

Countryside and Greenspace News

Summer 2008

Welcome to this first edition of the Countryside and Greenspace Newsletter – providing the latest news on the Borough's parks, greenspaces, countryside, trees and woodlands.

There's always a lot happening, and it isn't possible to cover everything. So this newsletter will mainly focus on a variety of exciting projects and initiatives being led by the Countryside & Greenspace Strategy and Development Team. Currently our work includes:

- An ambitious park regeneration programme, which is bringing about major improvements to John Whitehead Park, Newham Grange Park, Wynyard Woodland Park, Village Park and Harewood Pleasure Gardens, as well as creating a brand new Park in Inlgeby Barwick – Romano Park.
- New and improved spaces and facilities for outdoor play across the Borough, to be funded by a major new 'Play Builder' Programme.
- Tree Planting programmes across the Borough.
- Delivery of a new Stockton River Corridors Project.
- Production of a comprehensive Borough-wide Strategy for the Borough's 'green infrastructure' – including our Greenspaces, river corridors, trees and woodlands and accessible countryside.

So follow the links on the right to find out more, and if you can't find the information you need then please get in touch or visit our website. If you want more detailed information on our work we can forward a copy of our Business Unit Plan for 2008/09.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter. We will bring you the next edition in winter 2008/09.

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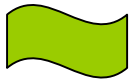
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Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Green Infrastructure Strategies for Tees Valley and Stockton Borough

Parks, trees and woodlands, river corridors, allotments, sports fields, ponds, and wildlife habitats.... These all form part of the Borough's 'green infrastructure' and they help to make the Borough such a great place to live, work and visit. For example, 'green infrastructure' contributes towards improved health, supports wildlife, encourages play and provides an attractive setting for new development.

Green Infrastructure planning is about how we develop and manage our green and 'blue' spaces, corridors and other features such as trees and woodlands – not in isolation but as part of a strategic network. This will help to maximise the benefits for people, the local economy, wildlife and the wider environment.

A new Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy has recently been published and endorsed by Stockton Council. It identifies 17 strategic green infrastructure corridors, running through the heart of urban areas and out into the surrounding countryside. The River Tees Corridor is central to this network, but it also includes other important corridors in the Borough such as Billingham Beck Valley, Lustrum Beck, the Castle Eden Walkway and the A66/A67 corridor. One North East is supporting this approach and over the next few years we look forward to delivery of some innovative projects within these green infrastructure corridors.

Over the next year the Countryside & Greenspace Strategy and Development Team will be leading on the development of a strategy for the Borough's green infrastructure. We are aiming to have a consultation draft available in November 2008, which will include draft green infrastructure network maps for the whole Borough. We will consult widely on these over the winter 2008/09.

Further information on both the Tees Valley and Borough-wide strategies is available in a report to Cabinet on 24 April (item 8 on the agenda):

www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab12.pl?cmte=CAB&meet=34&arc=71

For more information contact Graham Clingan on 01642 526870 or graham.clingan@stockton.gov.uk



Trees get a 'thumbs up' from residents

96% of people feel that trees are an important part of the local environment and 88% would prefer to live in a street with trees. Those are two of the findings from a recent Viewpoint Survey, conducted in December 2007.



88% of respondents also thought that more trees should be planted in the Borough, and over the next few years we'll continue to do just that. We're currently identifying possible sites for new tree planting to take place later this year, and we'll also incorporate any proposals for major new tree planting initiatives into the proposed Borough-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy.

In the meantime we're pleased to report that approximately 1300 new trees have been planted in the past two years. This has included a number of major schemes:

- South Stockton Link Road: approximately 200 additional trees.
- Central Billingham – including Finchale Avenue & The Causeway (funded by Yuilll Homes): approximately 60 trees.
- Mandale Phase 1: 350 trees.
- Ropner Park: 100 trees.
- Trinity Green, Stockton: 25 trees.
- Norton Ring Road: 75 trees.
- Black Path open space: 50 trees.
- South/Central Billingham: 75 trees.
- Havilland Road Play area – 60 trees (plus 100 other trees in Neighbourhood renewal areas in the Borough).
- Thornaby Road / Spitfire - 60 trees.

Finally you may be interested to know that we'll soon be preparing a '**Tree Work Bulletin**' in order to provide information 'on-line' about where scheduled tree maintenance works will be taking place. This will include a list of tree work in each Council Ward notifying, for example street tree pruning and programmed works for parks. This is aimed at giving people the opportunity to find out what is taking place and when.

