ideas which are now being translated into real projects (see Spaces for Play on pages 4-5).



## Five Lamps Seen in a New Light

Thornaby's famous Five Lamps iconic landmark is shining bright again thanks to a major restoration project by Stockton Council in partnership with Thornaby Town Council.

The original Victorian gas-lit lamps were erected in 1875 at the junction of George Street and Mandale Road, Thornaby. Commissioned by four local Justices of the Peace the lamps soon became a gathering point for residents and the site of public meetings and political rallies.

The original Five Lamps had been replaced and relocated over the years, and had suffered from vandalism. However, Thornaby Town Council and Stockton Borough Council were keen to see the feature restored to its former glory and so we worked with Leven Bridge Engineering to strip back the lamps to repair and refurbish them.

In the summer of 2010 the restored lamps were re-erected at a prominent location on Mitchell Avenue, once again reflecting the proud heritage and history of Thornaby.

## Stockton on Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy

The Strategy provides a framework for the future development and management of the Borough's green infrastructure. It aims to enhance our environment and to maximise the contribution it makes to people's well-being and quality of life. It also looks ahead to the challenges facing the Borough and shows how we can begin to meet some of those challenges through the way we plan and manage green infrastructure - helping to adapt to climate change and contributing to the on-going regeneration of Stockton-on-Tees.

Following the publication of a consultation draft last year we have nearly completed work on the final version of the Strategy which will shortly be published on the website: [www.stockton.gov.uk/countrysidegreenspaceGI](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/countrysidegreenspaceGI)

## Trees and Woodlands

### Grant aid for woodland management

Work has recently been completed on an overarching management plan for the Council's woodlands. This work was grant-aided by the Forestry Commission, and the Council now has all its woodlands mapped on the Council's GIS system linked to inventory data and a detailed management plan.

This provides a platform for the Council to apply for further grant aid to assist with management and access to the Council's woodlands. A number of projects have been identified including, for example, woodland thinning, improving signage, paths, gates and so on. We hope to receive grant aid to deliver some of these projects during the coming year.

## Tree Planting

The Council planted around 400 new trees in 2010 – in parks, schools, open spaces and on residential streets. Feedback from residents suggests strong support for these projects, which over the past 10 years have resulted in several thousand new trees being planted across the Borough. This has helped to enhance the quality of tree cover and provides a healthy sustainable green environment for the residents, businesses and visitors.

Reduced budgets may limit our ability to plant as many trees in the next few years, but there may be some new opportunities through The Big Tree Plant campaign. From April 2011, £4.2m Forestry Commission / Defra funding will be available nationally to support community groups to plant trees. More information on this and other grants is available at:

<http://thebigtreeplant.direct.gov.uk>



## Your Views

We do a lot of work to find out what people think about our existing parks and greenspaces and to get their views on possible improvements and planned projects. The results from our 2009 surveys are now available in a summary report which can be downloaded from our website:

[www.stockton.gov.uk/countrysidegreenspaceyourviews](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/countrysidegreenspaceyourviews)

This provides a brief summary of the following:

- GreenSTAT Surveys (2009)
- 'Your Local Greenspaces' Consultation (2009)
- Children and Young People's Parks and Greenspaces Consultation(2009)

The surveys show that overall people are very satisfied with the Borough's parks and more natural greenspaces, although there are areas where there is scope for further improvements.

In a series of drop-in sessions we asked people for their views about their local area, and on the website you can find the maps which show people's ideas:

We also asked children and young people to give us their views on a number of issues, and these have helped us as we have designed and built new play areas across the Borough as detailed in this newsletter.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who takes part in these various surveys and consultations; you can give us your views on any of the Borough's parks and greenspaces at any time. Simply complete a GreenSTAT questionnaire on line at [www.greenstat.org.uk](http://www.greenstat.org.uk)

Many thanks for your help.



# Stockton River Corridors Project

The Stockton River Corridors Project is working with local communities to enhance the environment along the River Tees and in other river corridors throughout the Borough. It is a partnership initiative between British Waterways, Environment Agency, Groundwork North East and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.



## Six Fields and Brick Ponds Project

The first phase of the Six Fields and Brick Ponds project at Hartburn is now complete, which includes new footpaths, the creation of new wildlife habitats and a gateway feature designed by a local artist working alongside local schoolchildren. Community hedge-planting events were organised early in 2010.

The project will continue to be developed with wider partners, with continuing community involvement to ensure the site is developed for wildlife benefit and local enjoyment.

## Tees Heritage Park

Thanks to the efforts of the Friends of Tees Heritage Park, a grant of £450,000 was secured from Community Spaces to help deliver Phase 1 of the Tees Heritage Park project - focusing on the beautiful stretch of countryside between Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick and Preston on Tees.

The project includes the design of 'gateway features' and 'landmark artworks' in partnership with local communities. Rest areas, access improvements, elements of natural play and 'virtual interpretation' also form part of this initial phase. ICT technology will be used at the key access sites so that people can download information on the Park and how they can get involved, including recording their memories and thoughts on the Tees Heritage Park through an oral history project.



