

Allestree Park

Community Rewilding Project

Summer 2024

Community Rewilding and Citizen Science Opportunities

During the spring and summer Derby City Council, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and the University of Derby, along with support from Friends of Allestree Park and Derbyshire Ornithological Society, have come together to deliver a wide range of community events to empower local people to come and get involved at Allestree Park. These events have engaged with over 200 people and have enabled Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to co-create events with a wide range of community groups.



Events have included Be a Boar Day, where volunteers came together to take part in some community rewilding activity to disturb ground in order to disturb dormant seeds in the soil in the hope they will grow and increase the diversity of plants growing on the site. The Birds Eye View event led by Derbyshire Ornithological Society (DOS) took place on a beautiful sunny Sunday and showcased the birds that can be found in the park, along with how members of the public can help to monitor them. DOS are leading on this citizen science project and welcome additional volunteers. A popular wellbeing wander was held in celebration of Mental Health Awareness Week, with plans for more wellbeing events to be made available over summer.

All of this culminated in a celebration of all that has been achieved so far with a Blooming Party event taking place on 9th June. This was a fantastic collaboration with activities and stands hosted by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Friends of Allestree Park, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Derbyshire Ornithological Society, University of Derby, Trees for Derby and Earl of Harington Angling Club.





Activities included opportunities to take part in citizen science and family friendly nature-based fun. Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and Derby City Council staff were available in the Community Conversations tent, welcoming conversations with the public about the rewilding project which were overwhelmingly positive. It was fantastic to see local people of all ages enjoying the day and being involved in practical citizen science projects. The survey results and feedback from the day was captured to inform the evaluation work being undertaken by the University of Derby to explore how the rewilding project is influencing positive changes for people and wildlife.

There will be a wide range of ways to get involved with citizen science projects as the summer progresses. Community groups are now able to register their interest to adopt a tree and commit to planting a fruiting tree during National Tree Week in November as part of our 'Tree for a Tee' project. These trees will provide a future food source for pollinators, birds and mammals. Meanwhile, ten fixed point photography posts are being installed throughout the park for anyone visiting the park to help monitor landscape changes as nature continues to lead the way.





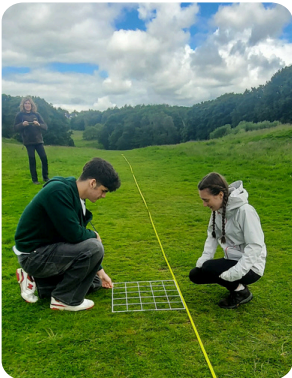
Learning through nature



In June, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust hosted the first Careers Day for local schools providing information about the range of green jobs available in the sector. Students from Allestree Woodlands School and Derby Cathedral School took part in taster activities ranging from communications and marketing, to wellbeing and practical conservation, giving an insight into the work taking place around the Allestree Park Community Rewilding Project. Feedback was very positive, and plans are underway to host a bigger event next year.



Year 12 students from Allestree Woodlands School also had an opportunity to complete an additional Level 3 qualification delivered by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and accredited by the Leadership Skills Foundation. The course, Leading a Project for Positive Change, teaches the students to plan and deliver projects to benefit the community, environment and themselves. Those taking part gain eight UCAS points and benefit from fantastic transferrable skills in project planning and teamwork.



During their course, the group created resources to teach people how to look after bees and bats, including instructions for making bat-boxes and creating habitat at home. They also gave away seeds for bee friendly flowers and night flowering plants which encourage insects, that in turn are a food source for bats. Other students encouraged local residents to build wildlife ponds in their own gardens and generated ideas for a new wildlife dipping pond in Allestree Park itself. This project has culminated in the development of a student website sharing information about wildlife ponds.



Litter picks were also held in the park, alongside a survey of park users to gauge interest for recycling bins to be introduced in the park. One hundred percent of those surveyed welcomed the idea of recycling points, which motivated the students to write to the council and share their findings.





Derby Parks volunteer news

Big Wood Step Construction

The Derby Parks Volunteers continue to carry out some great work in the park. The informal path through Big Wood has always come to an abrupt end as it emerges into open parkland overlooking the Derwent valley (the best view in the city!). Formalising a route down the steep slope has been a challenge but nothing the skilled volunteers couldn't handle. Keep a look out for more volunteer tasks on the park at derbyparksvolunteers.co.uk



University of Derby Balsam Pull

The group of 40 volunteers from University of Derby's finance team made an impression on Allestree Park in an effort to control the highly invasive Himalayan balsam plant. With tuition from the Derby Parks Team, they managed to remove thousands of balsam plants which will contribute to the tireless efforts of the Friends of Allestree Park, local Beaver Scout colony and the Derby Parks Volunteers.





Friends of Allestree Park

Friends of Allestree Park volunteers have been busy gathering information about the nature found on site at Allestree. This is the first season for the new Allestree Park Rewilding butterfly transect, which covers a route through part of the former golf course. It is showing that plenty of Ringlet and Meadow Brown butterflies have moved into the long grass. Orange-tips, Brimstones, Peacocks and skippers have been seen; butterfly numbers are pretty comparable to the two well-established park transects in the nature reserve area. It's promising so far and will be very interesting to see how it develops.

During the Blooming Party in June, members of Friends of Allestree Park offered childrens' craft activities, cakes, and a 'bioblitz'. On the bioblitz, despite the weather, children found a surprising variety of minibeasts in the long vegetation, including ladybirds, plant bugs and an impressive large black (harmless) lace-weaver spider!

The volunteers have also led Himalayan balsam bashing sessions to help manage this highly invasive species, and engaged local children through mini-beast hunts and pond dipping sessions, which are always very popular.