For more information contact Stuart Hibbert on 01642 524593 or stuart.hibbert@stockton.gov.uk

For information on our tree management work please follow this link:

www.stockton.gov.uk/citizenservices/environment/parksandopen/

Stockton's River Corridors

Anne-Louise Orange has recently been appointed by Groundwork South Tees as the new Development Manager for the Stockton River Corridors Project.

This exciting new partnership initiative (funded by Groundwork South Tees, British Waterways, Environment Agency and Stockton Council) will deliver a range of environmental regeneration projects along the River Tees and other river corridors within the Borough such as Lustrum Beck. A detailed work programme is currently being developed and we'll provide more information on this initiative in the next edition of this newsletter.



Anne-Louise is based in the Countryside & Greenspace Strategy & Development Team at Stirling House, Thornaby. Contact details: 01642 – 524965 or Anne-Louise.Orange@groundwork.org.uk

Fairplay Playbuilder

Stockton Council is to receive a total of £1,119,903 over the next three years to invest in a minimum of 20 to 25 play areas across the Borough. The funding, provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, will be used to transform existing play areas or create new, high quality play areas and play spaces.

Detailed design guidance for Playbuilder has just been published. It sets out 10 principles for designing successful play spaces, stating that they should:

- Be bespoke.
- Be well located.
- Make use of natural elements.
- Provide a wide range of play opportunities.
- Be accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children.
- Meet community needs.
- Allow children of different ages to play together.
- Build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge.
- Be sustainable and appropriately maintained.
- Allow for change and evolution.

'Spaces for Play' Event – 15 September 2008

We're planning an event for 15 September 2008 to explore current approaches to outdoor play and to provide further information on the Playbuilder programme. Members, officers, community groups and partners are invited to attend one of two sessions, due to take place between 2.45-5.00pm and 5.45-8.00pm at Castlegate Quay Watersports Centre. Please contact Val Clingo **before 5 September** to reserve your place at either event:

01642 526871 or valerie.clingo@stockton.gov.uk





Parks Regeneration Update

We're working on a number of park regeneration projects across the Borough. We can't provide a full overview of each scheme here, but the following summaries give an indication of the broad scope of this work. In all cases we're working closely with local communities – including 'friends' or 'supporters' groups, Town/Parish Councils, residents group and Area Partnership Boards. If other groups and individuals wish to get involved we'd be pleased to hear from them.

1. John Whitehead Park, Billingham

The first phases of development in the park are now in full swing: the children's play area is open, the shrub beds have been removed to improve sight lines and the general appearance of the park, the perimeter hedge lowered, CCTV cameras installed and the sensory garden is almost complete. The Supporters of John Whitehead Park have made an important contribution to this work and we have also worked closely with the Billingham Partnership.

In addition to the above we're also progressing with a number of other projects and developments:

- Installation of 3rd CCTV camera in partnership with the Bowls Club.
- Working in partnership with Kirklevington Prison to manufacture bespoke play area fencing.
- Café and toilets – both are to be refurbished soon and the cafe re-launched with a new menu.
- New park gates will be installed soon, and other work carried out to improve the main entrance off The Causeway.
- Our Landscape Architects have been working on a design-code for the park's street furniture, including benches, bins and notice boards.
- Artist Lee Brewster has been working with young people from local schools to develop detailed proposals for the development of other play facilities in the park – catering for the needs of older children and teenagers.

2. Romano Park, Ingleby Barwick

Outline planning permission was recently given to develop Romano Park – a brand new park for Ingleby Barwick. Plans include the development of new 'landscape for play' incorporating play equipment for children, and other features such as seating, flowerbeds and tree planting.

We're currently working on detailed designs for the 'landscape for play', drawing upon some excellent work which took place over the winter involving around 40 children from four primary schools. The children worked with a landscape architect and an artist appointed by the kids themselves to come up with ideas for Romano



Park. You can find out more and view some of the children's work by following the link to the 'Romano play' website:

www.romanoplay.co.uk/index.html



Ingleby Town Council have been very supportive of this project and we will be working with them and other partners to finalise designs for the 'landscape for play' with the aim of having this part of the park completed in spring 2009.

3. Newham Grange Park

Major improvements have already been carried out in the park, including installation of a new play area, creation of new wildlife habitats along the beck corridor, management work on shrubs and hedges, and most recently, the introduction of new seating, benches and notice boards. We've worked closely with the Friends of Newham Grange Park throughout and the group has recently secured additional funding for further improvements.

Amongst the future plans for the park we're working in partnership with Butterwick Hospice, Stockton Council has dedicated an area of Newham Grange Park for the planting of trees as a memorial wood.

