



EASTSUFFOLK
C O U N C I L

Green Communities Toolkit

Supported by East Suffolk Council
Community Partnership – Kesgrave,
Martlesham, Rushmere St Andrew,
Purdis Farm, Carlford and Fynn Valley

Green Communities Toolkit

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Welcome to this Green Communities Toolkit

We are conscious that there are incredible projects, initiatives and individuals all working to make positive environmental change in their neighbourhood. We're also well aware that starting such a project may be a daunting and overwhelming experience for some.

Our Green Communities Toolkit aims to use real life examples of projects as a starting point and inspiration to other communities that wish to contribute to greener communities but are unsure how to proceed.

Our thanks go to all the organisers, volunteers, community groups and organisations that have kindly offered to share their stories for the wider benefit. Those involved in the projects have kindly offered to share their experience in more detail to other interested parties. Please contact communities@Eastsuffolk.gov.uk for further details.

Please note - Each of the projects outlined in the toolkit are unique. Every project had sought the necessary permissions, approvals, and documentation as per their project. When considering a new project of any kind it is the responsibility of the organisers to ensure the correct permissions have been sought. Reliance on the information within this toolkit should not be considered satisfactory.

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Village Hall Solar Panels

Bredfield Village Hall

“Over the first 11 days of use...the saving was £39, with CO2 emissions reduced by 53kg” - Bredfield Village Hall Committee.

Background

Following a report compiled by Groundworks East in 2017 various improvements to the Village Hall were made. These included the installation of LED lighting, certain refurbishments, and governance reviews. The report also recommended the installation of solar photovoltaic (SPV) panels and was the final recommendation to be completed.

Aims

- Complete all accepted recommendations from the 2017 Groundworks East report
- Reduce running costs of the Village Hall and Shop (included in the building)

Overview

Taking in to consideration current feed-in tariffs and electricity charges rising, four companies were asked to design a system that would supply one phase circuit that is used by the shop and the hall. Energy used by the village shop accounts for 90% of the premises consumption. A battery system was also included in to the design to allow the storage of excess energy – allowing the shop to have a consistent flow of renewable energy at all times.

The angles of the roof lent themselves towards separating the panels over two sides. This helps to even out the generation potential during the day. The hall has a 30% slope on its roof which is close the optimum angle for panels.

Planning enquiries were made with East Suffolk Council. The proposed installation was not covered as permitted development, and therefore a pre-application query was required. The query submission was completed online via www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk and cost £222. It took approximately one month to receive notification that in this case, a full planning application was not required.

The Building Regulations department did not require involvement in the project on the basis that the installation would be made by a competent person who would complete the necessary documentation.

Advice from a structural engineer was sought to ensure the roof could support the additional load that the panels would create.

Installation was carried out by the selected provider with all relevant safety measures taken.

Overall the installation of the entire project, including panels, wiring and battery, took seven working days. Installation was halted at times due to events taking place in the hall.

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The battery element of the system is fully automated and can be monitored through a website and mobile app. Summary data is available and shows;

- The total power generated for comparison with consumption and hence the savings in electricity costs
- The extent to which the battery storage is used and hence the optimum capacity for the premises daily profile of supply and demand.

Funding

The following funding sources supported the installation of the system.

- East Suffolk District Councillors – Enabling Communities Budgets
- Suffolk County Councillor Locality Budget
- Bredfield Village Shop
- Bredfield Towlands Charity
- Village Hall reserves
- Surplus from the Covid Business Support Grant

Outcomes

Reviews of the outcomes and potential savings will be ongoing over the first year following installation. Data from the mobile app sourced shortly after installation has already given some suggestions as to the impact the system is having. For example, over the first eleven days of use, 38% of all the electricity used on site was gained through the solar panels. This led to a saving of £39 over eleven days and a reduction in CO₂ emissions by 53kg.