Tees Heritage Park

A launch event was held on Saturday 26th June 2010 to mark the start of the project at Preston Hall, giving people an opportunity to meet the newly appointed artist, Keith Barrett and his work partner Lynda Watson. Since then, they have worked in a number of local schools to develop ideas and proposals for the gateway features and landmark artworks, which will soon be subject to wider public consultation. Also an 'Inspire!' competition has recently been launched, inviting entries for the design of the signal posts which will stand at the main entrance points to the Heritage Park. Closing date for the competition is 4 May. More information is available at:

[www.fthp.org.uk/images/stories/inspire.pdf](http://www.fthp.org.uk/images/stories/inspire.pdf)

Meanwhile residents and visitors can already enjoy improved access through the Heritage Park via the new cycleway which links Ingleby Barwick and Preston Park. This has the added bonus of taking you through the new Preston Farm nature reserve which has been created by Tees Valley Wildlife Trust. With 9.4 hectares of floodplain grazing marsh, 2.1 hectares of open water, 1.5 hectares of reed bed and 5 hectares of broad-leaved woodland it's helping to make this area even more attractive for people and wildlife.

## River Routes in Stockton

Groundwork North East were successful in their application to Natural England's Access to Nature programme. With funding support also from Stockton Borough Council, the River Routes in Stockton Project is enabling two Community Rangers to work with local people to develop ideas for environmental improvements within the Borough's river corridors, and to improve access to these areas via a series of circular walks.

The project is for three years, giving a real opportunity to further enhance some of the Borough's most important, but sometimes forgotten, greenspaces and countryside.

**For opportunities to get involved contact Dan Barker on (01642) 564311 or email the Rangers at: [Daniel.Barker@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:Daniel.Barker@groundwork.org.uk) or [Steve.Mathwin@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:Steve.Mathwin@groundwork.org.uk)**



Cowbridge Beck, Billingham

# Getting us Growing!

We're currently working on a new Strategy for Allotments and Leisure Gardens and over the coming weeks we'll be seeking further comments and views from organisations and the wider public.

Allotments are a valued part of our urban environment. Not only do they enable people to grow good quality, healthy food but they also provide many other benefits:

- Keeping people physically active
- Promoting a sense of well-being
- Providing valuable social contact

They also give people a great deal of enjoyment and sense of satisfaction. Many of these same benefits are delivered through other types of leisure gardens and community orchards.



The Strategy will acknowledge that we already have some excellent allotments across the Borough and it will highlight the vital contribution that is already being made by Allotment Associations, Town and Parish Councils, community organisations, Stockton Borough Council and other partners. However we are also aware that more can be done. For example, to respond to increasing local demand for allotments, to provide support for the development of community gardens or other community-led projects and to improve awareness of the benefits of local food.

In the meantime Care for Your Area, Allotments Associations and Town/Parish Council's are already making efforts to increase allotment

provision in some parts of the Borough. For example, at Andrew Allotments in Thornaby 10 very large derelict plots have recently been redeveloped into 20 smaller plots.

While at Harewood Allotments also in Thornaby, work is on-going to bring around 50 overgrown and redundant plots back into management.

In addition to reduce the waiting time for an allotment, which on average is now between 2 to 3 years, when a large allotment plot becomes vacant and if practicable these are now split down into more manageable size gardens.

**For information on existing allotments please contact Care for Your Area on (01642) 391959.**

# Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park



Regular visitors to Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park have welcomed the replacement of the footbridge over Cowbridge Beck. The original bridge was removed after it was condemned and funding was secured from the Forestry Commission's Woodland Access Grant to pay for the new one. The steelwork for the bridge, provided by a local steel fabricator, was installed by Care for Your Area, before the timber work was completed by a local joiner.

The bridge itself forms a vital link for regular dog walkers who can access an area of the site approved for dog walking. Other parts of the site are designated as 'dogs on leads' areas and some are kept dog free altogether. This arrangement allows dog walkers to use the site while also providing safe areas for wildlife and for visiting school parties.

Mick Gardner, volunteer at the site and member of the Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park Environmental Trust said "It's a huge improvement on the last one, which was certainly showing its age" adding "and the dogs appreciate it too now that they can have more of their walk off the lead".

Funding from the Forestry Commission is also being used to improve access arrangements and visitor facilities at parks and other countryside sites throughout the Borough. These include proposals to improve the footpaths in Bassleton Wood in Thornaby, new benches at Wynyard Woodland Park and information boards at Billingham Beck Country Park.

## Keeping in Touch

If you would like to receive future copies of this newsletter by email, or would be happy to be contacted in the future on other countryside and greenspace issues, please let us have your contact details. Either email us at:

[countrysideandgreenspace@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:countrysideandgreenspace@stockton.gov.uk) or phone (01642) 526871.

The Council's urban and country parks and Wynyard Woodland Park's Planetarium & Observatory are managed by Care for Your Area. Email at:

[careforyourarea@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:careforyourarea@stockton.gov.uk) or phone (01642) 391959