The scheme involves the planting of a tree as a permanent way of celebrating a special event or remembering a loved one. Stockton Council will do most of the planting, but should anyone wish to plant their own tree there will be special public tree planting days where individuals have the opportunity to plant trees working with Stockton Council staff.

The trees, such as Oak, Ash, Maple, Cherry and Birch will be trees grown from seed collected in the North East. Details of the planting will be entered into a commemorative book, which will be permanently displayed in the Hospice Chapel in Stockton.

It is proposed that the cost of sponsoring the planting of a tree will be £20. It will be the copse that will be the memorial and, whilst early failures will be replaced, no guarantee can be given that any individual tree will ultimately form part of the woodland.



4. Harewood Pleasure Gardens, Thornaby

Late last year Stockton Council and Groundwork South Tees asked residents to complete a GreenSTAT questionnaire about Harewood Pleasure Gardens so that they could say how they wanted to see it improved and developed in the future.

The feedback that was provided has been used to produce a master plan that reflects the areas that they told us were the top priorities for development.

Crime and anti-social behaviour were the greatest concerns, and we were told that the gardens needed to be made a more welcoming and attractive place to visit.

Working with Groundwork and with input from local communities we have secured funding to implement a programme of works for the regeneration of the park, with the following improvements to be undertaken;

- Resurface the paths.
- Rebuild the steps and install a metal handrail.
- Improve the site furniture and benches.
- Carry out an in depth tree survey to establish the condition of the Trees
- Remove most of the shrubs in the dense area north of the war memorial and raise the crowns of selected trees.
- Carry out work to the entranceway to define an official entrance with new piers, paving and signage.
- Restore and repaint the main railings or replace them.
- Replace the flowerbeds adjacent to the war memorial.
- Replace the railings by the beck and replace the vehicular access gate.

5. Village Park, Thornaby

Working in partnership with the Village Park Residents Association and the wider community a number of improvements have already been carried out including:

- Installation of new play area with kick wall and seating areas.
- Clearance of shrubs for security purposes.
- Installation of CCTV.

The next stages in the project include:

- Installation of a Multi-Use Games Area.
- Installation of new entrance gates around park.
- Installation of Play Trail around the park perimeter.
- Resurfacing of footpaths.
- Development of picnic area adjacent play area.

6. Wynyard Woodland Park, Thorpe Thewles

One of the main priorities for Wynyard Woodland Park is the development of a new play area and designs for this are being developed at the moment. At the same time we are giving thought to the longer-term development of Wynyard Woodland Park.



We believe there is potential to develop the park into a major all-day visitor attraction, whilst conserving the special and natural character of the park. We'll consult on these proposals in the near future.

In the meantime visitors to the park will be notice the landscaping and other improvements carried out by Care For Your Area in the vicinity of the Visitor Centre. This work is already helping to transform this core area of the park and will have a real impact on visitors to this wonderful country park.

Recreation and Leisure Survey

'Walking and/or enjoying outdoors/nature' is the favourite leisure activity for the Borough's residents. That's according to a recent 'Sport, Recreation and Leisure Survey' which involved face-to-face interviews with 2705 people from across the Borough. That included interviews with around 100 people in each ward, providing some really useful data to help shape our strategies and service delivery.

The survey included a wide range of questions, finding out what people like to do in their leisure time, what they think about the greenpaces and other leisure facilities, and what they would like to see provided in the future. For example, when asked whether there should be more spaces or facilities for leisure near their home the highest proportion of respondents (28.1%) said they would like more 'parks, gardens or nature areas', followed by swimming pools' (15.4%).

The great majority of people (81.5%) use outdoor spaces for leisure purposes, and most respondents (66%) reported that the outdoor space they use most frequently is 'within two miles' of their home. More than half of all respondents (51%) stated that they usually walk to their most used space/facility. However, the survey also reveals the importance of key parks within the Borough: for example, when asked which spaces people used most often 15% said Preston Park and 13.4% Ropner Park. Three quarters of those visiting Preston Park, and nearly half of those visiting Ropner Park, travel by car.

When asked what their main activity was when visiting their most popular outdoor space the majority of people said they walk (56.8%) and enjoy nature/outdoors (51.9%). Taking children to play areas was also very popular (29.8%).

Those are just a few of the findings and a more in-depth analysis of the results is now being undertaken, which will in turn help to inform the development of key documents such as the Open Space, Recreation and Landscaping Supplementary Planning Document and the proposed Green Infrastructure Strategy.