It is anticipated that it will take a minimum of ten years to recoup the project costs, however the short-term savings will improve the viability of the community shop as a business. The project is also considered as a means of promoting the 'green community' spirit, encouraging residents to consider their own behaviours and actions towards renewable energy.



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Incorporating wildlife, habitat and play

Grundisburgh Playing Field Committee

“The success of this project has been achieved by the willingness of all those involved to work together to provide a facility that will be enjoyed by the community” – Playing Field Committee Chairman

Background

The Playing Field Committee were made aware of potential Section 106 Sport and Play funding that could be used to improve the provision for young people in the village. During the design stage it was agreed that integrating climate resilient planting into the park would be of benefit to local residents, wildlife and the areas biodiversity.

Aims

- Integrate a climate resilient planting scheme into the play area
- Increase habitat for wildlife and pollinators
- Bring nature and young people closer together

Overview

The fundraising, design, contracting and community engagement for the new play equipment was similar to most play area projects. The residents survey had clearly highlighted the importance of natural materials being used where possible and for the inclusion of ‘natural play’ – using imagination to create play within the park itself.

The final play area design took the survey views into consideration and found a balance between natural materials and longevity and ‘playability’. During the design stage it became apparent that incorporating nature would be important for several reasons.

- It would soften the design which included a significant amount of new equipment being installed, blending better with the natural landscape.
- There is a lack of planting and insect habitat on the playing fields – this is down to historical use as host for football pitches and similar sports.
- Survey results showed a significant interest in nature and the environment by parents and young people alike.

A bid was submitted to the Community Partnership for funds that would allow for climate resilient planting to be included in the final design. Where possible, the local Primary School students would be involved in the design and selection of the planting, alongside the local Horticultural Society. Plants were purchased from a local independent nursery to reduce

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their carbon footprint and to support local businesses after a challenging period due to the pandemic.

Volunteers were sought from the local community to help plant the new areas through local social media channels, newsletters, and word of mouth. Two planting sessions were held and saw a range of residents come and help.

The plants selected are climate resilient – they are more able to cope with stresses put upon them such as drought, heat, and challenging soil conditions. This selection will ensure that the plants are sustainable and will not require as much attention as others.

Funding

The planting element of the scheme was funded by the East Suffolk Community Partnership as part of the Green Communities Project. Grundisburgh is part of the Kesgrave, Martlesham, Rushmere St Andrew, Purdis Farm, Carlford and Fynn Valley Partnership.

The play area itself was funded from a range of sources, including historic Section 106 developer contributions. For more information on Section 106 expenditure and how it can be used for this purpose, visit the Communities area of the East Suffolk Council website.

Outcomes

The area was formally opened by Councillor Letitia Smith, Cabinet member for Communities, in April 2022. The planting contributes to several outcomes.

- Increased resource and habitat for pollinators and insects
- Brings young people and wildlife together in a well-designed way
- Creates a welcoming space for adults and children alike, increasing the equipment's usage and subsequent improvements in peoples physical and mental health.



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Conservation in churchyards with young people

Lightwave/Little Bealings Church

“Do something small to be part of something big” – Bealings Borrowers

Background

Little Bealings Church is a small church that has expanded its community facing element over recent years to include a café, cinema and space for exercise and community groups. It also boasts a churchyard that is home to a range of local wildlife and flora.

In an effort to bring nature and families together, Lightwave proposed ‘Bealings Borrowers’ – a weekly session in the churchyard that allows families with young children to participate in conservation and exploration of the habitat within the churchyard.

Aims

- Enable families to connect with nature and contribute to its conservation
- Improve local habitat through focused conservation
- Educate young people about their local environment

Overview

‘Little Bealings Borrowers’ is led by a member of Lightwave Church and includes young people and families from the village exploring the nature around them whilst in the churchyard. Each week includes a different activity – building a hibernaculum, collecting wildflower seeds or discovering wildlife. The activities not only increase peoples connection with the local environment, but also benefit it from small interventions that multiply to a significant impact.

