

Prudential Grass Roots

Supporting communities to improve their local environment



CASE STUDY

Patchway Green Spaces, Bristol

Patchway is a densely populated area in Bristol with a wide range of poverty and health problems. An area of land near to the Prudential-owned Mall at Cribbs Causeway is a significant green space including a 400 year old woodland which is home to scarce species of plants and animals.

The sites, which are scattered throughout an area of housing, commercial development and motorway, are all used by local people for leisure and recreation, and the Greenway footpath leads directly to The Mall at Cribbs Causeway.

BTCV and Prudential, working closely with the Patchway Conservation Group, have developed a programme to preserve and increase the biodiversity of this ancient site, encourage increased use and provide safer paths for local people to access the shopping centre by foot. All the plans are designed to ensure that the year-long conservation project can be managed in the long term by volunteers in the local community.

“The Mall at Cribbs Causeway is delighted to have enabled the local community to regenerate this important green space. We hope that by supporting this project we have empowered the local community to take ownership of their own environment – an ethos that is at the heart of the Grass Roots programme.”

JON EDWARDS, COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR,
THE MALL AT CRIBBS CAUSEWAY

Prudential Grass Roots was launched in 2001. It is run by BTCV, the UK's leading practical conservation charity, and funded by Prudential plc.

The programme is helping to drive regeneration for people and wildlife in communities around shopping centres and business parks throughout the UK, owned by Prudential plc and managed by Prudential Property Investment Managers Ltd.



PRUDENTIAL

Creating an urban oasis

Patchway, Bristol

The Patchway sites are used as public rights of way, however, many of the trees were suffering from vandalism, the footpaths were difficult to use and the area was covered in litter – a poor and neglected environment for people and wildlife.

An already well-established group of local volunteers, led by the Patchway Conservation Group and other active local community groups, highlighted the potential for the area to form a wildlife corridor of high biodiversity which would provide a rich resource for the community and attract visitors from the wider area of Bristol.

From consultation to practical conservation

Community consultation is vital for the long-term success of Grass Roots projects. A 'Planning for Real' event was held at which hundreds of ideas and concerns were recorded to determine the scope and detail of community activity, and the issues raised were shared among key partners. As a result, BTCV, together with experienced partners such as the Wildspace! Partnership Project and South Gloucestershire Council, were able to develop a community based management plan which supported volunteer activity on practical conservation tasks.

Activities were designed to encourage schools, residents and other community groups to get involved and increase the number of people committed to making the area a valuable, and valued, community space. Throughout the year-long project, activities included:

- Hedge planting and laying
- Footpath and rubbish clearance
- Woodland management
- Meadow restoration and seed collection
- Pond digging
- Bird box making
- Dry stone walling
- Coppicing and tree planting



Key statistics

There is little green space around Patchway which has a high proportion of council owned property. There is also a high percentage of elderly people and people with no car and so it is vital to preserve footpaths and access to local amenities.

The number of households housing lone parents with dependent children is 7.9% compared to 5% for the rest of South Gloucestershire

The percentage of households with no car or van is 20.2% compared with 13.4% in South Gloucestershire

13.9% of the Patchway population is retired

There are 396 full-time students and school children in Patchway

Source: 2001 Census, Office for National Statistics

Inspiring people, improving places

Patchway, Bristol

AFTER



"Events like this give people a chance to play their part and make a real difference to the environment and also to have a say in future projects that affect their local community."

HAZEL WILLMOTT, BTCV AVON PROJECT OFFICER

Opportunities for learning

A range of creative approaches were taken to encourage involvement from school children and to generate understanding of environmental concerns and the potential of positive community involvement. Students took part in classroom debates on the environment, produced posters, designed a nature trail leaflet and attended meetings with local decision makers – all of which helped to raise their self-esteem and stimulate them to become more positive and active in local community issues.

Raising awareness through events

Raising awareness of the importance of conservation can be achieved in many ways. Alongside local publicity, the Patchway Conservation event was planned as part of the Patchway Festival and involved three main activities: dry stone walling, pond dipping and replacing steps.

A 10-metre stretch of old boundary wall was repaired to benefit wildlife and to save it as a local feature of historic interest, all under the instruction of a BTCV trainer who taught volunteers the skills and techniques of dry stone walling.

Children and adults took part in a pond dipping session run by the Wildlife Trust's Education Officer. Identification books, dishes and nets provided the inspiration for learning more about pond wildlife. More volunteers signed up to replace worn steps with railway sleepers along an important access path.

Other events included tree planting and dead-hedging at Gorse Covert, part of the woodland area of Patchway and a main event was organised involving guided walks and making bird boxes, to celebrate Gorse Covert being awarded Local Nature Reserve status.

Leaving a lasting legacy

Patchway, Bristol

BTCV's approach is designed to leave a lasting legacy not just to the environment, but also to the people who live there. Using the environment to connect with young people as well as adults encourages them to take ownership of their own green spaces and to take pride in maintaining them.

Other longer-term benefits can be seen through a reduction in vandalism to the site and a greater confidence in local people who now use the area more regularly. As well as access to a green space, residents now have a safer and more accessible walking route to the local shops which has also encouraged a reduction in the use of cars – benefiting people's health and reducing pollution and congestion.

Achievements

- Over 500 people involved in the Patchway project, including staff from The Mall at Cribbs Causeway
- 100 people attended a public event to celebrate Nature Reserve status
- The area is now more attractive and accessible to young people
- 150 people involved in the Planning for Real consultation
- Press coverage equivalent to £13,756 in advertising value
- Opportunity for nearly 1 million people to read about the Grass Roots Programme through local media coverage
- £4,000 worth of volunteer time

Project Costs

The Prudential Grass Roots funding contributed £10,000 to the Patchway Green Spaces project and The Mall at Cribbs Causeway hosted an event free of charge. Local Authority funding through The Wild Spaces Project attracted a further £5,000.

Contact us

Prudential Property Investment Managers Ltd: 020 7548 6729
www.prupim.com
BTCV Wallingford: 01491 821 618
www.btcv.org
BTCV South Gloucestershire: 0117 960 5447
The Mall at Cribbs Causeway: 0117 915 5555

"Support from Prudential has encouraged local people to get involved in managing the site which has led to it achieving Local Nature Reserve status. Because it's maintained to a much higher standard, it's attracted more local people to the area and given children a better place to play."

PAUL HUMPHREYS, BTCV SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY PROJECT OFFICER

Project partners

BTCV • Prudential plc • The Mall at Cribbs Causeway
• Patchway Conservation Group • South Gloucestershire Council • Wildspaces Project • Patchway High School