For more information please contact: Rebecca Richardson in Spatial Planning (01642 526050 / rebecca.richardson@stockton.gov.uk) or Graham Clingan (01642 526870 / graham.clingan@stockton.gov.uk)





Stockton Council has signed up to a new survey system called GreenSTAT. GreenSTAT is a nationally used system for gathering the views and opinions of local residents regarding their parks, open spaces and wildlife areas across the borough through the completion of an online questionnaire. Information received will help us to improve our service, ensuring that greenspaces are planned and managed in a way that really meets local needs.

GreenSTAT is helping Stockton Council to;

- Record information that will enable more accurate and specific benchmarking to take place and contribute to performance management.
- Record information that allows a specific and sophisticated data analysis of the service/ individual pieces of open space.
- Add detail to and update the Borough's Open Space Audit
- Provide information that will be useful in the day-to-day and strategic management of parks and greenspaces.
- Provide evidence to potential funders and other project partners

It is essential that as many people in the borough complete the online questionnaire as possible. You can help us by adding the link below to any publications that you may be involved with, such as newspaper articles, councillor newsletters and leaflets:

'Your opinion of your park, wildlife area or open space is important to us. Please take time to visit www.greenstat.org.uk and register online to complete a questionnaire about a site that is important to you'.

Please contact Keith Mathews on 526872 if you require more information or assistance.



When the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act came into force on 1 October 2006 it introduced a requirement for all public bodies, including Local Authorities "to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising all of their functions".



The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has published guidelines for local authorities on implementing the 'Biodiversity Duty'. This can be downloaded directly from DEFRA's website:

www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/pdfs/biodiversity/la-guid-english.pdf

The UK Wildlife Trusts also have published a guidance leaflet, again available to download.

www.wildlifetrusts.org/index.php?section=about:publications:free

We'll be doing more work on this over the coming months. In the meantime we are circulating copies of the Wildlife Trust leaflet and an associated Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership leaflet to all members.

For more information on biodiversity issues visit the North East Biodiversity Forum website:

www.nebiodiversity.org.uk

And the excellent Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership website:

teesvalleybiodiversity.org.uk



Strategy & Development Team

If you would like more general information please contact Val Clingo. Or for more specific information contact one of the officers below:

Graham Clingan (Strategy & Development Manager) - Team leader, with particular responsibility for the development and implementation of strategies for countryside and greenspace, partnership working and overseeing projects/programmes.

01642 526870 or graham.clingan@stockton.gov.uk

Stuart Hibbert (Arboricultural Officer) - Responsible for developing a strategic approach to tree and woodland management across the Borough, including involvement with development sites and other planning issues. Leads work of Arboricultural Team.

01642 526873 or stuart.hibbert@stockton.gov.uk

Mark Nozedar (Assistant Arboricultural Officer) - Role includes managing customer service requests, managing tree and woodland contract work. Also provision of technical advice, development of management plans and a variety of project work.

01642 527529 or mark.nozedar@stockton.gov.uk

Susan Huddleston (Arboricultural Surveyor) - Responsibilities include tree and woodland surveys and inspections. Also provision of technical advice, development of management plans and a variety of project work.

01642 526879 or susan.huddleston@stockton.gov.uk

Keith Mathews (Parks and Green Spaces Officer) - Manages the park regeneration programme and a range of other countryside, access, natural environment and greenspace projects and programmes.

01642 526872 or keith.mathews@stockton.gov.uk

Tony Raine (Parks Project Officer) – Delivers a variety of park, outdoor play and greenspace regeneration projects.

01642 526876 or tony.raine@stockton.gov.uk

Sarah Edwards (Environmental Development Officer) - Provides advice on open space, land management and design issues. Secures new and improved green space through partnership working and the planning process, and works on development of strategies and policies.

01642 526875 or sarah.edwards@stockton.gov.uk

Val Clingo (Administration & Technical Assistant) – Role includes development of the website and other communication work, plus community engagement and admin and technical support for the team.

01642 526871 or valerie.clingo@stockton.gov.uk

Anne-Louise Orange (Development Manager - Stockton Rivers Corridor Project) - employed by Groundwork South Tees to coordinate delivery of this partnership initiative between Groundwork, Environment Agency, British Waterways and Stockton Council.

01642 524965 or Anne-Louise.Orange@groundwork.org.uk

The Council's urban & country parks and the Planetarium & Observatory are now managed by Care For Your Area. For information on this, and the work of the work of the Ranger Service, please contact:

Gina Davies (Countryside Recreation Officer)

01642 526877 or gina.davies@stockton.gov.uk

Ed Restall (Planetarium Director)

01740 630544 or ed.restall@stockton.gov.uk