Other activities such as a Bio Blitz have been completed – identifying the wildlife and insects within the churchyard, identifying them via an app, and documenting them to develop a picture of the churchyard.

The project is a partnership between Little Bealings Church, Lightwave, Bealings Primary School, and the Community Partnership as a funding body. Ensuring the close links between all partners increases engagement and improves longevity of the project.

Sessions are weekly immediately after school. The location of the churchyard lends itself as a key walking route to and from school, ensuring that there is a regular number of young people passing and gathering interest. Parents are actively encouraged to participate in the activities as well, although this is not a requirement. Parents/guardians must however remain present throughout the session.

Funding

The Community Partnership funded the purchase of equipment such as gardening tools to ensure there were no barriers to delivery. It is expected that additional funding will not be required as the equipment is sturdy and expected to last for a considerable amount of time if cared for correctly.

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Lightwave provide staffing for the events and their planning, a significant cost more than the Community Partnerships start-up funding allocation.

Outcomes

Young people from the nearby Primary School continue to engage in the activities available to them. This is developing an ongoing interest in the local environment from a young age, along with becoming an opportunity for families to spend time outdoors together on an activity for all ages.

The Church is part of the Eco Church Award scheme, and the work of Bealings Borrowers contributes towards this.

Although difficult to quantify, there is evidence to suggest that spending time surrounded by nature is beneficial to peoples mental health. This scheme allows for weekly time to do this, creating a consistent improvement in peoples mental wellbeing.



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Westerfield Station Wildlife Garden

Friends of Westerfield Station

“SUCH a lovely rewarding way to spend your time, full of colour and interest and a benefit to bird, bees, and people. Well done adopters” – Local resident via social media.

Background

Friends of Westerfield Station had been working with Greater Anglia to ‘adopt’ the station and take care of it, improving the visual appearance for its users and increasing the biodiversity of the areas surrounding the platform. A small number of volunteers had already made significant progress, however further funding was required to complete their goals – further biodiversity, raised bedding and improved habitats for wildlife.

The Community Partnership were made aware of the project from Westerfield Parish Councils engagement with the meetings, and a subsequent funding proposal was submitted.

“SUCH a lovely rewarding way to spend your time, full of colour and interest and a benefit to bird, bees, and people. Well done adopters”

Aims

- Improve the habitat for local wildlife, leading to an increase in biodiversity
- Make use of the areas around the station platform to create a welcoming environment for all passengers

Overview

Whilst work had been underway for some time, the wildlife garden was enabled in part by the Community Partnership funding. The works included:

- Raised beds for planting, flowers, herbs and vegetables
- Introducing particular perennials to the area when possible

Volunteers spare their time to complete and maintain the works throughout the year, with the support of Greater Anglia where required.

The project is more than the planting and improving of a habitat. It is important that the project reaches as many people as possible through a range of different means. To do so, the volunteers have Instagram ([@westerfield_railway_station](#)) and Facebook pages ([Westerfield Station Garden](#)) that are updated regularly.

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As part of their community engagement, they have worked with other local organisations to expand the provision at the station. Westerfield Cubs have provided handmade bird feeders to the station, and the local Church arranged for an initiative called 'Inspiring Angels' over the Christmas period.

Funding

The scheme requires partnership working in various ways, along with the volunteers that work tirelessly to maintain the excellent standards within the station. The group work closely with Greater Anglia as part of their Station Adopters scheme, and alongside other local organisations as mentioned previously. The close links to the Parish Council ensured that all parties were made aware of the potential funding opportunity that became available.

The Community Partnership funded the purchase of equipment and materials that allowed the works to progress. There is a focus on composting and reuse of materials throughout the scheme which will reduce further costs in the future.

Outcomes

From the funding of this project, Westerfield have now improved the habitat and biodiversity of the entire station area available to them. Not only is this of benefit to the wildlife around them, but it acts as an example of best practice and partnership working to others that use the station or pass through it on a regular basis.

