

Report to Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee

Green Gym 2013/14

Background

Funding for a Green Gym in Duchess Wood was obtained from the Forestry Commission, via their Community Seedcorn Fund, in December 2013. The funding was for the delivery of a Green Gym programme by the end of March 2014. It had been agreed by the Committee before hand that any Green Gym programme would be delivered by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV).

Given the short time available in which to apply for funding, and the relative roles and natures of the various groups on the LNR Management Committee, it was decided that the most appropriate organisation to apply for the funding would be TCV themselves. This would simplify any issues of outlay of funds vs claim of grant, and as a registered charity TCV were a very appropriate organisation for the Community Seedcorn Fund.

The timescale for delivery was very tight, bringing a series of challenges. Also, the time of year was not considered optimum for public involvement. As a result of these issues planning for the programme was a challenge and it seemed likely that attendance may be a challenge. However, it was considered to be a good precursor for a longer programme in 2014/15, which the Forestry Commission had expressed an interest in funding.

Detail (Excerpt from the Monitoring Form submitted to FC by TCV)

After an initial delay in the confirmation of funding the project commenced on the 10th of February after a very short period of publicity and the 8th programmed session was completed on the 31st of March 2014. Given the late award notification and direction given to complete the project before April 2014, the initial stages of the project suffered as a result of inadequate publicity run in and extremely poor weather. In the end a total, 12 registered volunteers engaged with the project with the majority engaging towards the latter half of the project.

8 Green Gym days were run with the majority of the work being undertaken around the 2 identified coupes which were cleared of smaller trees through the use of both chainsaw and hand tools. The resulting felled wood was either constructed into habitat piles or was made accessible for the management group who have identified on use for woodland sculpture projects and educational charcoal making sessions.

It was decided, by the Friends of Duchess Woods, to concentrate on woodland management preparation works and not to carry out native tree and shrub planting (as identified in the original application) however a large quantity of tree stakes and shelters have been purchased through this grant award in order to allow the group to carry this work out later in 2014. This work will either be completed by the Friends group themselves or as part of a future TCV/Lower Clyde Greenspace supported Green Gym group (subject to follow on FCS Seedcorn funding being agreed).

The project generated early publicity through the local newspaper with both an initial call for volunteers and a follow up article further to the launch event on the 10th of February. With the project just completed it is the intention of project partners to supply the local newspaper with a follow up article outlining the project's achievement and a further call to the local community to support the ongoing work of the Friends of Duchess Woods (and hopefully a continuation Duchess Woods Green Gym).

From the publicity generated through local press and widespread community leafleting (such as at local GP surgeries and health centre - see attached poster), the woodland has been promoted as a community asset which contributes to healthier lifestyles and a venue for socialisation.

All activities undertaken during this project were approved through the management plan for Duchess Woods LNR as relates to clearance and removal of non-native species and all volunteers who took part were engaged in a range of woodland management tasks and gained valuable skills and experience which will be of ongoing benefit to Friends of Duchess Woods moving forward.

A breakdown of participants by age is given below;

	Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female
0 to 4 years	-	-	16 to 25 years	4	2	Total	8	4
5 to 11 years	-	-	26 to 60 years	2	2			
12 to 15 years	-	-	+ 60 years	2	0			

Costs

	Expenditure
Staff costs	-
Project Management/Supervision	-
Volunteer costs	-
Operational/Activity costs	£2400.00
Office, overhead costs	-
Capital items	
Publicity costs	£150.00

	Expenditure
Other costs (please detail) Tree stakes, shelters and a selection of hand tools	£1040
Total Expenditure	£3590
Amount of FCS (CSF) contribution	£3590

If there were additional contributions “in kind” please note details below:

Support by Lower Clyde Greenspace and FODW (site visits) - £360

Publicity (Lower Clyde Greenspace) - £60

Next Steps

The Forestry Commission have been positive about giving funding towards an extended Green Gym programme in 2014/15, although at this stage they have been unable to indicate what funding they have available for this year, nor invite bids to be made.

Assuming that funding will be available, it would be apt to have minuted approval from the Duchess Wood LNR Committee that they would like to see the Green Gym programme continue.

Charlie Cairns
May 2014